



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 12, 2009

Issue 39

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-Calmar (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.

Tuesday, May 12, 2009

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Chair of Committees.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a delegation from the Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor Alliance, who are seated in your gallery. Ports-to-Plains is an umbrella organization for a nine-state trade corridor that stretches from Texas to the Canadian border. It was instrumental in hosting the first Texas-Alberta summit last December, in which our Premier had the pleasure of participating.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to inform all members that the purpose of the delegation's visit is because Alberta will be the first Canadian jurisdiction to join the alliance. With us today – and I would ask them to rise as I mention their names – are the hon. Tom Martin, the Ports-to-Plains board vice-chair and the mayor of Lubbock, Texas; Mr. Michael Reeves, the president of Ports-to-Plains; Mr. Joe Kiely, vice-president of Ports-to-Plains and assistant town manager for Limon, Colorado; Ms. Duffy Hinkle, vice-president of Ports-to-Plains; and also Mr. Scott Flukinger, who is policy adviser to Ports-to-Plains. I've heard this comment from both sides, whether I've been in Texas or been in Alberta: they're just like us. I'd ask members to provide the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great today to rise and introduce some special guests. We have 25 visitors from the Rich Valley school. They are led by teachers June Crowther and Cheryl Ruthenburg and parent helpers Janet Veltman and Harvey Hove. You'll see them stand in their red shirts. That has nothing to do with their political affiliation. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly today a grade 6 class from l'école Plamondon. We have 25 students visiting today along with two teachers, Twila Moore and Christina Frasier, and two parent chaperones, Marianne Ludington and Linda McDougall. They are very excited to be here today. They took part in a tour of the Legislature, participated in a mock sitting of the Legislature, and now are here to sit in the galleries of this Assembly. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to please rise and accept 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 rise today with two introductions. My first introduction on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is 28 visitors from Katherine Therrien school in the Edmonton-Castle Downs constituency. With them today are teachers Mrs. Joanne Friedt and Mrs. Jena-Lea Bang and parent helper Ms. Alicia Saunders. I would ask them all to rise now and receive the traditional warm greeting of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, my second introduction to you and through you to members of this Assembly is five people from the Go Green Eco Expo, an event that took place this year on April 4. The expo, which is sponsored by Newcap Radio, focuses on ways that Albertans can reduce the impact on their environment and start to promote green living in vibrant and healthy communities. I'll be discussing more about the eco expo in a member's statement later this afternoon. For now I would like to introduce – and I don't see them in the members' gallery, so I presume they're in the public gallery – Miss Colleen Yukes, Ms. Elissa Scott, Mrs. Maureen Tash, Mr. Randy Lemay, and Mr. Ross Hawse. I would ask all of these individuals to rise and receive the traditional warm greeting of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a group of 11 enthusiastic and bright young Albertans from the Grande Prairie-Wapiti constituency. Visiting the Legislature today to learn about how government works are students from the Living Springs Christian school in Hythe. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Tony Isaac, and parent helpers Mr. Duane Isaac, Mrs. Geraldine Isaac, Mrs. Mary Jo Isaac, Mr. Kelly Isaac, Mrs. Christa Isaac, Mr. Lowell Wohlgemuth, and Mrs. Laureen Wohlgemuth. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two constituents of Calgary-Nose Hill, John and Jeanne Barclay. They're also joined by Jeanne's sister, Brenda Etherington, and by John and Jeanne's daughter, Jennifer Redondo, who's also a resident of Calgary-Nose Hill, and their son Rob Barclay from Calgary. Today they were here in the Legislature to present a set of books, *The War Illustrated*, to our Legislature Library in memory of Mrs. Hilda Buckett and Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Audrey Etherington. All of my guests are seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms. Woo-Paw:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Bill Ryans, a constituent of Calgary-Mackay and veteran of the Canadian air force. He enlisted in 1943 as a radio operator. Mr. Ryans played a key role in the donation of *The War Illustrated* 10-volume collection to the Legislature Library earlier today. Mr. Ryans is seated in your gallery. I would ask Mr. Ryans to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and Enterprise.

**Ms. Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a distinct pleasure today to introduce two separate groups. One, from Calgary, is wives and

life partners of members of the World Presidents' Organization. This group is called the Bella Forum Group. They are here today with their co-ordinator, Sandy Kellam. Dr. Ruth Taylor, Beverly Berkhold, Carole Brawn, Shirley Glen, Dolores Killick, Elizabeth Yuill, Ann Sparks, and Midge Travis are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The second group live both in my constituency and in the constituency of my hon. friend from Strathcona. They are library board members, and among them are Muriel Abdurahman, chair of the Strathcona County Library Board and former MLA in this Assembly; Ernie Jurkat, vice-chair of the Strathcona County Library Board; Roxy Shulha-McKay, Strathcona library board member along with library board members and directors Colin Vann; Judy Schultz, famous for her writing; and Sharon Siga. Jason Gariepy, from Strathcona county council, is also a member of the board along with Joan MacDonald, a board member for the past four years and trustee for area 7. They would like to thank the MLA for Lac La Biche-St. Paul and the MLA Committee on the Future of Public Library Service for the work they've done for libraries.

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

1:40

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is Crime Prevention Week. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three Albertans seated in the public gallery who are making their neighbourhoods and communities safer by taking ownership and responsibility for crime prevention. They are among six recipients of this year's Solicitor General and Public Security crime prevention awards. With us today is Lori Andrew, who is a chairperson of the McMahon Business Association of Calgary, which works with the Calgary Police Service and the community to deal with crime in Calgary's Motel Village area. Also with us is Chris Hayduk, an Edmonton police officer who started a program that helps prevent crime by encouraging people to meet their neighbours and participate in community activities. Also, we have Maria Orydzuk, a producer with CTV who has raised awareness about crime prevention and other social issues. I would also like to recognize three other award recipients who are not able to be here today: Clarence Nelson of the Beaumont citizens on patrol and constables Allan Devolin and Garret Swihart, both Calgary police members who work with youth involved with gang activity or at risk of becoming involved in gang activity. Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would ask Lori, Chris, and Maria to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it's also my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two very important people from my constituency office in Stony Plain: Lorna Wolodko, my constituency manager; and Mychele Freund, our STEP student this year. They both do outstanding work appreciated by the constituents as well as myself. With your permission I would ask Lorna and Mychele to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater.

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you two very special individuals from Alberta's Association of Agricultural Societies: Tim Carson, the president for Alberta; and Lisa Hardy, the executive director. They're in town today talking to many individuals about some great

strategies they have for strengthening economies in rural Alberta. I just want to thank them and commend them for their efforts and all the efforts of the ag societies across the province. I'd ask Tim and Lisa to please rise so that we can give the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly our Quebec-Alberta student employment exchange student, Julie Chartrand. Julie is part of a program with 37 students who are sponsored by Alberta Employment and Immigration. Thank you for that. We're looking forward to her working as a research analyst with the Alberta Liberal caucus through until August. Julie lives in Montreal, and she has her bachelor of international economy from the University of Montreal and her master's degree in international business from HEC Montréal. Julie is standing, so please join me in giving her a warm welcome to the Alberta Legislature.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all hon. members of this Assembly four special guests this afternoon. Today, of course, is International Nursing Day, and I'm honoured to have these individuals with us from the United Nurses of Alberta. As front-line workers the nurses here today are concerned about the changes they see being made to our health care system and fear a return to the brutal and punishing cuts made in the early 1990s. Our guests are in the public gallery, and I would now ask each of our guests to rise as I introduce them. The first is Marg Hayne, president of the UNA local 33 for nine years. She has worked at the Royal Alexandra hospital for over 31 years. Our second guest is Deb Adams-Druar, president of the UNA local 196, and she has been a registered nurse for over 12 years. A third guest is Cari Noelck, treasurer of United Nurses Association local 33, and she has been an RN for 13 years and an operating room nurse for 10 of those 13 years. Also with them is Collette Mattson, vice-president of the UNA local 33. Collette has been a nurse for 28 years at the Royal Alexandra hospital, 26 of those years in labour and delivery. I see that they've already risen. Please give them a warm and traditional welcome to our Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. National Nursing Week is a time to recognize the incredible commitment and caring of our nearly 25,000 registered nurses in Alberta's health care system. Today I'm very pleased to rise and introduce three guests from the United Nurses of Alberta. They are Heather Smith, president of the United Nurses of Alberta; Bev Dick, first vice-president; and Jane Sustrik, second vice-president. Nurses are the single largest group of health care professionals and are responsible for much of the direct care of people who really need it in our health care system. Nurses are also some of the strongest advocates for our public health care system, which is universal and serves all Albertans. We're very pleased today to introduce these leaders in our nursing community. I would now ask that my guests rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to introduce Ray White as my guest in the Assembly. Ray represents approximately 600 health care aides and support workers through the United Steelworkers and six long-term care facilities in Alberta. Ray and the workers that he represents are concerned that the government is denying those who are in long-term care their dignity. Over the last number of months employees have been documenting care issues arising from short-staffing. I applaud my guest's efforts to bring to the attention of all Albertans the need to have a staff-to-resident ratio in order to care for Alberta's seniors. I would now ask that my guest, Ray White, rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Well, it's also my pleasure to introduce to you the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, who's celebrating an anniversary today, the anniversary of her arrival into this world just a few years ago.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Chair of Committees.

#### Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada became a nation in 1867. At that time the majority of goods were traded across Canada from east and west. This was also the case in the United States. Trade in Canada and North America is no longer east and west; it's north and south. The United States is our largest market and customer. The partners of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region recognize this and are an example of how we can work together on both sides of the border. We must develop trade corridors that transcend boundaries and work with other member jurisdictions to find our common interests and increase trade.

Alberta's trade is not limited to the western states but, rather, to the central and southern states as well as Mexico. The cargo traffic also uses United States highway systems other than the Canamex. Mr. Speaker, the Ports-to-Plains trade corridor connects the states of North and South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas, and even Mexico. Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and Mexico are some of Alberta's top customer states. That's why I'm so pleased to know that Alberta has recognized the importance of this partnership and has joined the Ports-to-Plains coalition. Regional economic development alliances along the east side of Alberta may look to partner with this coalition as well and could be Ports-to-Plains north.

There will be economic growth potential for all of Alberta, including Port Alberta, which will have the Edmonton area acting as a hub for trade through the western seaport of Prince Rupert and on to the United States. The most pivotal in all of this is an additional 24-hour commercial port of entry for Alberta at Wild Horse, in the southeast corner of our province.

Mr. Speaker, a trade corridor which has a defined customer and seller base in three countries in North America is truly a continental trade corridor. I look forward to all the possibilities as we embark on this initiative, things like eliminating or amending trade barriers in agriculture, forestry, and our oil industry. The understanding of these member jurisdictions has been very positive as we together approach Ottawa and Washington for recognition and consideration of our positions regarding the aforementioned industries.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

#### Oil Sands Royalties

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The only public source of detailed information on royalties comes from corporate filings. I want to read a quote to the Premier from the latest filing from Canadian Oil Sands Trust, just out in the last few days. That's the largest shareholder in Syncrude. "In the first quarter of 2009, Crown royalties decreased to \$4 million, or \$0.48 per barrel, from \$131 million, or \$14.57 per barrel, in the comparable 2008 quarter." Won't the Premier admit that a royalty of 48 cents a barrel is a giveaway?

1:50

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of the section or what he's quoting from, but we'll have a look at it and respond to that particular quote later.

I can tell you that the new royalty regime that's in place shares risk and also reward. As prices go up, the Alberta citizens, that own the resource, will get a higher royalty rate. As prices decrease, which they have significantly, below the \$45 a barrel mark, producers have seen a break in the size of their royalty.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks. Well, we all know the prices of oil and bitumen have dropped. The same report shows that in the first quarter of this year Syncrude's selling price was down 45 per cent from the same quarter last year, but their royalty dropped 95 per cent. These days the government is virtually giving away the oil sands. How does the Premier justify giving Syncrude a 95 per cent royalty cut?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the new royalty rate, as I said earlier, reflects the change in policy: the higher the price the greater the return; the lower the price the less royalty paid to Albertans by all conventional oil and gas and also oil sands producers.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. The people of Alberta should think about this: a citizen of Alberta earns more from returning two empty pop bottles than this government gets from an entire barrel of bitumen in royalties. Can the Premier tell us of anywhere in the world where oil companies pay a lower royalty than Alberta?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** There's something that needs to be made very clear. One of the commitments the Premier made and we made as a government was to keep as many Albertans working as we could. It is just unbelievable that the people over there can stand up and talk about how we have to spend money, we have to get people working, and when we keep people working, with a royalty that reflects the risk and reward, now they don't understand that. They want to shut the oil companies down, too, until oil prices go up and we can get a bigger share. So send everybody home and return their empty bottles. That's what he's worried about?

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, for years under the former Premier the government set a target percentage for royalty collection. Under this Premier those targets were eliminated. More than a year ago the Minister of Energy said they'd be setting targets in a few weeks. Well, we're still waiting. To the Premier: is this why his government failed so badly to set royalty targets, because they don't want people to know we're getting less than 50 cents a barrel?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I recall the day we announced the new royalty framework in Calgary. The hon. member, who was, I believe, the leader of the party at that time, now relegated to the third role, scampered out the back end and down the street with the media chasing him because he would not take a position. Why not take a position then? If you thought the royalty rate was too low . . .

**Dr. Taft:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Stelmach:** . . . stand in front of the people and state your position. But sitting on the fence: you know what it does.

**Dr. Taft:** Clearly, the Premier is getting pretty uncomfortable here, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the whole government is getting twitchy. They don't like to hear about this, do they? This government keeps its own backbenchers in the dark. Time and again we have to turn to corporate filings to get basic information on government royalties. To the Premier: why won't this government disclose royalty information to citizens in the same way corporations disclose to shareholders?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's clarify an issue here that's in front of us and is absolutely being misrepresented to the people of the province of Alberta. First of all, this member is speaking about a Crown agreement, a Crown agreement, by the way, that we all agreed we would not break. They weren't in favour of breaking any Crown agreements. We renegotiated the Crown agreements. The essence of the royalty paid now under Crown agreements with respect to integrated players is revenue minus costs. Revenues are very low; costs still remain very high. There is a narrow margin, and that's what we're collecting royalty on. It's a snapshot that will correct itself in the short term.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's remember that Syncrude was built with enormous assistance from the people of Alberta, ranging from huge direct investment and hundreds of millions of dollars in research funds to massive tax and royalty writeoffs. Most of Syncrude's capital was invested years ago and decades ago and long since deducted from taxes in royalties. To the Premier: is this what the Premier meant, 48 cents a barrel, when he spoke of getting a fair share for Albertans?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. minister explained, the current situation, the world oil prices, very, very high costs of operation – you know, again, I know he's going to stand up on another point of order, but that is the group that wanted to shut down the oil sands completely, shut her down.

**Dr. Taft:** Point of order.

**Mr. Stelmach:** See? I don't even have a crystal ball. It must be very uncomfortable on that side.

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

### Definition of Human Sexuality

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The *Oxford* dictionary has several definitions of sexuality, one of which being the quality of being sexual or possessing sex and another being the appearance distinctive of sex. Any living organism can fit into these definitions, making the teaching of biology without referring to sexuality quite a difficult prospect. To the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit: what definition of sexuality is the government using to guide its policy development?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if that's the best that they've got, then we'll go with that. The definition that we rely on is one that everybody would rely on, and the teachers who have common sense and those school boards that have common sense and have done such a great job in teaching our children know what the difference is. They know when they've broached that line. We don't have to define it. Human sexuality is what we've referred to. If we had to make that more explicit to them, we could do that, but that's what we're talking about. We're talking about sexual education.

**Ms Blakeman:** Gee, if it was so easy, why couldn't they do it?

Back to the same minister: what information has been chosen by the government to guide their decision on using the term "sexuality"?

**Mr. Blackett:** Common sense. Parents ask you to have common sense and respect their right to have an influence on their children's education. That's what it is. So we took three simple areas: sexuality, sexual orientation, and I forget the other one right now, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Then we'll move on.

The hon. member.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll try the Minister of Education, then. As the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit has stated, what is considered religious – that would be the part you couldn't remember – is determined through the curriculum. Can the minister explain how the curriculum will determine what is considered sexuality?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, I think, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit very clearly explained – and I think anybody who deals with this understands – in the mandated policy that we have now, it clearly talks about letting parents know when you're teaching sexuality. What that refers to, of course, is sex education. Now, we're not really worried about the sex education of frogs or of buffalo. What we're really talking about is human sexuality, and anybody who's involved in the process of education knows that and understands that. Notices are sent home to parents when children are taught in the grades 7, 8, and 9 health curriculum or in the CALM curriculum in high school about human sexuality.

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

### H1N1 Influenza Virus in Pig Herd

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Arnold Van Ginkel, the hog farmer whose herd was infected with the H1N1 virus, has done everything right. When his pigs began showing symptoms of illness, he contacted his veterinarian. His vet called the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and the herd was quarantined. Now nobody will

return his call. Mr. Van Ginkel and his family are facing imminent financial ruin because the government cannot decide what to do. My question is to the Premier. Why won't the Premier commit to providing compensation for the Van Ginkels, who face losing their farm because they did the right thing?

2:00

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the member is totally wrong in his statement, saying that nobody returned his calls. That's another example of misinformation, just outright misinformation. In fact, as we speak, there are federal government officials and provincial officials on the farm working with the farmer and also looking at the whole layout of the farming operation. We don't know if this is farrow to finish or if it's just the finishing barn. We've dealt with the overcrowding. In a farrow to finish operation or finishing operation you have so many hogs fed to market, you know, roughly 240 pounds. They've got to go to market. They couldn't go to market, so we of course bought those culled hogs. We destroyed them, made sure they weren't part of the food chain.

To say that calls were not returned is totally wrong.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps it's misinformation like when I said that the Premier said that evolution might be optional under Bill 44. Maybe that's the kind of misinformation it is.

The Van Ginkels are only the first of many farmers that are about to face financial ruin because this government has failed to manage the crisis. Why won't the Premier stand up for Alberta's hog farmers and put a plan in place to ensure that they can get through the current crisis without losing their farms?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I took part in a conference call with all of the provinces and territories represented. We took the initiative as the province of Alberta to get our colleagues together and discuss a plan, working with the federal government, working with our WTO ambassadors, and working with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to make sure that we get the correct information out. It makes it much more difficult when a member in this House gets up and gives misinformation about a very, very important issue. This is the livelihood of hundreds of Alberta pork producers.

**Mr. Mason:** That's exactly my point, Mr. Speaker. What pork producers really need is a policy in place to deal with urgent issues as they arise. Officials from Alberta Pork told us that this government had no clear plan of action when emergencies that threaten an entire industry arise. To the Premier: why has this government allowed H1N1 to escalate into a crisis that threatens hundreds of Alberta's farm families?

**Mr. Stelmach:** I hope all Albertans heard that very clearly. That's just an example of misinformation, fearmongering. That's the kind of issue we're working against right in this Assembly. Just to gain a few votes. Well, he's going to lose a heck of a lot of votes because nobody out there in rural Alberta is going to support this kind of misinformation, again putting more pressure on a marketplace that's already rejecting pork sales based on lack of scientific evidence.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

#### H1N1 Influenza Virus in Humans

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By now most people know that the northern Alberta woman who died recently and tested positive for the H1N1 influenza virus was from my constituency.

Her family and friends have been concerned about this information. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: could he please illuminate to my constituents if his department has determined the cause of death of this very important lady?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, last week there was extensive coverage of the unfortunate situation involving the member's constituent. At that time the chief medical officer of health did indicate that the deceased had tested positive for the H1N1 virus. However, there's no further information I can add at this time. Further tests are continuing.

**Ms Calahasen:** Then if there is no further information, can the minister please tell this Assembly of the go-forward plans of any pandemic operations that are going to occur?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we're fortunate in this province and, I think, world-wide that this particular influenza . . . [interjection] You know, when I went to school, we moved those from the back of the classroom up to the front, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Liepert:** We are gearing down because, clearly, on a daily basis the numbers of those who are testing positive have continued to decline. The operations centre will start to wind down this week. Fortunately, this has been a very mild case of the influenza.

**Ms Calahasen:** Mr. Speaker, I know my constituents are really concerned. As you know, anything that happens in our community is very important. There's been criticism in the media about the lack of information provided to the public by the chief medical officer of health. To the Minister of Health and Wellness again: what is the chief medical officer of health doing to properly inform the public about H1N1 and limit the spread of this virus?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, I think it was unfortunate last week – I know a couple of members of this Assembly were publicly stating that somehow the chief medical officer of health was suppressing information. That is just so much falsehood. In fact, I went today to the opposition's favourite research body, the *Edmonton Journal*, and they have a poll on the *Journal* website where the question was: "What do you think of the media's coverage of the swine-flu outbreak?" Their words, not mine. Mr. Speaker, 2.87 per cent of those polled said it was insufficient; 6.17 per cent said it was responsible; 9.18 per cent said it was adequate; 10.19 per cent said, "Ask me when it's over"; and 71.5 per cent said it was panic inducing.

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

#### Advocate for Seniors

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many seniors are continuing to contact me to say that they still feel that they do not have an appropriate avenue to register their very real concerns. One solution for Alberta seniors would be to establish an independent seniors' advocate. My question is to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Can the minister tell me whether there are any plans to create an independent seniors' advocate?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish that I could stand here today and say that seniors in Alberta do not suffer from abuse, but I would just be dreaming. They do. We have four avenues of services that are available to seniors to help them with any complaints that they might have. First of all, if it was criminal in nature, the police should be notified right away. We have a division of Seniors and Community Supports that is an investigative unit called the Protection of Persons in Care Act. We have a bill on the floor right now concerning that. We also have the ministry and our seniors' information line. We have the Seniors Advisory Council as well.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. I agree that there are many things out there, but the seniors still really sincerely believe that they need a go-to person that really has specific understanding and knowledge of the issues that they face. Is the minister planning at this time or are there any conversations about creating this office?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, I strongly feel that seniors are well represented through my ministry. We have a seniors' information line. We have the Protection of Persons in Care Act. We also have an independent Alberta Ombudsman, who will investigate immediately. At this time of fiscal constraint I think it would be irresponsible to duplicate these services.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. Unfortunately, that's not how the seniors feel. They feel that if Alberta has a Child and Youth Advocate, seniors want the same rights to advocacy as the children have. How can we justify not having one for them?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, I do know that our seniors have a concern in this area because there is abuse that happens. We all have a responsibility to report abuse. The reporting of abuse can be done directly to my ministry. We have a separate arm that will investigate these complaints. We also have the Alberta Ombudsman, who will investigate these complaints. I feel that we have a sufficient number of services to help seniors who may be suffering from abuse.

#### Deerfoot Trail Traffic Congestion

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, every day Calgary motorists are fighting increased traffic congestion on the Deerfoot Trail, which is not only highway 2 but the main north-south artery for traffic within the city of Calgary. Deerfoot Trail is presently carrying traffic far beyond its designed capacity, and some days, even outside rush hour, traffic is reduced to a crawl. My questions are for the Minister of Transportation. Will the minister take some action to reduce the congestion on Deerfoot Trail?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct in that the Deerfoot operates way beyond the designed capacity in a number of locations. We recognize that some portions of Deerfoot have far more vehicles than the road was designed to handle. Deerfoot was designed to handle about a hundred thousand cars a day, and in a lot of areas it's handling 160,000 cars a day. The fact that the road still operates that far above design capacity is a testament to how well that road actually was built and designed. The Alberta government has invested \$200 million and . . .

2:10

**The Speaker:** Is that right?

The hon. member.

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, it's often difficult for residents of Beddington Heights in my constituency to merge onto Beddington Trail and also to access the Beddington Heights community from northbound and southbound Deerfoot Trail. What can be done to improve that situation and give greater access for residents of Beddington Heights?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to tell this hon. member that something is being done to improve the access in that area. We are looking at adding a lane later this year to southbound Deerfoot Trail between Beddington Trail and 64th Avenue. With the help of my hon. colleague from the Treasury Board we could possibly even use some building Canada funds, and that would get the project started later this year and completed sometime in 2010.

**Dr. Brown:** Well, that's very good news for the residents of Calgary-Nose Hill. I wonder, in view of the high rate of accidents in that particular location and along the north end of Deerfoot Trail, what measures his department is taking to decrease the rate of accidents and to increase traffic safety in that area.

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, we recently completed a traffic safety review on Deerfoot Trail. We're putting the final touches on that report right now, and I assure the member that we will look very closely at the report's recommendations and put whatever measures are practical into place that make some sense. But reducing collisions is a shared responsibility. My department has a responsibility to provide a high-standard roadway, but drivers have a responsibility to drive safely and be courteous to one another. You can't have one without the other.

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

#### Health Services Budget for Nurses

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In April the Alberta government ordered the chief executive officer of Alberta Health Services to cut his budget by over \$500 million. My first question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Will these budget cuts reduce the role of registered nurses in the public health care system here in Alberta?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the member is getting his information, but in the budget for this fiscal year the budget for Alberta Health Services actually increased by \$500 million.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. Again to the same minister: what will the new reduced budget do for the ratio between licensed practical nurses and registered nurses?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, there's one budget, and it has increased by a half a billion dollars from what Alberta Health Services had for operating funds last year. I'm not sure what terminology the member is using, and I don't understand the question, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. MacDonald:** The question is clear. This government has told



the chief executive officer of Alberta Health to cut the budget by half a billion dollars, or \$500 million. Now, again, how will the planning work when you're trying to expand the scope of practice for some health care professionals and reduce the scope of practice for other ones? How exactly is this going to work?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, there's a vote on the Appropriation Act, I think, later today or this week. Maybe the member should read it before he votes on it because he will see clearly that the funding for Alberta Health Services is increasing by \$550 million for operating over last year.

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

### Carbon Emissions from Coal

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal Minister of the Environment has recently been in the media talking about the possibility of decommissioning traditional coal-fired electrical generating plants as part of the federal climate change plan. As we all know, Alberta relies heavily on these plants to produce our electricity. To the Minister of Environment: with, first, the Obama administration and now, it appears, the federal government moving in new directions related to climate change policy, what effect will this have on Alberta's policy?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, I'm sure, Alberta already has a mandatory emission reduction program that's backed by law. Now, that being said, I think it's important that we understand, and whatever these discussions lead to, recognize that in Alberta it's the application of technology that is the key to success for us to be able to reduce our emissions. The other thing that's very key to us is that we don't want to leave stranded assets in place. We don't want to arbitrarily cut off the life of a plant before its economic life has expired.

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

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the Minister of Energy. Obviously, the federal policy being discussed could have an impact on our communities where the coal industry is operating, including those in my constituency, but it could also impact electricity consumers in Alberta. Can he advise what impact such a policy would have on Alberta's electricity market?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, a very important issue for Albertans. Sixty per cent of Alberta's electricity, of course, currently comes from coal-fired generators. We're working in concert with the federal government to try to understand the details of the program that they will come forward with. We want to be sure that any policy that does come forward from the federal government doesn't penalize this province and cause an issue where there are undue costs passed on to consumers. Alberta's newest coal-fired plants use some of the best technology in the world and, in fact, have substantially lower emissions than the older coal plants that they're speaking about.

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

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Energy again. The federal Minister of the Environment referred to the potential application of carbon capture and storage in addressing emissions from coal-fired electricity plants. Is this something being considered under the province's carbon capture and storage program?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in a word, yes. We do have enormous coal reserves in the province of Alberta, and they're relatively economic. We have other sources as well that we're working with: wind, solar, biomass. But we have not given up on coal just yet. We think that by exploring carbon capture and storage, both in postcombustion and by gasifying coal, we can capture emissions that would normally be attributable to coal plants and meet or expand our economic and environmental goals by doing so.

### Fundraising Dinner Sales Committee

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, the sales committee list for the Premier's dinner in Edmonton includes a number of Tory glitterati, many of whom are on government agencies, boards, and commissions, earning hefty salaries over \$100,000. Last week the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development dodged some very simple questions, which I'd like to pose again today because Albertans deserve accountability. What conflict-of-interest provisions are in place for members of agencies, boards, and commissions such as the Surface Rights Board regarding political fundraising for a governing political party?

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, if that falls in your area of competency, go ahead.

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recycling questions from last week. Things must be getting bad over there.

As I said last week, all of these appointments are screened for competency first, but there is an ethics check. Any possible conflicts of interest must be identified prior to appointment, and as in the public service, if anything comes before one of these boards and there is a conflict of interest, the member has to excuse himself.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess my follow-up question is: do the conflict-of-interest guidelines as currently drafted allow for members who sit on the Surface Rights Board to then fund raise for the governing political party?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, the party opposite obviously isn't very successful at fundraising or winning elections. There is quite a difference between buying a ticket to attend a fundraising event and going out and doing active fundraising. I'll remind the hon. member that there's this thing called freedom of association. Just because you're active in the government, you don't have to resign from political life.

**Mr. Hehr:** I absolutely love the freedom of association and, I think, so do most Canadians. But people on the sales committee for the Edmonton Premier's dinner also sit on a board, the Surface Rights Board. If they're involved in sitting on the board and selling tickets for the Premier's dinner, do you guys see a conflict of interest here at all?

2:20

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat myself again. If a specific conflict of interest comes up between a matter that's before the board and a member of the board, the member is obliged to identify that and excuse himself.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

### Staffing of Long-term Care Centres

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In January the United Steelworkers and the NDP caucus highlighted nearly 300 worker reports showing that seniors are receiving substandard treatment in long-term care because of chronic understaffing. Seniors, who've worked hard their whole lives for the privileges that we enjoy today, deserve better than to be treated like this. Since the session began, our caucus has been tabling these reports, and there are more coming in. To the minister of health: will the health minister commit today to legislating an appropriate staff-to-patient ratio to ensure that Alberta's seniors are treated with the dignity they deserve?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we are working with the operators of long-term care facilities in this province to ensure that the care that our long-term residents receive is of a standard that would be expected in this province. There have been some issues raised over the years. They've been dealt with and continue to be dealt with if they're raised. We need to ensure that the residents of our long-term care facilities receive, as I say, the care that they expect to have.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the reports in question have been provided to the minister, and they document numerous degrading circumstances to which seniors have been exposed. They're not fed on time, they're not bathed regularly, dressing changes are delayed, and they've been left untoileted for hours on end. This is happening because facilities aren't putting enough workers on shift to deal with the workload. Back to the minister: why does the minister refuse to take action to ensure that long-term care centres can and must ensure adequate staffing to treat seniors with the care, respect, and dignity they deserve?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is making some allegations that I'm not going to concur with. There are instances where staffing shortages have been a challenge, I guess is the best way I can put it, with our long-term care operators. As this member would recognize, workforce challenges in health care have been quite evident for some time. We have a workforce strategy to try to meet some of these issues, and we'll continue to do so.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was an important announcement made today that really affects the constituency of Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm sorry. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona still has one additional question.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. It seems I have to work a little harder for this one today.

Instead of coming up with new and creative ways to allow private operators to charge more fees for fewer services, why not focus on

your obligation to treat seniors with the dignity they deserve in the settings they require? When it comes to long-term care, the solution is easy: more beds and legislate an adequate staff-to-patient ratio in care centres. To the minister of health again: chronic understaffing is hurting seniors, so why won't he do what needs to be done and regulate effective minimum staffing levels?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, the member, I think, has just showed her lack of knowledge about this particular issue. There are no fees for services when it comes to health care. In long-term care Alberta Health and Wellness provides the care. There are no fees for health care. If the member wants to ask the minister of seniors about accommodation rates, there are fees for accommodation rates. Ask about accommodation rates. But there are no fees for health care.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

### Timber Harvesting and Reforestation Certification

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta announced today that the province's timber harvesting and reforestation monitoring program has been certified as meeting world-class quality management standards, which is very important to my constituency. My questions are all for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. This accomplishment is huge. We should be shooting off the fireworks. Where are the reports on this from the Auditor General? Where are the reports from your ministry? Why aren't we shooting off the fireworks?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by reminding the hon. member that setting off fireworks in the forest during the fire season requires a permit.

This was a very significant announcement today, recognition from the international standards organization that our forest monitoring system meets international standards. It wasn't in the Auditor General's report because while the Auditor General was checking this, our application was under consideration. The Auditor General, however, did reference it and noted, "We believe this quality control system will bring the necessary rigour to make monitoring for compliance effective when fully implemented." That quality control system is now in place.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, that's fine, Mr. Speaker, but when I go home this weekend, I guess our companies are going to ask me what the ISO certification will do to make better timber harvesting and reforestation monitoring in this province. To the minister: what can I say to them?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne can report that the ISO certification means that our program does meet international standards. It will assure Albertans that their forest resources remain healthy and sustainable, that they are monitored, mandatory replanting at two years, checked again at eight and again at 14 years to make sure that they're growing, 3,500 inspections a year. We've said for a long time that our monitoring of harvesting and replanting is among the best in the world. With this certification we can now prove it.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, that's fine, and I understand that the ISO certification will do that. What other steps possibly could be taken within your ministry to strengthen the reforestation monitoring and help communities like Whitecourt, that are forest-dependent, remain sustainable?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ISO standard includes a commitment to continuous improvement. In fact, our program framework does include both internal and external audit processes. This system of self-checks, accountability, and continual improvement ensures that the program will get better with time. No other province in Canada has this ISO certification. Once again Alberta leads the way in Canada.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

#### Access to Medical Services

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a few minutes I will table a letter from a constituent of mine to the minister of health providing a first-person account of the kind of hell that the sick all too routinely experience these days when they have to go to the hospital in Calgary. John Witwicki's medical emergency was a rapid heartbeat, supraventricular tachycardia. For that, he spent seven and a half hours in a hallway under the care of three EMS staff, 12 hours in emergency waiting to be admitted, and four days in a ward waiting for tests. To the minister. John is aware of your long-term plans. He and I both want to know what you're going to do right now to solve the problems you have right now.

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what we're going to do is exactly what we've been doing for the last year, and that is to put in place a governance model that is going to run this system more efficiently and more effectively. We've brought in one of the leading CEOs in the world to run the system. If this hon. member has a suggestion on how we can turn it around overnight, I'd like to hear it.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I quote from John's letter. "Sitting rooms provided for patient comfort and rehabilitation are off limits because they are occupied with patients and beds. All rooms are in a co-ed mode with eight of us sharing the same toilet facility." I ask the minister: does he find this situation tolerable? Would he subject his wife to that?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I've said from day one that we want to work to improve access to the health care system because it is not adequate. I've also suggested to the hon. member here that if he has a suggestion on how we can turn this around overnight, I'd like to hear from him. All I hear from him is criticism. Let's hear some suggestions.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I will ask on John's behalf: "How much longer do the citizens of Calgary have to tolerate these conditions?"

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, ask him if this is a spending day or a savings day. One of the things that we could do is commit here today to spend a whole bunch more money, as I've tried to point out to the member to his right, who still can't figure out \$500 million more versus \$500 million less. We have increased the operating budget this year for Alberta Health Services by some 7.7 per cent. I've met with the CEO, and that particular gentleman has said: we

are going to work within that target, and we are going to improve this system. I would suggest that's doing a whole lot more than this individual is, sitting here crying about a situation that we're fixing.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

#### Wind Power Generation

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of locations in my constituency have been identified as possible sites for the siting of wind turbines for electricity generation. This has raised a number of concerns among local residents. My questions are to the Minister of Energy. Who is responsible for the siting and setback provisions of these turbines? Is it the province, or is it the local municipalities?

2:30

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, it's both. The siting relative to wind turbines is under the purview of the Alberta Utilities Commission, and they do follow some quite strict guidelines related to noise control around the sitings. The AUC's rules on noise control include some requirements related to turbine sitings. A facility may not produce more than 50 decibels of noise during the day at any nearby residence which is one and one-half kilometres or closer and no more than 40 decibels at night. The setbacks from these eloquent structures . . .

**The Speaker:** We'll probably get it the next time.

**Mr. Marz:** To the same minister: could the minister explain what regulations are governing the setback distance from neighbouring residences and from neighbouring property lines?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the situation is that they will vary according to municipalities. There's a convention in the wind powered generation industry that suggests that any residences should be at a distance away from a turbine of at least four times the height of the structure. As an example, an 80 metre turbine structure would be required to be sited 320 metres away from the nearest residence. Some municipal bylaws support this convention, and Alberta Transportation, interestingly enough, also has a role to play. They require that turbines be at least 300 metres from the nearest road.

**Mr. Marz:** To the same minister again, Mr. Speaker: has the minister's department conducted any studies as to any potential health risks? If not, have they accessed any studies done in other jurisdictions, and what are the results of those studies?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, at this point in time we have limited information relative to wind turbines and their effect or possible effect on health. All types of generation, including those that are categorized as clean and renewable, have both pros and cons, and we do work in the system to be sure that none of these things are detrimental to health. The AUC takes social, environmental, and economic factors into consideration when these facilities are in fact applied for and sited.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### Condominium Property Act Consultation

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government claims that they are serious about protecting the rights of condo owners, but all

they do is claim ignorance and monitor a problem that was known and written about by the Calgary Home Builders' Association three years ago. To the Minister of Service Alberta: what notification has the minister been giving to condo owners since first learning of this problem?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated last week, I had an excellent meeting with the Alberta Real Estate Association to begin the dialogue about the Condominium Property Act. This is really important moving forward and hearing from owners. We hear on a regular basis on our consumer line about situations that Albertans are experiencing. Working with the Department of Municipal Affairs and some of the other departments, we know that we can look at that and solve some problems.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think those are excellent meetings. They won't cut it. This government should be protecting consumers, but it is failing to do that. To the minister again: why is there no consumer alert on Service Alberta's website that would help protect condo buyers?

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Condominium Property Act the major thing is that there are rules within the act about solving disputes. There's also mediation included in this legislation to make it easier and less costly for owners to get these kinds of disputes resolved. Most certainly, there is information for owners to start the process. When owners take the step and decide to pursue the other course of action, legal action, well, that's something that becomes their choice as well.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the past weeks of monitoring leaky condos, who has the minister consulted during this time?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has spoken on that matter as well with respect to leaky condos. With the Condominium Property Act, again, this particular legislation deals with condominiums, how they run their boards and all those matters. That does not preclude information, working with the minister to make sure that we look at all angles to protect consumers and help them make the best choices.

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

#### **Knowledge Infrastructure Program Funding**

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Albertans learned through this House about a shared postsecondary infrastructure project funding agreement between the federal government and our provincial government. Albertans continue to tell me that every single one of our postsecondary institutions is important and that they would be upset if this funding went to only select and certain institutions. My first question is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. Can the Minister tell us exactly how the

money will be distributed amongst Alberta's universities and colleges?

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

**Mr. Horner:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The shared funding agreement of almost \$350 million that was announced last week, \$187 million of which was provincial funding, supports high-priority capital maintenance and renewal projects throughout the province. We have a very eloquent structure of a knowledge-based economy and a framework that we're going to be putting forward in front of this House right now. In order to make that happen, we have to ensure that the deferred maintenance across the system is taken care of. Under the federal-provincial program approximately 70 per cent went to universities, 30 per cent went to the colleges. They were selected based on talking to the individual institutions and Campus Alberta.

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. I often hear from constituents about the need for more student spaces at new facilities, so I hope the minister can please explain why the funding is focused on deferred maintenance rather than on the construction of new institutions.

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of years we've taken a very strategic approach to the construction of new facilities and new spaces in the province. Colleagues may recall discussions last year in this Legislature around the Campus Alberta framework, where we talked about individual access plans from each institution and a projection of the number of spaces that we're going to need and those that we're going to build. But as important to that is ensuring that the facilities that we have today can fill the needs for tomorrow and that the students of today can have an adequate facility to work in and learn in.

**Mr. Rodney:** My final question is to the same minister. I've heard the claim that the funding is to reach across Alberta, so to speak. Can the minister please explain how the funding will be distributed throughout the different regions across the province?

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I guess one of the things that we could look at is how we develop our strategic priorities around the capital that we put into the postsecondary system in the province. That's starts with, as I said, the individual access plans for each of the institutions, coupled with a projection working with other departments within the government, so Health and Wellness, Employment and Immigration. We got together and decided the workforce strategies of those departments, then projected out the number of jobs in those various categories that we might need, the vocations that we might be looking at, the apprenticeship training that we might be looking at. We made a determination then in the various locations or campuses around the province, all 28 of them, and said: "Where do we need those spaces? Where do we need deferred maintenance projects to be undertaken? Where do we need value-added into those institutions?" That's how we made those determinations.

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

### School Construction and Renovation

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural Alberta's aging schools desperately need upgrading, and there's very limited funding for modernization projects. Some rural school boards have simply resubmitted last year's three-year capital plan because none of their requests were approved. Requests this year for modernization projects total \$1.5 billion, yet there's no new funding. To the Minister of Education: given that construction costs have decreased due to the economic slowdown, why is the minister not taking this opportunity to invest in rural schools?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, primarily, Mr. Speaker, because I didn't get any extra money in my budget.

**Mr. Chase:** Considering that the Wild Rose school board only requested one capital project last year because their request did not align with the province's building plan, how many capital projects are deflected even before the approval process begins, due to, and I quote, differing principles?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, I wouldn't have any idea of what the reference to differing principles is, but I can tell the hon. member that we have in excess of 60 school boards in the province, not to mention the charter school boards. I can tell you that each of those school boards files on an annual basis a capital plan which identifies their top priority with respect to new construction and their top priority with respect to modernization, and deferred maintenance comes after that. So new, primary maintenance, and deferred maintenance issues. Some of them have, it will surprise the hon. member to know, more than one new project or renewal project and certainly many deferred maintenance projects. It would not surprise him to know that there are not 66 new projects every year, nor are there 66 renewal projects every year, so obviously some of those projects are going to go on to the next year's. It's not surprising, then, that they would come back in next year's plan.

2:40

**Mr. Chase:** Well, the devil is in the details, and I guess that rather than 66 maybe the answer is with 666.

Given that a 1949 written-off section of Iron Ridge elementary was brought back into service to meet the province's class size initiative, what is the minister doing to ensure that the province's principles – they're your principles – align with the capital pressures school boards face?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we work very diligently with school boards across the province to make sure that those areas that have the most essential needs have those needs dealt with. That's why we're spending approximately \$760 million this year; I think it's closer to \$1.4 billion over the next three years in new and renewed schools across the province. Does that deal with every single issue? No. Does it deal with the critical issues? I believe it does. We work with school boards all the time to make sure they have the places where they need them for their students and that schools are safe places for students to go.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 102 questions and responses today. In 30 seconds from now we will continue the routine.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

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

### Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday, May 8, 2009, I had the pleasure of attending the Life without Limits Gala hosted each year by the Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta. The event featured Josh Blue, the renowned winner of NBC's *Last Comic Standing*. It was a lot of fun and included lots of laughs.

The CPAA is a great organization that collaborates with community agencies and organizations to advocate on behalf of individuals with cerebral palsy and other disabilities. They are a leader in delivering programs and services, educating the public, and providing information on treatments and resources relating to cerebral palsy in Alberta. They have a dedicated staff under the leadership of their executive director, Ms Janice Bushfield, and passionate volunteers and supporters.

Given the strength of the organization, it's easy to see how the May 8 event was so much fun. The success behind the event included the entire CPAA staff, that went above and beyond their normal workload. Also, I'd like to recognize the help of Allergan Botox and Alberta Beverage Container Recycling Corporation for their support of the event. On top of CPAA staff volunteers Brant Hurlburt, Kelly Jennings, and Steve Burak also donated their time and services to make this event truly successful.

I know that in my home city of Calgary the Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta is hosting an open house on May 21 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This will be another excellent opportunity for Albertans to familiarize themselves with the important work the CPAA does, to get a tour of their facilities, meet the staff, and check out their multisensory and music therapy rooms. I've heard there is something for everyone.

The Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta is an organization that does very worthwhile work in our province. I was thrilled to support them by attending their Life without Limits Gala and by rising in the House today to recognize their commitment to Albertans with cerebral palsy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### National Nursing Week

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recognition of many of our guests today and some of my dearest friends and the thousands of nurses across this province it gives me great pleasure to rise today to salute nurses during National Nursing Week, which runs May 11 to 17. Special events are being held throughout our province to honour nurses this week, and May 12 is International Nursing Day. It is celebrated around the world every May 12, the birthdate of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing.

Mr. Speaker, this year's theme for National Nursing Week is Nursing: You Can't Live without It. Let me say definitively that, no, we can't live without nurses. Nurses play a vital role in our health care system and the life of every Albertan. These dedicated health care professionals provide care where and when it is needed. Nurses deliver quality health care each and every day and make the well-being and safety of their patients a top priority. They are a key part of the strong health care delivery system we have in the province of Alberta.

National Nursing Week is an opportunity for us to show our appreciation for the contribution nurses make to health care and our communities. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that I speak for all Albertans when I say thank you to all Alberta's nurses. I encourage everyone to salute the nurses in their communities as we give special recognition to the importance of the nursing profession during National Nursing Week.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Lyn Radford  
Madiha Mueen**

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've often heard it said: volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless but because they're priceless. Last Wednesday Red Deer's four Rotary clubs, the city of Red Deer, and friends of the community acknowledged two exceptional citizens and priceless volunteers at their annual spring gala. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Red Deer citizen of the year, Lyn Radford, and the young citizen of the year, Madiha Mueen.

Ms Radford has been the driving force with a number of projects in Red Deer and is well known for her work on opening the Red Deer gymnastics centre and chairing the Alberta Summer Games in 2006. She also chairs Red Deer's Olympic torch committee, the Red Deer Curling Club capital campaign, and serves on the Red Deer College Board of Governors, to name only a few, and all that while raising four children.

Eighteen-year-old Madiha received the young citizen of the year award for her outstanding volunteer work with the leadership program at Hunting Hills high school, pennies for paws, the Red Deer regional hospital centre, and the list goes on.

Their names will be added to a list of past recipients on the base of the clock tower at the old courthouse in Red Deer. I'm proud to say that Red Deer is known for its spirit of volunteerism, helping others in our community and around the world. Mr. Speaker, these individuals have made their community proud and are inspirational role models for all of us. I would like all the members of this Assembly to join me in recognizing the accomplishments of these two outstanding citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Go Green Eco Expo**

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in my introduction today, Newcap Radio sponsored the first Go Green Eco Expo in Edmonton on April 4. The event was held in the Butterdome, which surprisingly is not in Edmonton-Calder. The main purpose of the expo was to spread awareness about environmental sustainability in Alberta and to promote those businesses that supply sustainable products and services such as organic health and body care products.

Newcap and the organizers of the event also wanted to educate Albertans on minor lifestyle adjustments that they can make to become more environmentally responsible in their everyday lives. Now more than ever our province needs to make the environment and conservation a top priority. Expos like this help bring awareness to the general public in fun and creative ways, like recycled leather flooring. I have to admit that I thought all leather was recycled once it had come off the cow, but I learned that there are other purposes. They had open discussion, presentations, and a number of very interesting points of view. It was \$10 very well spent, Mr. Speaker.

The 43 exhibitors at this expo drew nearly a thousand people, a number that they hope to improve on in next year's expo. The organizers of this exhibition that are here today have received tremendous feedback and support for their cause, and this is only the beginning. If you would like some more information on the Go Green Eco Expo, please visit their website at [www.gogreenecoexpo.com](http://www.gogreenecoexpo.com).

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The visitors, hon. member?

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They had actually been introduced before and had moved over to this side of the galleries, but I'll introduce them again. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly . . .

**Ms Calahasen:** Three beautiful women.

**Mr. Elniski:** . . . three beautiful women. Thank you. I'd like to introduce . . .

**Dr. Sherman:** Three smart women.

**Mr. Elniski:** . . . three smart women. Thank you, sir. I'd like to introduce Colleen Yukes, Ms Elissa Scott, and Mrs. Maureen Tash of the Go Green Eco Expo.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

2:50

**Rosie Templeton**

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a special young Albertan. Last weekend the 52nd annual 4-H selections program was held in Olds. I'm pleased to also acknowledge that my friend and colleague the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills presented to Rosie Templeton of Coaldale, who among 90 of the province's top 4-H members received the province's highest honour, the 2009 Premier's award.

Rosie is a seven-year 4-H veteran and a member of the Ready-made 4-H Beef Club and the South Country Judging Club. Most recently Rosie was named 2009 provincial public-speaking champion and regional judging champion. As the Premier's award winner Rosie's passion for the 4-H program will serve her well as she represents 4-H on a provincial level.

In addition to the Premier's award announcement, 41 senior-aged members were chosen to represent 4-H at major educational programs throughout Canada and the United States during the 2009-2010 year. Fourteen 4-H ambassadors were also selected to promote 4-H and youth involvement in Alberta over the next two years.

The longest running youth organization in our province is 4-H. By following the 4-H motto, Learn to Do by Doing, members take part in activities that meet their interests, increase their knowledge, and develop their life skills. Our government is proud to support this important program for our province's youth.

It might be of note to Rosie and the other recipients that our Premier was also leader of the Andrew 4-H Beef Club, Mr. Speaker, and he was also district president of the 4-H Council.

I wish to acknowledge the youth and adult leaders who support the work of 4-H across Alberta and congratulate each and every one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table today the responses from Service Alberta on the consideration of the main estimates with respect to the budget.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will now table five copies

of the letter from constituent John Witwicki that I referred to in question period.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of 10 reports from long-term care workers indicating specific problems on shifts that were short-staffed. These indicate that the meals were served late, rooms were not properly cleaned, and residents were woken early so that staff could finish their work.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter dated April 10, 2009, from a constituent, Lorian Kennedy. Lorian Kennedy is writing to express anger and disgust at the Conservative government's decision to delist gender reassignment surgery.

Thank you.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk Assistant:** I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Stevens, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, response to a question raised by Mr. Mason, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, on April 14, 2009, in Department of International and Intergovernmental Relations main estimates debate.

**The Speaker:** On a purported point of order, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### Point of Order

#### Allegations against a Member

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in reference to 23(h), which refers to making allegations against another member. There were, in fact, two points of order.

**The Speaker:** Deal with the first one first.

**Dr. Taft:** Okay. One of them, Mr. Speaker: in the exchange with the Premier, the Premier made an allegation which he's repeated a number of times. We've gone through this a couple of times. It's an allegation to the effect that the Official Opposition wanted to shut down the oil sands.

**The Speaker:** I think that's point number two.

**Dr. Taft:** Okay. Sorry. Then the other one, Mr. Speaker, was a description from the Premier of a news conference in Calgary in which he described me as scurrying away, or he used some colourful language like that. The fact of the matter is that we were blocked from access to that news conference. This I remember very vividly. It was at the McDougall Centre. We got in the door, and the security blocked our access. They refused to allow us in even though we identified ourselves. All through that period the news conference was conducted, and it was only at the very end, after it was over, that we were allowed access. Of course, at that point I didn't have the information to respond, so that's why I walked out.

I found the Premier's statements to be false and abusive, and he made allegations and descriptions of me that I think were not only untrue but insulting, and the facts clearly were otherwise. As I say, I was there with staff. We were barred from McDougall Centre for that news conference until the news conference was effectively over.

I would ask just for the honourable thing, which would be for somebody on that side to recognize those facts and withdraw the Premier's statements.

Thanks.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member obviously has a version of events; the Premier has a version of events: two differing versions. But the reality is this. There was a news conference. I think people agree with that. The Official Opposition leader left without making comment. Whether he left without making comment because he didn't have any comment to make, whether he left without making comment because he didn't have any knowledge of the subject, whether he left without making comment because he didn't know what to say is not really the Premier's concern or my concern. The fact of the matter, as he has indicated, is that he left without comment. That actually indicates exactly what the Premier said, and that is that at the time when he could have made comment, he left without making comment. It's a different version of events but no point of order.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity on this point of order.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The access to the McDougall Centre is part of the concern that has been brought up in this point of order. I have written to the Premier expressing concern about similar situations when I also have been denied access to the McDougall Centre, which is the equivalent of the Legislative Assembly and its grounds in Calgary. For a person to be expected to comment on something as important as the royalty issues, you have to be there and present and welcome to be a part of the whole discussion. Expecting someone to make an off-the-cuff comment based on no previous information is not acceptable.

The other part of the unacceptable nature of, basically, the insult that was suggested is that somehow like a shadow in the night the hon. former leader of the Alberta Liberal caucus scurried away like some deer in the headlights. That was not the case. We believe in research; we believe in being informed before we enter into a discussion. We didn't have that opportunity because the Premier through, unfortunately, his minion in the McDougall Centre prevented access, just as has happened with the health discussions at Government House. Until we have an opportunity to fully participate, how can we possibly answer questions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of the Treasury Board on this purported point of order.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, yes. On the point that somehow in here we have to be careful about allegations, many on that side have a right to stand up and be indignant. That hon. member does not. Yesterday he twice talked about the Premier as someone who is passing a bill as a favour to secret donors around his leadership, undisclosed resources, who have shown up on various boards – I'm paraphrasing; the quote is in *Hansard* – and have received millions of dollars in grants, that some have also expected to benefit hand-somely. Those are not only past the point of what honourable should

get to; those make very serious allegations, that I think the Premier showed tremendous calm in ignoring. Then based on whether it's scurry or slurry or sneak or "My reputation has been hurt by an allegation" – you shouldn't throw rocks if you live in a very, very glassy house. Should there be rules about making allegations? I agree. But it should start right there first.

3:00

**The Speaker:** Are there others, or should I bring this matter to a head?

**Dr. Taft:** Well, I just . . .

**The Speaker:** No. We've already had one participation. This is not a debate.

The chair would like to point out *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms* at 494, acceptance of the word of a member.

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted. It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

I would further refer all hon. members to the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 433.

The Speaker ensures that replies adhere to the dictates of order, decorum and parliamentary language. The Speaker, however, is not responsible for the quality or content of replies to questions. In most instances, when a point of order or a question of privilege has been raised in regard to a response to an oral question, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is a disagreement among Members over the facts surrounding the issue. As such, these matters are more a question of debate and do not constitute a breach of the rules or of privilege.

This is not a point of order.

Second application. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

#### **Point of Order Allegations against Members**

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the second issue I also cite 23(h), (i), and in this case as well (j), but particularly (h) and (i). This has to do with statements from the Premier alleging that the opposition wanted to shut down the oil sands or shut down the oil industry totally. Despite the comments of the President of the Treasury Board I actually try to stick to the facts in my questions. As an example, I will gladly back up every statement I made yesterday in my questions with facts. I can table the documents, and I can show the *Gazettes*. I can indicate, you know, where all that information came from.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that we've never said that we should shut down the oil sands or shut down the oil industry. I think that's an allegation and a twisting of the facts that's unjustified and unworthy of this Assembly. The Premier persists in repeating it, and I think that's most regrettable.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is obviously a difference of viewpoint but also not a point of order under the citations given because those citations refer to allegations against a member. As you've said repeatedly, an allegation against a whole caucus does not constitute an allegation against a member. Suggesting that the Alberta Liberal Party didn't have a policy on oil

royalties or suggesting that the effect of whatever position the Alberta Liberal Party took would be to shut down the oil sands is a validly held position given any logical research of the positions that they've held, but it's not an allegation against a member.

You know, over the course of the discussions of royalty review the Liberal opposition has taken many positions, but they've never really had a position that I can discern on royalties. One of the things that they had suggested – for example, when we did come up with the royalty regime, they accused us of trying to tear up the agreements with Suncor and Syncrude. Then shortly after that, a few months after that, the hon. member comes forward and says that we should have known better than to allow Suncor and Syncrude to invoke the bitumen royalty option, which was in the earlier agreement, that somehow we should have torn up the agreement at that stage. I mean, it's not hard to discern when you read some of the material that comes out in question period, some of the material that's shown on their website – did I just admit that I sometimes read their website? I should not have done that. It's not hard to discern that they either don't have a position or they have an inconsistent position or have positions which would have the effect of shutting down the oil sands, all of which, I agree, is a matter of interpretation, none of which is an allegation against a member.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. The hon. Government House Leader is entitled to be concerned about newly developed information with regard to royalties, but for him to suggest that the hon. Premier simply had a difference of opinion – how many times, Mr. Speaker, would you have allowed a student in your class to repeat misinformation before some type of disciplinary action was taken? What we have here is that circumstance. We have an individual across the way continuing to pass out information suggesting that the Liberal caucus wants to shut down the oil sands. We're on the record as asking for sustainable development. We're on the record as expressing environmental concerns. We're on the record announcing concerns that Albertans aren't getting a fair share for the resource they own.

But never – and I feel like this is a déjà entendu circumstance because I've said this before, and the Premier hasn't seemed to have got the lesson yet. We have never suggested shutting down the oil sands. To draw out any kind of conclusion that would suggest that somehow we're opposed to a major development in this province – it has some difficulties, obviously, with emissions and with tailings ponds, granted, but this is a major source of income now and into the future, and it has to be sustainably managed. To suggest that the Liberal caucus is opposed to development in the oil sands, Mr. Speaker, that's pure bunk, and if I had the Premier in my class, after school he would be writing out: I will not say that the Alberta Liberals are opposed to sustainable development in the oil sands. He would have to write it out a hundred times.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on this purported point of order.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I want to sort of preface my comments by saying that like the Minister of Education I, too, have noted some inconsistencies from time to time with respect to Liberal positions on certain issues. However, the Premier has clearly alleged – and he has not only alleged it with respect to the Liberals but also with us – that they want to shut down the oil sands. Nothing could be further from the truth. Quite frankly, I consider that to be real fearmongering because many, many



thousands of Albertans' jobs depend on that. So for the Premier to repeatedly make those assertions, which I believe he knows are not correct, in my view constitutes the breach that has been identified by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**The Speaker:** Well, that's all very nice, but unfortunately points of order and points of privilege have to deal with accusations against individual members of the House, not groups or other parties. If the hon. members would like to read the rules once again, *Beauchesne* 494 and *Marleau and Montpetit* at page 433, all of these matters deal with allegations against individual members. The Blues basically say: "You know, again, I know he's going to stand up with another point of order, but that is the group that wanted to shut down the oil sands completely." Those are the words of the Premier of the province of Alberta.

We've had this matter raised in the House before. We've dealt with it before, and we're dealing with it today in the same way we dealt with it before.

### Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 47 Appropriation Act, 2009

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before I call on the hon. President of the Treasury Board, this bill must be dealt with by 10:15 this evening.

The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to move second reading of Bill 47, Appropriation Act, 2009.

I can just anticipate, after question period, that we'll have a very lively debate on many of the bills for the rest of the day, and I look forward to it.

3:10

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you. I would hate to disappoint the hon. President of the Treasury Board, so here goes. Mr. Speaker, as you know and as the House knows, last Thursday when we voted the estimates on Budget 2009, the Alberta Liberal caucus voted against those estimates. We voted against those estimates because we do not feel that the budget that has been brought in this year for fiscal '09-10, for the fiscal year coming, given the financial, fiscal, and economic circumstances in which we find ourselves in this province and, indeed, across the world, is a responsible budget for the people and the province of Alberta. We could not very well vote against the estimates on Thursday and then turn around and support the Appropriation Act, Bill 47, this time around, and certainly we will not be doing that.

I want to go on record, before we go any further, as being very, very clear that the Alberta Liberal caucus supports and endorses the tireless efforts of the employees of the government of Alberta to carry out the jobs and the tasks that are assigned to them by their political masters, to do their jobs to the best of their abilities, to uphold their oaths as public servants, and to carry on the business of the public sector in the province of Alberta for the benefit of the people of this great province of ours.

However, their political masters have seriously lost their way. We are being asked to support a bill – and I'm sure that at some point, whether it's the President of the Treasury Board or whoever,

someone on the government benches opposite will say: "Well, you know, if you vote against the bill, you're voting against the employees of the government of Alberta; you're voting not to pay these people. What have you got against these hard-working civil servants?" Well, we have nothing against these hard-working civil servants, but they need a better budget to work with than this one. This one does not cut it.

**Dr. Brown:** Too much or not enough?

**Mr. Taylor:** The Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, Mr. Speaker, just said, "Too much or not enough?" I find this line of reasoning, this either/or line of reasoning that the Conservatives, the government and its backbenchers, who are here primarily to prop up the Lieutenant Governor in Council, continuously parrot very interesting. They can't seem to wrap their collective heads – and I know it's a struggle for them – around the notion of whether this is a spending day or a savings day. You know, it's both, or it should be both. It's got to be both. It's both a spending day and a savings day and a paying your bills day and a paying your debts day and an investing for the future day. It has to be all of those things, virtually, if not every day of the week then certainly every week of the year and every month of the fiscal year. You've got to do all those things together.

As I pointed out before to the President of the Treasury Board one day in question period – I don't remember which day it was – it's kind of like walking and chewing gum at the same time. You know, you've got to do more than one thing. It's very simple, Mr. Speaker, and we'll take it back down to the level of the average, ordinary family in the province of Alberta. The average, ordinary family in the province of Alberta has to do all those things because it has bills to pay. It has a mortgage payment to meet. It has a Visa bill or a MasterCard bill to make a payment on or, hopefully, pay in full every month. It has kids who are going to go to university or college some day and has to save for them. It has two adults, both of whom are probably working, who have to save for their own retirement because pension plans ain't what they used to be. It has all those things, all those responsibilities, and it has to meet all those responsibilities pretty much simultaneously.

This budget on so many levels – on so many levels – fails to do that. It fails to do that. The best it does is pledge to not keep increasing spending this fiscal year as much as it has in past fiscal years and to put a little bit here and a little bit there back into the sustainability fund once we stop running deficits in the province of Alberta. This budget projects deficits not only this year but next year and the year after that as well. And who knows beyond that?

I mean, those of us who have been in this province longer than since the last boom that just ended started can remember back to a time when the Conservative government of Alberta started running deficits. Yes, the circumstances are somewhat different, Mr. Speaker, today. I realize this. They're still prevented by law from borrowing money to go into deficit unless they're borrowing money from their own sustainability fund. You know, that's an improvement over the old days, but we remember when deficit spending started not only in the province of Alberta but in every province in the nation, in the nation itself. We went on this orgy of year after year after year spending more as governments than we took in until pretty soon we individually and collectively had debts, provincial and national debts, in the billions upon billions of dollars.

In this province we had a provincial debt and an ongoing deficit that to get under control, to end, to balance the budget, to eliminate the deficit and start to pay down the debt put us in a very difficult position that hurt a lot of Albertans, hurt us all in some ways. All of us had to sacrifice. I think my colleagues on the benches opposite

would agree that we'd all prefer if we didn't have to go through that again. But, Mr. Speaker, this budget so utterly fails to address the consequences of running consecutive deficits that it threatens to put us right back into that position.

Now, true enough, when and if Bill 33, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, passes this House – and I'm sure "if" is merely a theoretical construct – you know, we'll have a new, allegedly improved sustainability fund of about \$17 billion combining all the loonies and toonies between the cushions in the couches and the money we got from taking the pop bottles back to the bottle depot and all the rest of that, and we'll be able to use that money to cover off these deficits for a while. But ultimately, if we don't have a plan going forward other than for hope and prayer that the price of oil and the price of gas go back up and somehow the world comes out of this recession, that \$17 billion is going to be gone, and there is no plan B. There's only this sort of quasi-commitment that, you know, when we do and if we do get to the point where we're running surpluses again, we'll start putting an undetermined amount of money back into the sustainability fund at an undetermined schedule of making deposits until someday in that grand and glorious future when my grandchildren have grey hair, we'll have \$10 billion in the fund again.

That's not good enough, Mr. Speaker. There's no long-term savings and investment strategy in this budget, no desire to commit to one. There's no real plan to replenish our short-term savings. There's no prioritization of programs that work for Alberta. There are no plans to reallocate funding or spending to programs that work for Albertans. They're just isn't anything in here that gives me confidence that this budget protects the fortunes and futures of the people of Alberta.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move an amendment at this point to Bill 47, the Appropriation Act, 2009. I'll give a moment to the pages to distribute this.

**The Speaker:** Yes. We'll wait for this. It's not that normal at second reading, but we'll have it circulated quickly, please, pages. Distribute them so everybody can work.

Hon. member, please proceed with your amendment.

3:20

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will read the amendment into the record. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 47, the Appropriation Act, 2009, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 47, the Appropriation Act, 2009, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not provide a long-term savings and investment strategy, set adequate priorities, or reallocate spending to sufficiently protect the futures and fortunes of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I think I set up the reasoning behind this reasoned amendment in debate before I moved the amendment, so there's really not a whole lot else that I feel I need to say about this. I realize that I've now changed the debate on Bill 47 at second reading to a debate on the amendment, but having gotten my point across, I hope, I think, I will take my seat now and let others join the debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are now on the amendment. The amendment is before everybody. That is the gist and the purpose for the debate. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview on the amendment.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Specific to, well, what is a reasoned amendment, always, of course, the budget is one of the

most important debates in a spring sitting. I think this year it's particularly important because we have an unprecedented, or at least unprecedented in 14 years, deficit. I also think that there's an extremely important discussion to be had. I only wish the government were leading this discussion in the way that the discussion about balancing the budget was led by the government in the early 1990s. The government has the tools at its hands to address directly what is proposed in this amendment. I think it's very important to notice in the amendment the specific referral to the fact that there is not currently in this budget a long-term savings and investment strategy. That's what I want to focus my comments on for a couple of minutes.

This very government – well, I should say, I guess, the preceding government, when the minister of finance was the member then for Strathmore-Brooks, Dr. Lyle Oberg. At that time he commissioned a special report, which I only wish every member of this Assembly had studied. It's come to be known informally as the Mintz report. The title is *Preserving Prosperity: Challenging Alberta to Save*. It was written by a committee of several people, chaired by Jack Mintz, which was given the name of the Alberta Financial Investment and Planning Advisory Commission. They came out with startlingly important conclusions. For those of us who want to spend the rest of our lives in Alberta, who want to see Alberta prosper for lifetimes to come, I don't think there's a more important document than this one. I think it's very important, for understanding why this amendment is so vital, to read a handful of excerpts from this report.

This is from the executive summary of a report commissioned by this government, chaired by a fellow who is known as a very, at least, small "c" conservative, a right-wing, market-driven economist, Jack Mintz. The other people on it were Harry Buddle, Daniel Halyk, Judith Romanchuk, and David Weyant. Here are a handful of points from the executive summary on why we need an Alberta long-term savings and investment strategy. I quote from page 3 of the report.

Alberta is at a critical point in its history. The province's economy has consistently outpaced the rest of Canada. We enjoy the tremendous benefits of the lowest income taxes in the country, no sales tax, the highest per capita spending on health care in the country and an education system that outranks some of the best in the world . . . These advantages make Alberta a very prosperous place today.

[some applause] I'll be interested if there's still applause because I quote from the next paragraph of the report.

At the same time, warning signs should be heeded.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is a warning sign. If nothing else, at least this debate should serve as a warning sign because the report found, and I quote again from page 3:

To a very great extent, the level of spending and the low taxes we enjoy today are the direct result of our abundance of resource wealth. Alberta's aging population and the expected lack of growth in resource revenues suggest that it will be difficult for Alberta to preserve our current prosperity for present and future generations. In fact,

And I emphasize this. In fact, wrote the Mintz commission, if action is not taken now, Albertans could face a substantial tax hike by 2030.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment moved by the hon. MLA for Calgary-Currie proposes action now. That's exactly what this is about. This amendment is exactly about the need to respect and take seriously what the Mintz commission wrote and advised and what this government has chosen so determinedly not to act on.

I'll skip a few paragraphs here, but I think it's important to drive home some key points. I quote again from the report.

To put it in clear terms, Alberta's non-renewable resources should provide significant benefits not just to Albertans today, but also for our children and grandchildren. When Alberta sells its resources . . .

And, parenthetically, Mr. Speaker, given question period today, I must say that I believe we're selling the resources much too cheaply. I return to the report.

... it has given up wealth that can either be spent today or saved for the future. When our stock of non-renewable resources dwindles, Alberta's economy will need to rely only on its people – not its natural resources – to create wealth.

It goes on. Then it says, Mr. Speaker, what I think is a remarkable statement, a dramatic statement for a government report written by a committee of economists. I quote again a government-commissioned report.

Alberta should not look like a ghost town in the next century when the resources are depleted.

Mr. Speaker, that's a very, very significant warning. We stand here debating a budget that puts Alberta back into, effectively, a deficit for the first time in 15 years a mere eight months after the price of oil and natural gas began to collapse. We had 14 or 15 years of consecutive multibillion dollar surpluses, and a mere eight months after natural resource revenues drop, we're back into deficit. We've having to squeeze public services, and we're having to consider raising taxes. Those are the kinds of warning signs that should be heeded, that Jack Mintz warns about.

In fact, if you go to the trouble of interviewing Mr. Mintz, which I would urge all government MLAs to do – please sit down with this guy; please listen to what he says – he warns that in the foreseeable future, the next two decades, Alberta is either going to have to raise taxes 40 per cent or lower spending 40 per cent or do some combination of the two. Using the government's own forecasts on revenues, there's no way other than going into massive debt, which will drive us into destruction.

3:30

I'm again quoting from the Mintz report. "To achieve those objectives, this report recommends," and there are several recommendations. I won't read them all, but this could not be more important, Mr. Speaker, number one: "setting a bold target of achieving \$100 billion in net financial assets in a reinvigorated Alberta Heritage Fund by 2030." Now, that would be apart from pension assets.

I can already hear some of the cabinet ministers saying: well, we already have \$70 billion in AIMCo. In fact, most of that is tied up in pension liabilities. We want to see that target. We want to see some strategy. We understand that times are tight right now, but where is the strategy when times get better? Where is the symbolic gesture that we could use now, even if it's a small symbol, to say: okay; no matter how tight, we've got to commit to the future. Mr. Speaker, there's no sign of that in this budget as presented. What's so frustrating is that when we raise the issue with government members, it just gets laughed off or shrugged off. I hope – I hope – that this caucus of Tory MLAs gets the message through to this government that a savings strategy is crucial.

The report goes on to recommend, and I'm quoting from page 4 here: "saving a fixed percentage of Alberta's total revenues each year as part of the budget." Then the third item: "establishing a clear and specific purpose – to preserve and enhance Alberta's prosperity for the benefit of current and future generations – and changing the name of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund to the Alberta Heritage Fund."

Let's stop using this term "rainy-day fund" for the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. I've argued for quite some time, Jack Mintz has argued, many others have argued that we should look at that effectively like a RIF, effectively like an income fund. While governments don't retire, Legislatures don't retire, there is an equivalent sort of moment looming for Alberta as an economy. That

moment is when our nonrenewable resource revenues deplete to an insignificant level.

The warning signs could not be more clear. Alberta was once a significant player in conventional oil production. That "once" was in the early 1970s. Peak conventional oil production was 35 years ago. Today Alberta's conventional oil production is minor. Alberta's natural gas production, which has been immense in the last 15 years, is dropping 4 per cent a year now, peaked some years ago and is inevitably declining. The oil sands, for all their enormous size, bring forward immense complications of their own, and they will not generate the royalty income that our conventional resources have generated so well.

Let's get past this rainy-day idea. Let's imagine the day coming when royalty revenues are not significant anymore and we need to turn somewhere else. That's the day we need to plan for by establishing the kind of heritage fund that the Mintz report recommends, Mr. Speaker. That's the kind of strategy that's envisioned in this amendment and that is completely lacking from this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I don't need to drive – well, I will need to drive this message home more. I can't drive it home any more right now. But I think it's vital. I can see that some of the government MLAs are actually listening. They don't need to listen to me. They can listen to their own advisers. They can listen to the Alberta Chambers of Commerce. They can listen to the Institute of Chartered Accountants. They can listen to the Canada West Foundation. Please, people, please put in place a long-term, disciplined savings strategy for this province.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available, that provides five minutes for questions and comments.

On the amendment.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, on the amendment. The problem they seem to have is that they're stuck somewhere between yesterday and fantasyland. I think it's nice that they decided to switch their previous position on many of our civil servants, who they soundly thrashed in here about their bonuses. Over 6,000 of them had to sit here and listen to how unworthy they were that they would be on a bonus system. I'm glad to see they finally may have realized that these are hard-working people and that bonuses were part of their salary. But I don't expect that they will recover a lot of their other arguments.

Let's just talk about what this amendment is trying to say. By referring to a paper that was produced in a very different time – and I wish they would have come out and said: what we would like you to do is save by taking money from these areas, take money out of ongoing areas of the budget that we're dealing with. That's what our debate is in here now, the budget of this year, for the coming year, and the two out-years. Tell us how much they would like us to take out of the programs we deliver. Given that around 76 per cent of the money we spend is in the areas of health, education, advanced education, and seniors, to have a significant change so that you could take money out of these hospitals right now, take money out of these schools right now, take money out of these seniors' facilities right now and put it in the bank so that a couple of hundred years from now, when our oil is gone, we'll have a lot of money in the bank.

Earlier today you listen to the question that comes: you should have more people in these facilities; we've got to spend more money on health care, a \$500 million increase. That wasn't quite enough; that's a cutback. But we've got to save ourselves into prosperity. You know, maybe in the dictionary there is confusion between a magician and a politician, but we can't magically just wave our little

wand and wave a report and say: if you just wish hard enough, if you hope and click your heels, you can spend more on everything, and you can still have money that we can put in the bank.

And this will be our platform: don't deal with anything specific. Oh, they can pull some communications budgets out of here, and they could pull some hosting budgets out of there, and they can add it all up to about a day and a half of health care and say: "See? See what we mean? You've got to get tough on these departments. You university people, you need not sit around and talk with the minister and have lunch. That's a waste of money. And you don't need to communicate what's going on in Alberta around the world because those communication dollars are wasted anyhow."

It's easier to get bad news if you stand up here and misrepresent what's really going on. That's like free communications. They'll pick up the stuff they really like – some very unfortunate birds in a tar pond, in an oil pond, or whatever the heck you want to call it pond – and we can spread that all around the world for free just about if we stand on the steps here and repeat it enough. We can focus on every negative thing we can find in Alberta. That's free. We don't know why, we don't understand why your government would think it's important to spend money on communications to actually show the world the level of environmental commitment we've made here and the progress that has come directly from Alberta companies and Alberta attitude. Somehow, by selling our resources, whether it's coal or oil or natural gas, selling those resources and investing them in some of the most world-class facilities – medical, educational, experimental, and research – somehow that would be better: just put the money in the bank.

They talk about building an economy. We couldn't agree more except we actually know how to do it far better than just pretend, heels click, the money is in the bank, we're all rich. You have to build the universities, you have to build the hospitals, and you have to run them. You have to pay the people that run them for you a decent salary, and you have to compete not only with our neighbours but around the world. We went through a very interesting economic time, where prices rose significantly around the world, yet because of the resource wealth we've got, we were able to maintain and actually grow. We continued to invest in infrastructure, including what we said.

**3:40**

We've provided more benefits. My mother was sitting here a few days ago. She gets angry when she's told continually how hard things are for her. Eighty-two years old, and she's still coming here to shop and will tell you unequivocally that they could never have imagined what their parents went through to help build this province, and now it seems like they have to be given everything, glasses and teeth and a little help here and a little help there, as if somehow the 60 or 70 years of hard work were just good luck, and now the government needs to make sure we're looked after. They're slightly insulted that they're treated like that. That's a little bit different.

For the hon. members to suggest that the Mintz report would somehow be our salvation – Mr. Speaker, can you imagine? You would know now how lopsided transfer payments are from Alberta to Ottawa to fund a lot of programs that other provinces have in place to try to look after the people that they're representing and that they have the responsibility to care for. Without getting caught up in exact details, we all know that it's into the hundreds of billions of dollars that Alberta has allowed, encouraged, participated in for the wealth creation of this country.

So let's take that, what we've got left, and let's put it in the bank. Alberta could. We're going to shut down schools and hospitals and all the stuff that they won't say, but if they get it, they'll have to do

it. We'll put this money in the bank. Who do you suppose is going to pay when the other provinces – Mr. Speaker, Quebec has some \$140 billion in acknowledged debt, \$7.5 billion to \$8 billion a year interest payments. Ontario is even worse than that and has billions of dollars in Crown corporations. When the consolidated financial statements are finally adopted by the other provinces, probably next year, it's even going to portray the wealth that Alberta has far greater in comparison to what you would imagine now.

Just think politically, Mr. Speaker, regardless of what party might do it, to become the only province in the country with wealth, with a great big fund. You let your roads deteriorate, you've quit building hospitals, but you've got this big cash. Cash is king. We've got money. Do you think the rest of the country, the rest of the provinces, given the system we live in, are going to sit back and say, "Oh, good for you"? I don't think so.

Mr. Speaker, there is a balance between living in yesterday and hoping for the future. Then there is recognizing what we're in today. There's no question that it's far harder to approach the coming years given the uncertainty and having to deal with the incredibly difficult choices that we're going to have to make as a province. But we have always done it. We have talked with Albertans, and whether they'd like to admit it or not, this province recognizes that times change and political reality changes with it or it disappears. You can sing the songs of the past, and you can harp on solutions that may have worked then.

There may be a future where Alberta has billions of dollars in the bank. I quite honestly believe that it will happen. Our days are going to return quicker than any other province, probably quicker than anywhere else in North America, possibly in the world. As our resources are developed, we're going to be ready, more prepared to have the infrastructure, more prepared to understand what it means to reinvest in research, in the medical sciences. The knowledge-based economy and the value-added economy that we're working for is out there, but it's coming here because of the political stability and the common sense that have gone into both our taxation and our spending priorities.

You know what? I hope we adjourn this session soon. I hope, personally, that the hon. members spend the entire summer and all of next year – as a matter of fact, I hope they spend the next two and a half years – out around Alberta telling them exactly what they want to do because then I won't have to campaign one day, not one day, when you tell them, "We believe that we're going to have to cut all of the programs for Albertans because some guy that used to lead us got this brilliant idea that we'd be far better off with a bunch of money in the bank." That's what I hope they do. I hope they spend two and a half years spreading the word. I might even be able to find their website – I'm not good at this, but I'm trying – and I'm going to send them some money, and I hope they put it to good use, get out there and tell Albertans: we're going to save our way into prosperity. That's the Liberal way.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must congratulate the President of the Treasury Board for his impassioned speech. You know what? We disagree. I respect that disagreement, and I frankly enjoyed the vigour of his presentation.

I just want to put three quick points to the President of the Treasury Board. The first one is about British Columbia. I know we'll hear all about the debt and all this kind of thing. Just on pure spending, if you compare per capita spending in Alberta with per capita spending in B.C., Alberta spends, the most recent figures, 28 per cent higher. Alberta spends 23 per cent higher than the national

average, 28 per cent higher per person than B.C. does. Yet when I go to B.C., the roads are good, they run a ferry system, they're building the Olympics, they've got a pharmacare program, and UBC consistently outranks U of A. So our point on this side is that surely – surely – there is some value for money that can be squeezed out of the provincial spending. That would be the first point. And the people with access to that information are the government.

My second point. As the Member for Calgary-Currie has often said, this is not either/or. Most or all of us have families, and we manage at the same time to do a number of things financially if we're going to have long-term prosperity. First of all, we need to pay the bills. We do have to pay the rent. We have to buy the groceries and so on. Secondly, we need to pay our debts, a mortgage, whatever that may be. Third, any one of us here, if we're doing a good job of planning for the future, is saving. We put something aside even in the lean years in the RRSP. We put something aside for our kids' college education. This is not an either/or proposition. This is a both/and. It's exactly the same kind of balance that successful families achieve in their own lives. We're looking for that same kind of balance from this government.

So the first two key points: let's try to get the kind of value for money that the B.C. government delivers. Let's try to get that from our dollars here in Alberta. Secondly, don't look at this as either/or. This is just like good, long-term domestic financial planning. Third, I agree with the President of the Treasury Board that there has to be some strategy around the politics of Confederation, and we don't necessarily want to have a giant, juicy target of, you know, half a trillion dollars or something, but there are ways around that: endowing the postsecondary institutions so that maybe the day comes when we don't actually need to provide any provincial tax revenue to them because the endowments are so large, like the world's great universities already enjoy. And there are other ways around that.

I enjoyed the comments from the President of the Treasury Board, but I've got to tell you that they deeply worry me because there is such an entrenched resistance to the very thing that this Mintz report and this amendment are about. I guess I fear, from my own perspective, for the future of Alberta in the same kind of way, apparently, that the President of the Treasury Board does but on completely different perspectives.

**The Speaker:** President of the Treasury Board, did you want to comment?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** I think that was a comment.

**The Speaker:** That was a comment, but it could have been a question too.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

3:50

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking very specifically to the amendment . . .

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. We're still on the Q and C section. If you have a question, you proceed.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, no. I hadn't realized we were still on that section.

**The Speaker:** Does anybody else have a question or comment?

There being none, then I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity to participate in the debate on the amendment.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Speaking very specifically to the amendment, the idea of having a savings plan is hardly new. Joseph recommended a savings plan to King David a millennium ago. He predicted that there would be seven good years, followed by seven years of famine. As a result, during those seven good years he built up the granaries; he created the food supplies. The idea of providing savings and setting aside during the good years is nothing new. That needed to be established.

Now, the either/or part of the discussion. The hon. President of the Treasury Board with regard to savings said: well, how can you save and still fulfill the needs of Albertans at the same time? Where does this problem occur? I'll take this problem back to 1994. Stupid moves. Stupid moves followed by inaction. We closed down, blew up hospitals in Calgary. We drove away the professionals who staffed them. Now 15 later we're trying to entice them back. How can you do both? Well, if you had done both, we wouldn't be in this position we are right now because we would have had a savings plan. We wouldn't have had to be going overseas to recruit temporary foreign workers, especially in areas of medicine, because they would still be here had we not driven them away. So inaction, stupid action, and then failure to look into the future sufficiently beyond the next paycheque.

This government and the Premier in terms of savings and investment declared full speed ahead in the development of the oil sands. What was the result? Inflation. What was the result? A lack of workforce in the rest of the province because this one area was so overheated that the costs and the lost jobs and the drain were felt throughout the province. How can we save? By doing things at a sustainable pace, by thinking of that next step as opposed to just strictly living for the moment.

With regard to the comment about the 6,000 individuals and our lack of support or our wavering support for civil servants, the reality is that very few of that number of convenience, 6,000, saw the \$40 million. It was the deputy ministers and the higher individuals within the chain of command that received the majority of that \$40 million, so don't be telling me that it somehow found its way, dribbled down to the civil servants who do the actual front-line work.

With regard to savings, how can we accomplish savings? Well, how is it that Alaska is able to accomplish it? How is it that Norway, who started so long after Premier Peter Lougheed initiated the idea of a heritage trust fund, was able to run with it and set aside savings that we can't seem to do here in this province or that the government seems unwilling to do?

Again with regard to savings and monetary procedures, all we hear is the old, worn-out phrase: tax-and-spend Liberals. Well, we're talking about saving Liberals, a savings account, and we've proposed this for some time. When the Alberta Liberals are more fiscally conservative than the so-called Progressive Conservatives, then there is something to be worried about in this province as to who should be running the government.

With regard to individuals who have indicated a savings plan, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview indicated Jack Mintz. I'd like to add on such luminaries as the Canada West Foundation. I'd like to talk about the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. How about the Canadian Federation of Independent Business? Let's throw in Preston Manning. Let's throw in Peter Lougheed. These are all individuals that are hardly noted for Liberal tendencies who have recommended the need for establishing a savings fund, and they didn't say: well, we'll wait till oil goes up to \$160 a barrel. They recommended those savings when oil was back at the \$10 a barrel level. So the idea of a savings plan isn't new.

With regard to savings plans in the 2004 lead-up to the election we said that while we still had a surplus, we needed to set aside 30

per cent of any surplus dollars and with that create a university endowment fund: 35 per cent of that 30 would go to it. We said 25 per cent for infrastructure. We wanted to set aside 5 per cent for culture and arts development. We were looking at the various aspects that an endowment fund, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview pointed out, would be necessary to offset our dependency on nonrenewable resources.

In 2008 leading up to the election, based on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview's economic background, a doctorate from England, he said: we've got to set aside 30 per cent not just of surplus revenue but 30 per cent of every nonrenewable dollar that we get because the clouds are coming, and if we don't set up a savings plan now, we're in for deep trouble. Unfortunately, this government chose to take us deeper into trouble with a \$4.7 billion deficit, no savings plan. We owe \$8.6 billion on the unfunded liability, which should have been addressed years ago. Had it been addressed years ago, we wouldn't be at this point. Savings and wise investments are absolutely essential.

In the last five years this government has lost over \$5 billion from the heritage trust fund due to questionable investments. We have experienced poor investments in asset-backed commercial paper. I do believe that AIMCo, however long the arm's length is, will be the agency to make the wise investments, knowing how well the Ontario teachers' fund did with the individual at the head. I know that this government doesn't feel very strongly about the recommendations that its Auditor General makes and suggests that the Auditor General drifts from money management into policy, but he's argued the savings point.

What we're saying through this amendment is that savings and investment have to happen at the same time as wise expenditures. Control inflation; you don't have the problem.

I know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo would like to share his wisdom on this matter. He's a young man, and he's got longer to save for than I do, so I will sit down and save the House some time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

No participants? Then I'll call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill to participate.

**Dr. Brown:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is a wonderful thing to be in the opposition and have the opportunity to criticize without coming up with any concrete propositions as to what they might do with the budget. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie was up a few minutes ago talking about his amendment, and he inferred that one might trim and spend and save all in the same day. Therein lies the rub. We hear all the time that we're not spending enough in certain areas. We hear that we're spending too much in certain areas. We hear that we should be saving at the same time. We're talking about an amendment which talks about the fact that this Appropriation Act in 2009 does not provide a long-term savings and investment strategy. This is an appropriation bill. It talks about what we're going to spend in the fiscal year 2009-2010.

4:00

I would like to know from the opposition – I hope someone will get up and address the issue – how much they would save this year given the fact that we have the budget and the economy where it is right now. I'd like to know how much they'd save this year. I would also like to know where they would cut in order to save that particular amount of money.

They also talk about setting adequate priorities and reallocating spending to "sufficiently protect the futures and fortunes of Albertans." If there was ever a nebulous statement, there it is. What are

those adequate priorities? How would they reallocate? Where would they spend more, and where would they cut? Let's see some specifics regarding this. Let's see them go on the record and not just say that we need to spend smarter. I hear that term all the time, that we have to spend smarter. That means, presumably, that you have to cut somewhere and that you have to spend more in other ways.

So let's see where the rubber hits the road. I'd like to hear some specifics from the opposition. When they're putting forth an amendment here that talks in very general terms, let's see where it's going.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar first.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much. The previous speaker was talking about concrete solutions. I believe those were the precise words. When this party, the Official Opposition, suggested originally to the government that we initiate a stability fund or a stabilization fund to provide a cookie jar whenever it was necessary to have a substantial amount set aside because of the volatility of oil and gas prices, does the hon. member, number one, not consider that to be a concrete solution when the Provincial Treasurer and the President of the Treasury Board and the Premier and the bloated cabinet were so anxious to use that money and so grateful to have it set aside? Is that not an example of a concrete solution from this side of the House?

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill if you wish.

**Dr. Brown:** I think there was a stability fund, and the reason that the government has some flexibility is because there was that saving, so it is there. I think that you've just answered the question on what the government ought to have done, and we did it.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill: if he's looking for places to cut, would he not consider the suggestion, which has come from our party and, I think, has also come from the Official Opposition, that the elimination of the subsidy for horse racing in our province might be a good place to start?

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, if you wish.

**Dr. Brown:** Well, I think that this has been discussed. I'm here to support the budget as it is written right now.

With respect to the horse racing I think that it's been adequately explained in this House many, many times that there is no subsidy on horse racing. What the horse-racing industry gets back is a portion of what's taken in on their own facilities with respect to the slot machines and the VLTs that are located on those premises. Without the horse-racing industry there wouldn't be any revenue, so there is a net gain, in fact, to the province of Alberta from those facilities.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Certainly, to clarify for the hon. member, the Official Opposition brought the stability fund forward twice. Both times it was rejected, and fortunately it was finally accepted by the government.

Now, if we're looking for a cost saving, the previous Premier reduced the size of cabinet at one point. Does the hon. member consider the size of the cabinet now, in light of these difficult economic times, to be suitable, or should we reduce the size of cabinet perhaps by 20 per cent to save a few dollars?

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, do you wish to, or should we see additional questions first?

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate on this matter.

**The Speaker:** We can't adjourn debate during the Q and C period.

**Mr. Mason:** I'd just like to remind the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill – he wasn't here at the time – that what happened was that facilities like Northlands and the Stampede board were taking far more than the cut that they were allowed on their gambling sheets, and the Auditor General caught them and found it out. What happened is that they had to reduce their take to the same take that any casino might charge on the gambling machines, and they got an agreement from the government to provide a subsidy to make up the difference. That's how it came about.

**The Speaker:** Additional comments or questions with respect to this matter? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Again, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member: does the hon. member consider in these economic times, which are quite difficult – and we do have a shortage of money – the cabinet too big, too small, or just right, like Goldilocks?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if you wish?  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you. I'd like to contribute to that last point: is it too big or too small, or is it just right, like Goldilocks? I think it's way too big. I agree with the hon. member. It's much too large.

**The Speaker:** Additional comments or questions with respect to this matter?

Hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, you cannot adjourn the debate because you finished the debate without adjourning it.

The next member up is the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have really enjoyed, actually, listening to many of the people who have spoken today, especially the former Leader of the Opposition, Edmonton-Riverview. I enjoyed listening to the hon. President of the Treasury Board speak with passion, too, on the direction of Alberta and what he sees as a future for our province. I believe they were both speaking towards, hopefully, a bright future for our citizens, one that looks responsibly towards future generations.

I think that if I could sum up sort of the two positions without having the clarity, one position would say that we've got to keep some of that and keep looking out for the future, and one position might be: let's invest it all now and put it to work now or not put it to work now, maybe just spend it all now on a variety of different things. If I look at those positions, I would say that it is much wiser of us, which is the nature of this amendment, to develop a long-term savings plan that we can really get behind here. Although I agree that it is a very difficult financial time here in Alberta, nevertheless it's time we get on with this thing.

For the last 40 years, in fact for the time this government has been in power and, in fact, for my entire life Alberta has taken in significantly more money than any other province and, I would go so far as to say, any other jurisdiction in the world per capita. Now, I could be corrected on that, but that is what I have been led to believe, and since I am not corrected, I'll stand by that.

One of the comments continually made by the hon. President of the Treasury Board is that we have world-class facilities, world-class this, world-class that, yada yada yada. That's fair enough. You look around, I guess, the western world. People would say: "Yeah, Alberta has got similar stuff to what we have here. They have similar health care facilities. They have similar universities. They have similar police forces. They have similar justice departments." But by no means are we number one. One would think that if someone had brought in the most money per capita for a governing body with the people involved, we would have the best, and that simply doesn't happen.

If you look at relative reports coming out in this country alone, we look at health care reports that say that we're roughly in the middle of the pack. You look at policing numbers. You know, we're short on policing numbers. You look at wait times for our accused to get to trial. They're longer than average. You look at our roads, all of that stuff. [interjection] Well, then I'll be corrected later on.

4:10

Nevertheless, these things are all average when we look across Canada. How can we sit here and say that we are providing value for the dollar for what our current citizens are getting when we're spending more than other areas and all these reports come back and say that we're doing an average job? I find it difficult to reconcile those two points, and if someone can do that for me, well, then maybe I'll be better served and wiser the next time I rise to speak in this honourable House.

Now, if we go to a long-term savings plan, there's no doubt we can continue to, I guess, snow through our abundance of natural resource revenue in the next 40 years like we've done in the last 40 years, during the life of this government, which is essentially what we've done. We've snowed through that revenue, and yes, we do have average stuff when we compare to the rest of the western world. Kudos. Great. We've got average stuff for having the most revenue.

Hopefully, over the future, having this savings fund, maybe it will force us to get some financial discipline. We will say that we're going to put some of this resource money away, and I'd say that the 30 per cent figure that we ran on in the last election is a reasonable amount. I don't know the exact amount suggested by the Mintz report. But it should be in and around that figure. It should be a responsible figure for us to go forward, or else, as the Mintz report says, we are going to be in a dangerous situation come 40 or 50 years from now.

**Dr. Brown:** Would you do that this year?

**Mr. Hehr:** Why not start this year? If not this year, hon. member, when? Next year? Fair enough. We've got to at least start with some nominal figure and say: we're going to start. Okay? We came up with, I think, the number of \$50 million, and by no means is that: "You can sound the bugles from the mountaintop. Oh, my goodness. They are really going forward on this." Nonetheless, it would be a start. I think that if we came up with some number, that this year we're going to do X, that we're going to devote X amount to doing this in the future, it's some recognition that we have a problem of snowing through petroleum revenues whenever they come in. To be

honest, as Albertans we don't pay for anything we use anymore. We just simply snow through it all in one generation like we've done.

I think this savings plan will recognize the fact that we owe something to future generations that will want to live here. Alberta will not become a ghost town, but I believe it will if we keep spending at the rate we are and not recognizing that this is sort of a one-time, I guess, opportunity to really set us up for the future. Well, you know, maybe lightning strikes twice, but I don't necessarily see that happening. Our advantage here is that oil. What we can do to sustain that advantage long term is to have a long-term savings plan.

Those are my points, and I thank you for the opportunity to allow me to speak on this issue, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Question? Comment?

Additional speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address the amendment as well as the bill.

**The Speaker:** Well, we're on the amendment now.

**Mr. Mason:** I know, Mr. Speaker, but I think that for various reasons I will not have the opportunity.

**The Speaker:** Sorry.

**Mr. Mason:** That doesn't count?

**The Speaker:** No, that doesn't count. Okay? We're on the amendment now, and the bill will be debated in its true form after the amendment is dealt with. The hon. member is a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. We'll go on this afternoon to 6 o'clock. The House will reconvene tonight at 7:30. The hon. member may have ample opportunity between now and 10:15, when the vote is called.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that your job is to enforce the rules.

**The Speaker:** Pretty much.

**Mr. Mason:** Yeah, pretty much. Sometimes we may not, you know, like the rules all that well, but I get it.

On the amendment, which is that it

be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not provide a long-term savings and investment strategy, set adequate priorities, or reallocate spending to sufficiently protect the futures and fortunes of Albertans.

My response to this, Mr. Speaker, is that I'm not entirely onside with all three of those reasons. I want to address particularly the one where I have some difficulties. Maybe I disagree or maybe it's just a more nuanced approach, but certainly I don't think the bill sets priorities adequately. I think there, indeed, could be some reallocation of spending, which just goes hand in hand with setting priorities differently.

It's the question of long-term savings and investment that I have a bit of an issue with. I know that that's the Liberal Party's position. They think we should be building up a giant fund and that this, in fact, should get us through difficult times and ensure a steady flow of revenue. Now, I think it's fair to say that we should have more

savings through the heritage savings trust fund. In particular, the idea of spending the interest each time keeps the fund from growing. I would support that. I would ask hon. members what happens in an economic recession, as we've seen, and particularly when there's a major downturn in investment markets and in the stock market. We see, in fact, that those countries that depend on these funds have taken massive, massive losses. I think that the implications have not been carefully enough considered.

What we proposed, I think, is a little different. This also addresses the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill's comment: where would the opposition cut? The real question that has to be dealt with with respect to this, Mr. Speaker, is on the revenue side. We heard today that Alberta is getting less than 50 cents a barrel in royalties on oil. This has been an issue that we have raised in the past, particularly when oil prices were extremely high. If a barrel of oil is trading at \$38 a barrel and we're getting 50 cents, then that really amounts to a minimal, minimal amount of revenue. The royalty system has to come into the discussion around savings and priorities because we are letting billions of dollars slip through our fingers that rightly belong to the people of Alberta.

The question of a tax on bitumen that was put forward by the government's own task force was rejected. The Premier called it a wellhead tax and said that it smacked of the NEP. The result was that as the two large operations in the tar sands, Syncrude and Suncor, switched to a bitumen basis for calculating their royalties, they managed to reduce the amount of royalties that they were paying to the province very, very dramatically because the government had an ideological aversion to what the Premier called a wellhead tax on bitumen.

We've seen a huge drop just in the last year in revenue that we obtain from the tar sands from two operations that were identified by Pedro van Meurs, an internationally respected consultant on oil and gas royalties, as two of the most profitable enterprises on the face of the planet. They managed to cut in half their contribution to the province that has nurtured them and helped create them. So the government has not addressed that through its attempts to renegotiate the agreements.

4:20

The other aspect that I'd like to talk about, Mr. Speaker, is the whole question of corporate income tax. When I was first elected, I attended a luncheon of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, and the guest speaker was the then Provincial Treasurer, Dr. Steve West. Dr. West, in his speech to the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, announced that they would be reducing the corporate income tax rate in this province from 15 per cent to 8 per cent over a period of time. He claimed that there was lots of competition from places like Ontario and other provinces that were reducing their corporate income tax. We felt that that was completely unnecessary because this is paid on profits of corporations. It's not paid by companies that are like General Motors and losing lots of money. They don't pay any of this tax. It's based on the profits of the corporations, so there's no real reason to reduce the tax in that fashion.

Now, the government has proceeded along that line with our opposition fairly continuously opposing it. They're now at about a 10 per cent effective rate on corporate taxes, so they've cut corporate taxes by a third. At the time when they made the last cut, of course, the corporations in Alberta were setting record profits, multibillion dollar profits for EnCana and Nexen and all sorts of corporations that were making enough profits in one year to run a small country, but we were reducing our take.

So the revenue side, the proportion of the economy, the GDP that is available to government to meet the priorities of the people of the



province, has been steadily shrinking as a result of this government's policies. The result is that we have a crisis in health care. According to the health minister, it's unsustainable. Well, the fact of the matter is that the economy has grown, the population has grown, and health care spending needs to keep pace with it, but in fact the government doesn't have the resources to do that because of policy decisions that they've made.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this budget doesn't reflect that. I think there are a number of problems with the budget that would lead me, on balance, to favour the amendment even though I disagree with the Liberal policy of having massive savings in cash and investments. Our preference is to create a \$20 billion green energy fund to transform the economy, make investments in research and development, and basically restructure our province's energy economy based on renewable energy before we get to the point where we can no longer sell our oil internationally because of climate change issues.

But I want to indicate that we felt this budget should have had a greater stimulus to keep people working. We think the government's projections in this budget are not sufficient. They're assuming that the economic recession will be shallow and of short duration, and the number of people who have been laid off has already well exceeded the figure used by the finance minister when she tabled her budget.

There's \$215 million in unallocated cuts. If the government's projections are not met, and I don't think they will be, they will have to find another \$2 billion of cuts. Eliminating the Wild Rose Foundation has been a really tough blow for the volunteer sector.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm really serious. We have to abide by the amendment we're playing with.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to give other reasons why I would support the amendment, but I'll try to be a little bit more on task. Thank you for that.

So in terms of this amendment, the real question, I think, why I'm prepared to support this, is the failure to set adequate priorities, which is clearly part of this amendment. I don't think that the government has shown any signs that it's prepared to make up the shortfall in mental health services. I don't think the government has shown that it is setting adequate priorities with respect to long-term care beds, which play a key role not only in protecting seniors and making sure that they're well taken care of in their final years but which play a key role in solving the problem with the crisis in emergency room waiting times. If you can't move people out of emergency rooms into acute-care beds because they're occupied by long-term care patients, then you've got a real serious problem.

Mr. Speaker, there are lots of reasons why I believe that this government has not set appropriate priorities for our province in this budget. Although I'm not entirely in agreement with the Liberal opposition with respect to the need for massive savings, I do think, on balance, I am prepared to support this amendment that we not now read the budget a second time.

There's one last point I want to make in terms of setting adequate priorities and reallocating spending, and that is the over a billion dollars in deficit from the health authorities, which the government knows about but is not included in this budget, which means that the deficit is much larger than the government is prepared to admit to the people of Alberta. There's something fundamentally wrong with a budget that doesn't include all of the liabilities of the government in the coming year. That's another reason why I believe that we should support this amendment.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes my comments. I'm sorry for having

strayed from the true path, but I will attempt to adhere to that in the future. Thank you very much for your patience.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Well, I'll be very brief, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood said that he didn't entirely agree with the Liberal savings plan. The Member for Calgary-Buffalo said that even in the face of this recession that we're dealing with right now, he would proceed with the plan, which I take it is that 30 per cent of the nonrenewable resource revenues would be put into savings. By my calculation a third of \$10.7 billion, roughly, is \$3.2 billion, which would have to come from somewhere. It would probably be roughly 30 per cent of the health care budget or 60 per cent of the education budget. Does he agree with the Liberal proposal to keep socking away money when we need to spend it in this recession?

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the hon. member for that point, but I cannot be held accountable for a Liberal economic policy. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, Q and C.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I listened with interest to the hon. member's remarks. The hon. member talked about a \$20 billion green energy fund. My question would be this: if this \$20 billion green fund was to become a reality, would there be any money from that fund allocated for carbon capture and storage projects?

Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you for that question, hon. member. No. The fund would be divided in three parts. A billion dollar revolving fund to help homeowners, small businesses, and farmers as well as various government buildings to do complete retrofits in order to reduce their energy costs – and the savings could then replenish the fund; that's why we'd call it a revolving fund – would be one component.

4:30

Another component would be major investments in research and development. We would create a second Alberta Research Council but one focused entirely on renewable energy in order to make Alberta the centre and the leader in the country in terms of research and development and commercialization of renewable energy technology.

Thirdly, we would get involved in actually building and operating renewable energy projects, doing joint ventures with other provinces, the federal government, or possibly even with the private sector, and that would be how we would deal with it.

In terms of carbon capture and storage, hon. member, we think that if there's merit and value in carbon capture and storage, it is the people who are producing the massive amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> that needs to be captured that really ought to be the ones who are making that investment rather than the people of Alberta. We wouldn't completely reject that direction, even though it's a temporary solution, simply of land-filling, essentially, the carbon instead of reducing it, but if there is some temporary merit in doing that, then, by all

means, those who are producing the CO<sub>2</sub> should proceed and should pay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General, you wanted to be in on the Q and C?

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A quick question. I was listening to the hon. member's comments. What I gathered, generally, was that the hon. member would like to spend more on some very specific projects, which he spoke very eloquently about. He also referred to continuing to increase health care spending. As I understand the gist of his comments, he will be supporting the amendment because the government does not have a long-term savings plan. So I would like him to reconcile the two. If you're supporting the amendment, how do you reconcile that with spending more?

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I think the minister misheard me. That's the part of the motion that I have some difficulty with, this idea that we should have these massive investments in the creation of some massive savings plan. I think it's much better to invest in transforming our economy into a renewable, energy-based economy rather than putting a whole bunch of money in the stock market, where periodically we would take a bath.

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

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member in his presentation this afternoon on the amendment made reference to the term "tar sands," I observed, in my constituency of Fort McMurray, the oil sands capital of the world, of which I'm very proud. I wanted to share with the hon. member: did he know that the 100,000 people in my community refer to the tar sands as oil sands sweet blend? Now, it has been referred . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much. Unfortunately, the time is expired for this moment.

Now, we're still on the amendment. Are there additional speakers?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment lost]

**The Speaker:** We're back to the discussion on the bill. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. I'd like to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 47 read a second time]

### Bill 27

#### Alberta Research and Innovation Act

[Adjourned debate May 6: Ms Blakeman]

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 27, the Alberta Research and Innovation Act, with some very genuine concerns, and the more I study this bill, the more deeply concerned

I become. I think we all understand the importance of research and innovation and the importance in every society of public support for that function. The simple fact of the matter is that private, for-profit interests do not in any great amounts support fundamental research, basic research, into issues simply because the timelines are so long and the risks are so high.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

If you're doing basic research, you don't really know where it's going to take you, whether it will lead to anything that can be commercialized, whether it will lead to any clear results at all. That doesn't mean it isn't important. It's the foundation for applied research, commercialization and so on. Certainly, there are companies in the world that do support basic research, but I think everybody paying attention in Canada, the United States, the western world, India, China, wherever you go, understands that there's a very significant role of the public sector in supporting research.

Alberta has a pretty good track record in this. The Alberta Research Council was established many, many decades ago, and the University of Alberta was established now over a hundred years ago. They have both had long legacies in research. In fact, the Alberta Research Council was kind of a spinoff, as I recall, of the University of Alberta, and it was in part to help in the very early days, some 70 years ago or so, in research into the oil sands, or the tar sands, whichever you want to call them.

Alberta has a long history in supporting research, and that history was advanced significantly in the late 1970s by some decisions of the government of the day to establish, in particular, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, which has created, I think it's fair to say, an international, even a global reputation for backing good research. Since that time, more recently using roughly the same model as the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, we've seen parallel research funds set up on sciences, on engineering, precious little on anything relating to the liberal arts, but hope springs eternal, and maybe that'll come some day.

That's all background, Mr. Speaker, for this bill. I lay out that background because I think research is important, I think that public support for research is vital, and frankly I think that the future of this province depends on our success in areas like this. I have said this many, many times, that 50 years from now I don't believe that Alberta is going to have an oil and gas economy. I think if we're flourishing, it will be because of advances that none of us can foresee. So I'm a big supporter of public funding for research, and in the last two general elections, at least for us in the Alberta Liberals, increasing public support for research has been a core part of our platform.

All of that is background, and with that, you might think that I would be delighted with Bill 27. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the more I consider this bill and the more I look at the background documents to it, the deeper are my concerns. What we foresee in this bill is a terrific centralization of control, a centralization of control over Alberta's research sector. I guess I shouldn't be surprised. I'm not a lifelong Liberal actually, but maybe my principles are lifelong that way because the liberal in me, the small "l" liberal and the big "L" Liberal, is pretty unnerved by the tendency of this government in many, many sectors to centralize.

4:40

In the last year we've seen nothing less than a breathtaking centralization of control over the health system. All the regional health authorities were dissolved; the Alberta Cancer Board, which was a wonderfully respected organization, dissolved; AADAC,

dissolved. All brought into one central system. We've certainly seen a centralization of the school boards over the last 15 years. We see a centralization in all kinds of areas, and it's now to the point where the Premier issues mandate letters to his ministers and is expected to follow all the way down the line. Of course, there's a logic to that, Mr. Speaker, but I think when it's carried too far, it becomes a misguided logic. I actually am a small "I" liberal in the sense of believing in the liberties of people, believing in the importance of freedom and freethinking and believing in the long term that society's interests are best served when people are able to think freely and to act freely.

Certainly, there are clear economic foundations and philosophical foundations recognizing that there are limits to freedom and that there are areas in economics where as a society and even as individuals we're better off to have a fairly centralized system or to have a non market-based system. But when it comes to ideas, Mr. Speaker, I think freedom is absolutely vital, and my concern with this bill is that this leads to a curtailment of freedom; this leads to a centralization of control that is actually quite alarming.

I would urge all members, as they look at this piece of legislation, to read some of the background documents that are connected to it. I draw their attention, for example, to a document dated November 4, 2008, just six months ago: Alberta Education and Technology, Roles and Mandates Framework for Alberta's Provincially Funded Research and Innovation System. The subtitle is Focusing and Accelerating Innovation.

Mr. Speaker, I think there's a genuine risk that this bill will actually do the exact opposite of what it's intended to achieve. As you read through the document, you can see that what this does is ultimately centralize control over ideas and research and innovation in the hands of a very few people, and that span of control is immense. It will span research into medical issues. It'll span research into engineering issues. It'll span research into biological and life sciences issues and a whole host of other areas.

If you actually turn to page 6 of this roles and mandates framework, put out by the government six months ago, you come to a paragraph subtitled Clear, Long Term Vision. I want to read this into the record, Mr. Speaker, so I'm going to quote this entire paragraph. It's only one long sentence.

Clear, long term vision: Alberta's provincially funded research and innovation system has a long term vision (as set by the Premier) . . .

I want to emphasize that: as set by the Premier.

. . . which focuses and aligns the work of each component of the system and ensures all stakeholders are working towards the same goal.

I don't want to be overdramatic here, Mr. Speaker, but that's a frightening sentence. What this erects is a system of control focused in the hands explicitly of the Premier. It's a kind of totalitarianism of ideas, and I'm not prone to that sort of language unnecessarily. But what the heck is going on here when we are bringing in a piece of legislation that overtly is built on a sentence that says that Alberta's provincially funded research and innovation system has a long-term vision as set by the Premier? I don't care if the Premier is the current one, the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, or the next one, maybe the Member for Foothills-Rocky View, or it might be the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Who knows? I think it's wrong and dangerous to have the hands of one person controlling such a span of research funding. Now, there will be those who would say that I'm being alarmist. There will be those who'd say: "Well, it's only the Premier in name, and everybody knows the Premier takes advice. It'll really be the Lieutenant Governor in Council, or it'll be stakeholders." Whatever. It's down here, Mr. Speaker, in black and white.

The paragraph before that isn't really much more reassuring. Again I'm on page 6 of the November document put out by Alberta Advanced Education and Technology. I'm going to read it into the record as well.

Government Leadership: The Government of Alberta develop value added and knowledge based industries that support the diversification of the Alberta economy, utilizing research and innovation as key building blocks in turning this commitment into action. The Government of Alberta shows leadership by ensuring the stakeholders are clear about their roles, mandates and linkages within the research and innovation system.

Again, Mr. Speaker, any thinking person, any person with genuine experience in how innovation and research work should be deeply concerned about that.

Let's just take apart that sentence for a brief moment. It starts off by saying, "The Government of Alberta develop value added and knowledge based industries." Well, let's ask ourselves: is that what we want a government to be doing? Do we want the government to develop industries? Isn't that taking us right back to where we were 20 years ago when we had a government developing industries, investing in MagCan, magnesium refinement, south of Calgary and in Gainers and in NovAtel? And it seems to me there was a laser research company, GSR, General Systems Research, something to that effect. Are we turning the clock back to that point? Are we actually saying here – and we are – that the government of Alberta develop? It doesn't say invest in research that will stimulate the development, or it doesn't say will partner in development. There's no equivocation here at all: "The Government of Alberta develop value added and knowledge based industries." That's the path to ruin.

You know what I find happening? The feeling that's developing for me, Mr. Speaker, is that we're back to the very same mindset of the mid-80s when we had a government beginning to get us into debt and deficit, a government beginning to get us into the business of being in business, a government playing all kinds of games, that ultimately led us into a crisis and wasted staggering billions of dollars.

That's just the first phrase of that sentence. Then we have the classic Alberta clause all of us have used: "support the diversification of the Alberta economy." Well, of course, we all want to support the diversification of the Alberta economy, but my personal view is that this isn't the way to do it. But then the sentence continues: "utilizing research and innovation as key building blocks in turning this commitment into action." If we look at this seriously, "The Government of Alberta develop value added and knowledge based industries . . . utilizing research and innovation as key building blocks in turning this commitment into action."

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, we have five minutes for questions and comments. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was listening with great interest to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview. I realize that the time expired. I'm so interested. Could you please proceed?

4:50

**Dr. Taft:** I would be thrilled to proceed. I just want to continue on this one paragraph, Mr. Speaker.

We have the government of Alberta developing value-added and knowledge-based industries utilizing research and innovation as key building blocks in turning this commitment into action. I cannot imagine a more interventionist statement from this government or

any other government this side, maybe, of Beijing. I don't know where. We have here a mandate and a government document about to be supported in legislation that just sweeps away all the lessons that so much of the world has learned in the last 20 years, that innovation comes up from the bottom, that innovation is something that percolates, that innovation happens in unexpected ways, and that government should not be in the business of business. Here we have government lock, stock, and barrel getting right back into the business of business.

Now, I know time is short at this point, but I just want to go through the last sentence of that paragraph I read into the record: "The Government of Alberta shows leadership by ensuring the stakeholders are clear about their roles, mandates and linkages within the research and innovation system." Listen to this. The government of Alberta ensures the stakeholders – in other words, those doing the research – are clear about their roles. What are we doing here? Do we have somebody at the beck and call of the Premier or somebody in some senior civil servant's office saying: your role is to research X and lead to innovation, and your role is to research Y, and somebody else's role is to research Z. Mr. Speaker, it's not how innovation works. It doesn't come from the top down.

I cannot imagine a more heavy-handed, interventionist, anticreative approach to research and innovation than what's being proposed in this framework. And I can hear all the arguments that'll come back: "Well, do you want chaos?" You know what? Chaos is a lot more creative than what's being proposed here. "Do you want people confused about their roles and their mandates?" Well, if we're talking about innovation, sometimes that's exactly what it takes. We need fermentation. We need the kinds of things that the hard lessons of other places should have taught us and our own history should have taught us. We need a creative class, and we don't get a creative class by the Premier giving mandate letters out to match his vision and then giving the orders down with clear roles and mandates to all these researchers. That ain't gonna work. That ain't gonna work, Mr. Speaker.

We've turned the clock back here. We're putting way too much control in the hands of far too few people. It's politically and culturally frightening, and it's economically backwards. It's intellectually misguided, at least. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that if we're out there trying to attract the best and the brightest to this province, if we want the best and the brightest youth to stay here, and they have to deal with a system that tells them, "Well, the senior bureaucrat says your role is this," they're going to go somewhere else. They're going to go to a place where they're given the creative mandate and the resources to say, "Think, experiment, innovate, and come back to us and see what you've got."

You know, the lessons of history are so clear. Nobody told Albert Einstein: go out, Mr. Einstein, and innovate something on physics, and report back. That's not how it works. Nobody told Steve Jobs: go out, Steve, and invent the personal computer. You know how he did that? He did that in his garage as a 19-year-old. On and on it goes.

This is nuts. This is misguided craziness, Mr. Speaker, so you can bet we're not going to support this. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and join debate on Bill 27, the Alberta Research and Innovation Act. Research and innovation are integral to the growth of many sectors across the province, and it is important that this government leads the way in research excellence. The purpose of this act is to

promote and support the strategic and effective use of provincial resources to help meet the government's research and innovation priorities.

Mr. Speaker, the roles and mandates of all provincially funded research bodies have undergone extensive evaluation over the past year. As a result, a roles and mandates framework for Alberta's provincially funded research and innovation system has been created. This new framework reconfigures the current research and innovation system. It is designed to reduce complexity, facilitate access and transparency, and ensure that resources are used effectively.

I would like to highlight the structure of the new research and innovation framework in Alberta, including the new research authority committees and research entities. First, the Alberta research and innovation authority will provide advice and recommendations on research and innovation matters to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology in areas such as strategy, policy and long-term planning, identification of strategic opportunities in research and innovation, and monitoring of overall performance.

The act will clarify the duties of the Alberta research and innovation authority and help support the roles and mandates framework. It will also reflect recommendations made by an international review panel of the Alberta Science and Research Authority in 2007. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the minister will be able to make regulations relating to the Alberta Science and Research Authority, allowing for adjustments as the research and innovation system evolves.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Research and Innovation Act will create two advisory committees similar to the Campus Alberta Strategic Directions Committee, established within the Post-secondary Learning Act. The first of these, the Alberta research and innovation committee, will provide advice to the minister relating to the coordination of mandates and roles and activities and initiatives of the provincial research entities that will be established under the act. This committee will link the provincial entities and assist the minister in aligning the framework's priorities.

The second committee created, Mr. Speaker, will be the cross-government portfolio advisory committee. This committee will provide advice and recommendations on funding matters related to the new provincial entities created under the act. This advisory committee will provide an opportunity for ministries interested in research and innovation to review research plans and provide advice to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology.

Mr. Speaker, the Research and Innovation Act will provide a legislative structure for the implementation of the roles and mandates framework and will establish a number of new provincial research and innovation entities. These entities will have clear roles and mandates and will be consolidated from existing organizations funded by the government of Alberta. Ultimately, these new provincial entities will build on the success of the current research and innovation groups.

Four research entities are currently being contemplated and will focus on research and innovation matters in the areas of bioindustries, focused on strategic agriculture, forestry, and other life sciences; energy and the environment, focused on strategic energy and the environment; health, focused on strategic health; and commercial development, focused on assisting companies and entrepreneurs through technical support and enhancement through technology commercialization. Existing entities and their functions will be merged and/or reorganized to support a more aligned and integrated research and innovation framework.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, existing entities that will merge or reorganize include the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute, the Alberta Life Sciences Institute, the Alberta Energy Research Institute, the Alberta Research Council, and iCORE. These entities and the others that fall under the current research structure had significant impacts on the province. However, by merging and reorganizing them, it will increase their effectiveness and efficiency.

The Alberta Research and Innovation Act simplifies the process for both creating new provincial entities and dissolving them as the need may arise, which as a result builds responsiveness into the system. Additionally, it allows for flexibility in both broad structure and corporate objectives, which will allow them to better meet the needs of the system and its participants. These new provincial entities will provide opportunities for government ministries to achieve their research and innovation objectives with defined outcomes. This act will provide the model for the implementation of the roles and mandates framework that will in turn help foster a diversified economy. Additionally, the Alberta Research and Innovation Act will support the development of a research and innovation environment that is focused, integrated, and aligned.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like at this point to just mention that there have been some members in the House that have spoken about rumours in the Assembly such that there will be no fall competition for the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research funding and comments questioning our commitment to our scientific foundation. There has been absolutely no announcement toward that end. Alberta is building upon an excellent science base, and we continue to be a jurisdiction where researchers want to come because of the excellent people and infrastructure already in place. It is a detriment to all of the excellent scientists and researchers we have in Alberta to imply otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 27 is about making our world-class research and innovation system stronger and even more attractive to researchers both here and internationally. I strongly support Bill 27, and I urge all members to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have five minutes for comments or questions. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Yes. Thank you. To the Member for Calgary-Montrose: does he genuinely believe that a highly centralized research-financing organization like this, with ultimately very explicit, clear political control in the hands of the Premier and cabinet, is the best way to stimulate innovation? Does he think that that's how innovation erupted in California or in, you know, the Boston area or anywhere else? Is that really what he believes? If it is, could he give me some evidence to support it?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] Well, you know, it makes it a bit difficult to hear when you have hecklers on the other side who constantly speak about the need for government to be a mechanism of effectiveness. On any given day in question period or whatever other mechanism they have in this Assembly, members opposite speak about spending, and members opposite speak about saving. We realize that there is great potential for us to be international leaders in research and innovation. We are international leaders on many fronts already. Now the time is upon us

when we can better align our system so that we are more effective, so that instead of having a wide range of organizations each doing their own little pieces, we can be more effective and co-ordinated with provincial resources. Provincial resources are, obviously, not infinite. I mean, the province, just like any family or any business, has a defined amount of resources that we can put into any given area.

What we're trying to do is make sure that we get the best possible return by being strategic and by being more aligned, to make sure that we've identified areas where we feel that we will be international leaders, Mr. Speaker, in research, whether that be in the bioindustries, energy and the environment, or health. I mean, Alberta today is recognized as being a foremost producer of research in these areas and commercializing these technologies here in our province. One only needs to look at our nanotechnology research. It is an international leader. There are so many exciting things coming out of Alberta in our research and innovation system.

Mr. Speaker, aligning our system so that the overall priorities of society, of government can be more aligned ensures that we really are strategic and that we're best using our resources to produce results that will perhaps help us in health care and help us in solving the problems of modern disease and help to ensure that we bring those solutions to market in Alberta as well.

I think that for far too long we've had a system that has done very well in the respective areas. There's absolutely no doubt that we have organizations and institutes that have done tremendous, tremendous work and provided Alberta with a wonderful reputation internationally for the research they've done. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's time to rise up and go to a new level. That's what we're speaking about here. It's time to step up and go from A to B and show everybody internationally that Alberta is the place where the brightest minds come together with the support of such a progressive government.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. I want to very quickly go from the nanny state, as recommended by Calgary-Montrose, a total, centralized control, to nanotechnology. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview pointed out the wonderful contributions and the origins of research through the University of Alberta, that's celebrating its hundredth year. I want to very quickly wave a flag in the direction of the University of Calgary, that was formerly under the auspices of the University of Alberta. We have been doing wonderful work for 42 years as an independent institution.

With regard to the nanotechnology reference that I made, the surgical arm, the robotic arm that is so precise and can be controlled from thousands of miles away in terms of doing surgery, is just one of the phenomenal inventions that has come out of the University of Calgary, no doubt collaborating with the University of Alberta.

One of the fantastic research organizations associated with the University of Calgary is the institute for sustainable environment and economy. Experiential learning gets thrown in there once in a while as well. This institute is responsible for terrific developments. It is working in terms of projects on sequestration. It's working on converting electrical-generated wind power into a compressed form of energy which can then be brought on demand and added to the grid.

5:10

I want to point out that right across from the university we have a wonderful research park with facilities such as Alastair Ross. Most recently we celebrated the opening of the new Smart Technologies.

I believe that the majority of the government's investment should be directed towards our own postsecondary institutions. There's no doubt that innovation and technology are going to lead us into the future and take us from our current dependency on nonrenewable resources, so while we have the nonrenewable resources, let's use the money as investments in our postsecondary systems.

With that, I would like to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a second time]

**Bill 45  
Electoral Boundaries Commission  
Amendment Act, 2009**

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to move second reading of Bill 45, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2009.

This legislation will help government keep pace with Alberta's growing and changing population. Under the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act an Electoral Boundaries Commission must be appointed to review existing electoral boundaries and make proposals for change where appropriate. Right now the act requires an Electoral Boundaries Commission to be appointed no earlier than March 25, 2010. Amendments in Bill 45 will move up the date to establish a commission to no later than July 31, 2009.

The commission has a year to conduct public hearings and do its research, and then it must provide a report to the Speaker with recommendations as to where electoral boundaries should be located. Mr. Speaker, this time frame will not change. Regardless of changes to the legislation, the commission has one year to report. Appointing the commission earlier will, however, allow the commission's recommendations to be reviewed, debated, and adjusted by this Legislative Assembly well in advance of the next provincial election.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission Act also requires the commission to submit a report that divides Alberta currently into 83 proposed electoral divisions. Bill 45 will direct the commission to divide Alberta into 87 proposed electoral divisions. This increase of four divisions recognizes that Alberta's population has increased by more than 1 million people since the last time the number of electoral divisions was changed. Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I was quite surprised to see that that was almost 20 years ago. Alberta has changed an awful lot since then. The amendment will help ensure that Albertans from all areas of the province are being represented in this House fairly, equitably, and effectively.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments in Bill 45 will also expand the information that the commission can use in its population calculations. The commission will be able to consider more recent population information along with Statistics Canada census information in its population calculations if the commission feels the information is reliable and helpful.

The final amendment, Mr. Speaker, relates to what have been referred to as special electoral districts. Generally speaking, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act says that the population of a proposed electoral division must not vary from the provincial average by more than 25 per cent. However, to recognize that some parts of our province are particularly remote or may be sparsely populated, something our caucus is quite familiar with, the act allows for there to be a maximum of four electoral districts with a

population of as much as 50 per cent below the average. To be eligible as a special electoral district, the proposed electoral district must meet certain criteria that are listed in the act, 3 out of a list of 5 criteria, Mr. Speaker. One factor that the commission may consider in determining whether to propose the creation of one of these special electoral districts relates to the size of towns in that area. For that factor Bill 45 increases the maximum size of a town in a special electoral district from 4,000 to 8,000 people. This also recognizes that the size of some of Alberta's small towns, even in remote and sparsely populated areas, may have increased over the last few years. Changes to the Electoral Boundaries Commission will help to ensure that political representation reflects the changing population of the province and that these changes are put in place in a timely and responsible fashion.

I'd also like to add, Mr. Speaker, that one point that is part of the current act and will continue to be part of the act after these amendments is that the commission will be supported by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, so there is dialogue between the Chief Electoral Officer and the commission with respect to the planning of the boundaries.

I encourage all of my hon. colleagues to support Bill 45, and I look forward to hearing and participating in the debate. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to rise and speak to Bill 45, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2009. If you look through that, much of the object of the act, as explained by the hon. Minister of Justice, was that we are essentially changing the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act to reflect that they are adding four more seats to this province's democratic Legislature. I guess that, on its face, is the most obvious move. There are also some other things which I will speak to later on the act.

If we look at that first move, which is to increase the number of MLAs currently sitting in this Legislature, I guess one can say that, well, yes, Alberta has increased by, I believe the hon. minister said, a million people since the last time this act was drawn up some time ago. But I guess if you look at it more, what's happened in that time since the electoral act was redrawn, what has happened sort of outside the framework of the adding of those million people, what has really happened in society has been the advent of our ability to communicate, to be able to talk to one another with computer technology. Whether it's cellular phone technology or other types of technology, it allows us to communicate in a much more effective fashion than we at one time did.

For instance, you know, I just stepped out of here about 15 minutes ago, called my constituency office. They told me that a gentleman had called into the office and wanted to talk to me about X. I actually called that guy back, and lo and behold, no one missed me in that time I was gone.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I did.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, yes. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar may have missed me.

But what I think that story points out is that, yes, we haven't only added a significant amount of population, but we've added such a different component to our technology that there is simply no need for an addition of four more MLAs to this House for that primary reason, that we simply can do the work ourselves.

For instance, it's not only because it's my constituency of

Calgary-Buffalo, but I would suggest that I have a fairly busy constituency office. In Calgary-Buffalo I have a large percentage of people who are not only renters but people who would be considered far below the average, I guess, wage earning here in Alberta. I think if you also look in Calgary-Buffalo, we also have a significant number of recent immigrants who have come into the province. They live right downtown in Calgary.

5:20

Often, if you look at these two groups, although they're not the only ones who've used services of their MLA – other groups do, too – they use their MLAs probably disproportionately more than other groups. If I can handle the number of, I guess, people who come into my office and, I believe, effectively serve them – I believe that if you talk to them, they are effectively served by me and the hiring of two staff members – well, then I think it's fair enough that, you know, we can all do it. In fact, if we got added a few more constituents to my riding, I would feel safe in saying that we could handle their needs, too, at my office. I don't know. Maybe some other members would like to speak about their constituency offices. Maybe they're coming unglued at the hinges, but I would doubt that that is the case.

Anyways, my point is that if we look back to what debates were just happening, I guess the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill was asking: what would you guys cut from the budget? Well, here's one thing I wouldn't add to the budget, okay? Here's one thing I wouldn't add to the budget: another four MLAs to come here and, I guess – although we do do important jobs. I'm not minimizing what we do here. It is important and all of that stuff. Nevertheless, if you want to know what I would cut, that's a little more difficult because you don't open up the books. But I wouldn't add this.

You know why? Just some simple math tells me. I looked at the Legislative Assembly Offices, and it costs, I believe – and someone can correct me – \$53 million or \$51 million a year for us 83 members to sit in here. If you divide that number by, I believe, all 83 of us, times it by four years, you'll get roughly \$10 million for four MLAs to sit here for an average of a four-year term. If you look at that, I don't think that's an expense that the state or the Legislature, the people of Alberta need to undertake at this time. It's simply unnecessary.

I'd like us to all roll up our sleeves and do a little more work here and handle a few more calls, maybe, instead of buying a pin for someone to go on a trip to, say, some foreign jurisdiction and hand out Alberta pins that maybe some members are paying for out of their offices – I don't know – or some other things like that, maybe one less silent auction item. Don't get me wrong; I've provided a silent auction item as well from time to time. But all I'm saying is that it's just that we can all do a little more work in our constituency associations, possibly hire another person, and handle everyone's concerns. I don't think we need another four MLAs.

In fact, the hon. leader of our party, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, has been so bold as to suggest that we need another four MLAs like we need a hole in the head. That's not really language you would use, but he did use it.

**An Hon. Member:** Shocking.

**Mr. Hehr:** Shocking, yes. If you talk about shocking, that was actually shocking when that was said. I believe I said we need another four MLAs like a dog needs more fleas. Actually, when I went home to discuss this with my father, he said: well, the Legislature needs another four MLAs like the hon. Member for Calgary-

Buffalo needs a doughnut. I thought that was a little bit mean of my father, but he can be like that sometimes. Nonetheless, I think the point is being made. There are lots of these things – we can keep on going – that are kind of funny and euphemisms for, I guess, things people don't need or what Alberta citizens don't need at this time. What they don't need is a greater expense for maybe what we can all do here more efficiently by the use of technology and that sort of stuff.

Moving on to, I guess, some other portions of the bill, I was encouraged to hear that the commission when it's established can use even more updated information from the 2006 census. I don't know if that information will be available or out there, but I think that's another recognition that maybe there is technology out there that will allow us to find out what the true population of Alberta is and where people are located in this province and allow us to do even a more up-to-date finding out how many people need to be here.

I think there is one question, and I might as well ask it now. It'll probably go back to my office, or possibly the hon. Minister of Justice is here right now, and she could probably answer this later on or possibly even later today or something like that. I know we're allowed to have now four, I believe, ridings outside of 50 per cent of the population. I believe that's what that is.

**Mr. MacDonald:** It's 25 per cent.

**Mr. Hehr:** No. I believe this amendment has changed it now to be 50 per cent of the people. If we just take a couple of seconds, I'll grab that. I believe it says four ridings outside of 50 per cent of what the average is. I believe this is a change from what it used to be, from being 25 per cent outside of the riding. If that has been a change – and I'm not sure if it is – if the hon. Minister of Justice could explain how it differs from what was there before. I do have some possible concerns about that. If that could be addressed, maybe those concerns could be relieved.

Nonetheless, I think this is one of those bills that will probably address some of the things that have changed in Alberta society. Primarily, we are no longer a rural society. Most of our people have gone to the cities or outlying areas of cities, bedroom communities, that sort of thing. We're no longer an agricultural or rural-based society. I think this Electoral Boundaries Commission will have a lot of work to do in recognizing that the vast majority of our citizens are living in cities. I believe probably 70 per cent, possibly 71 per cent at this time. The electoral map has to reflect that. I think this Assembly should reflect that. I think some of the decisions we make in here will be significantly impacted by a more realistic drawing of an electoral map that actually reflects where our population resides.

I look forward to this commission being drawn, hopefully, recognizing some of those things. Going back to my first point, let's recognize that we are in a time of constraint. I will most likely be putting forward an amendment later on, just to give the hon. members of the government a heads-up, so they can maybe think about this, that maybe this commission can do their job with redrawing the electoral map if there are only 83 members in it. I think that's something to think about. Let's show them that we can roll up our own sleeves here in difficult times and take some more calls. Let's get the Alberta SuperNet up and working in different places and all that stuff.

5:30

Nevertheless, I think those are my comments, and of course I'll have more at different time periods. I appreciate being given the opportunity to speak. I may go have a doughnut right now.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. member who wishes to speak? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright on the bill.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo's comments. I hadn't really planned on speaking to this, but I do have to point out a few observations. I know that the hon. member talked about the cities being where the population resides, but there has to be some consideration given sometimes at some point to where our food resides and where our oil and gas reside and where all the people who produce those things that get funneled into the city reside. I know that the majority of the population continues to urbanize – the whole globe continues to urbanize – but somewhere we have got to establish a balance.

I know that technology will provide some of those solutions. I mean, for some reason some of the newspapers in this province keep commenting on how well I utilize technology to talk to constituents. I don't know that I'm the best one, but I do the best I can. But you have to understand that in rural Alberta, Mr. Speaker, people don't just want to see you on a video screen or over the phone. Every one of my constituents, all 34,000 that live there, don't call me Mr. Griffiths; they call me Doug. They ask me how my wife and kids are doing. They ask me, you know, how my garden is growing and how the lawn is growing. They talk to me as though I'm a member of each and every one of the communities.

You have to understand that in my constituency of Battle River-Wainwright, Mr. Speaker, there are 32 different communities, there are five different county and MD councils, and then there are all the elected school boards that I have to represent. All of these people are only represented by me. It's not an urban centre, where there are two school boards or one city council that is represented by 20 urban MLAs. This is 43 different elected bodies combined that are only represented by me, and every single one of them expects to see me every couple of months to sit down and talk about the issues, not over the phone but right there, face to face. On top of that, in each of those 32 communities there are parades, there are fairs, there are rodeos, there are all the graduations, there are all the fundraising events plus every other event that goes on that for some reason everybody always expects me to be there for.

There are typically only two opinions, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency. Either people come up and say, "I can't believe you can actually maintain a presence regularly in each of your 32 communities and get around to see the councils and attend all of those events," or people don't understand that I have all of the constituency issues to deal with. We're up here, two hours from my constituency, with all of the committee work, the parliamentary assistant duties that I have, and the time that we spend in this Legislature, and they wonder how I can even make it. Or, as I said, because they don't understand how many committee meetings we have, how much work goes into the budget, how much time we actually spend up here, they ask me: why aren't you attending every single thing?

I actually had one of my constituents come up to me at a fundraising event in one of the larger communities in my constituency, walked up to me and said: you weren't at the graduation ceremony; why weren't you? She was very upset. I said: well, between my parliamentary assistant duties, the committee duties that I have, the time we spend in the Legislature, the fact that we've been working on the budget, the fact that I have 32 communities to represent, and I try to sometimes squeeze in some time with my wife and sons, I may not have had an event that Saturday night, but I might have chosen, actually, to put my two boys to bed after I gave them a bath and kissed them goodnight. She looked aghast. She suddenly

realized that she had no idea about the amount of work that goes on up here, how much time we spend up here.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked to a lot of people in my constituency. We spend time historically in this province and across western Canada talking about how in the eastern provinces we sometimes think that Ontario and Quebec or Ottawa and Toronto are the centre of the universe. They have so much of the population, and we don't get a voice out here, where we produce so much of the natural resources. I've suggested that perhaps we should take the 83 MLAs and divide them in half and have half of them always based on population and half of them on sort of a grid cut out of the province. It doesn't matter whether four people live there and all the oil is there or a hundred thousand people are there and there's no oil there, it never changes. So we'd have balance in this House between the regions where our resources are and people work hard to produce them and where the population lives. We've complained a lot in this province, across western Canada, about how we face the same situation and we need a triple-E Senate in Canada, but we don't model it here in the province.

I know that people talk about equal representation, one person, one vote or one person, one representative, so that we all should represent about 40,000 people. But, Mr. Speaker, somewhere within the consideration of the courts and within this Assembly there has got to be consideration given for fair representation, where 21 MLAs in the city who represent one city council, two school boards, and one health authority, who may have a lot of work – I'm not saying that they don't have a lot of work – have to be balanced with an MLA that lives in rural Alberta, where it takes two hours to go from one corner of the constituency to the other, and has 32 communities to represent, 43 different elected bodies. There has to be some consideration, some balance given to that.

Although I would still like to see deeper democratic discussions had about whether or not we could split the House between 42 MLAs based on population and 41 based on regions or maybe split into two Houses – I don't know – some really deep, back to the very beginning philosophical discussions about democracy, there is no way that I would not support something that will add more MLAs to make sure that rural MLAs aren't taxed more with more communities, more disparity, and less voice in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have five minutes for comments and questions. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, I thank the hon. member for his questions. I'll make some brief comments, and then maybe he can answer sort of from my comments and generalize where I'm going.

I heard his comments on the fact that something has to represent where our oil comes from and where our wheat comes from and all that sort of stuff. But the simple fact of the matter is: that stuff doesn't vote. That stuff is not what we represent. We don't represent oil that comes out of the ground. We don't represent wheat. We represent people, okay? Those are the people who cast their ballots and who actually go to the polls and actually talk to an MLA. It's called representation by population, and that is the primary goal along with effective representation. I do know that that is a portion of it, but I think that you can do effective representation. And that's what we owe our citizens: effective representation.

I don't know if you have to be at every graduation. I'm not at every graduation in my community although I think people know I get around to a fairly significant number of events in my community and don't say that I'm not able to be seen on the streets. There are



certain things that have to, I guess, come first, and I believe effective representation can be given to the technology devices that are available, that people have an ability to get a hold of you and that you can be accountable through these things. Just simply put, that's sort of where my feelings are.

I guess we all have our own feelings on this. People are in my office all the time who can't speak the language. We go our extra mile to try and help this, that, and the other thing, so I know the challenges.

Anyways, I'm starting to ramble. I'll pass it on as just sort of a general comment, plus I'll give you a chance to comment back.

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't meaning – and I'm sure the member understands – that his job is easier than mine because I have different groups to represent or so many different communities. But there tend to be different mindsets that occur in the city as opposed to rural Alberta.

5:40

One of the great principles of democracy that we always discuss is that you have to prevent a tyranny of the majority. Democracy is great. Democracy is fundamental. But somewhere when you have a vote of 51 per cent or 80 per cent for something and 49 per cent or 20 per cent opposed – democracy has to be a fundamental principle, but you cannot allow 80 per cent of the population to dominate 20 per cent of the population because you could undermine the very fabric of the democracy if you don't prevent a tyranny of the majority.

I meet people in the city who sometimes talk about the environment. It's very important to them. It's very important to rural Albertans, too. But there are fundamentally different ideas about what protecting the environment means to rural Albertans and urban Albertans. I have a cousin in the city of Calgary who talks a lot about the environment and the need to shut down the oil sands, not realizing that this isn't just providing oil and gas; it's providing plastics and diapers and so many other fundamental things in our lives. Rural Albertans have a different understanding. They're not destroying the environment by growing wheat. So if you suddenly give too much influence and power to urban Alberta to the detriment of rural Alberta, where it doesn't have a fair and balanced voice, you could wind up undermining all that very success that you're trying to achieve.

I appreciate the member's one person, one vote and that those resources don't vote, but somewhere, Mr. Speaker, you have to make sure that those voices are significant enough and balanced enough against the majority so that you prevent a tyranny. Thank you.

**Mr. Chase:** Just within the five minute period I want to put it on the record that over here we know all about tyranny of the majority. Beyond a doubt. In terms of responsibility, try being an opposition member and having a number of portfolios. I realize that we're not in the position of the NDs, but there's a struggle involved. I just wondered if part of the solution that you might envisage would be a form of proportional representation.

**Mr. Griffiths:** I know that time is short. Very briefly, it really depends on how it's formulated because right now the 34,000 people in my constituency come to me knowing that I represent them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview on the bill.

**Dr. Taft:** On the bill, yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take advantage of the Minister of Justice being here. I regret to say I missed some of her introductory comments because I was just in a commitment outside. I will keep my comments fairly brief.

I listened with sympathy to the comments from the Member for Battle River-Wainwright, and I know that's a huge, spread out, sparsely populated constituency. It is a complicated issue. I do think there is a case to be made, actually, for fewer seats. I sometimes wonder why there needs to be 83 of us here and if a lot of things government gets into perhaps unnecessarily or just because there are make-work projects for MLAs, but I won't prolong that.

I know it's limited debate, but if I were to take my seat and open the opportunity under 29(2)(a) for the Minister of Justice to just go through again – I think she might have done this once before – the variations from the mean that are proposed here, plus or minus 25 per cent, minus 50 per cent, that sort of thing. I know that will probably come up in committee, but can the minister take a moment to elucidate the approach of this bill on that particular issue? No? I don't read sign language, but I take it that was a no. At the next stage. Okay. All right. I just thought we could be innovative under 29(2)(a).

Well, I acknowledge this is an important bill. It affects every one of us. There's a good chance that any number of us won't have constituencies to represent after this commission is done its work. I must say it's a concern of mine. I'm concerned that Edmonton-Riverview will actually get dismantled through this process because of political reasons. However, I'll wait and see. It could happen. It was attempted last time. I should get it on the record that all the submissions last time around concerning my constituency from the Progressive Conservative constituency associations in southwest Edmonton advocated dismantling Edmonton-Riverview, and I think there'll be an even stronger move to that next time.

Anyways, Mr. Speaker, I won't prolong the debate in terms of fewer seats, but I actually think it would be a really refreshing idea to consider. I think we all get carried away with the importance of our jobs. We're all busy. We could all go 24 hours a day because we all know that people expect us at their graduations, or there are homeless people, there are receptions, there are 100th birthday parties, all of that stuff. But at some point we just have to say: enough. City councillors do it with far larger populations. Members of Parliament do it with far larger populations. I think that would be an interesting debate. I wouldn't win it, so I won't prolong it. I do, however, hope that we can keep the number of MLAs to 83 because I actually don't think we need to be adding more politicians to the social-political fabric of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have five minutes for questions and comment. The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened to the comments from the opposition and from the government side of the House with interest. I wanted to first say that I think that the nature of what we do in this House, even though we all probably as members have a different take on it, inherently comes from an understanding and an abiding faith that what our constituents have elected us to do is to represent them.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that from the work I have done and I think other people have done in this House, not only in their current

careers in life but in terms of work around the world, I truly do believe that there is no replacement for standing face to face with someone and listening to what their concerns might be. I know that there is much celebration of technology and much celebration of finding other ways to do things, but it has always been to me in my life experience and the case in my life that it is very difficult to substitute that direct conversation because people will share things with you in person that they will not share with you by e-mail or by phone.

I believe that it is a fundamental piece of what we have to do in this House, all kidding aside as to how many people represent us or whether we may or may not think that people effectively represent in some joking manner. But when you're standing face to face with someone and you're seeing where they live and how they live and what their day was like and what it's going to be like tomorrow, there is nothing that can replace that. So I would ask the member under 29(2)(a) to perhaps comment on that.

With respect to the 25 per cent question which has come up – and there have been some queries about that – there was reference in my opening comments to 25 per cent and 50 per cent. The 25 per cent reference was with respect to no constituency in the province having either more or less than 25 per cent of the mean average of people in a constituency so that you don't see tremendous deviations in that, with the exception of the special electoral districts, which do have a set of criteria attached to the legislation that would allow for exceptions beyond 25 per cent. So I hope that that may clarify to some extent, because two 25s add up to 50, so people sometimes confuse the issues. They are actually separate issues, and it's about ensuring consistency across the province with that one exception, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. On the bill, Mr. Speaker?

**The Deputy Speaker:** In the time available, for questions and comment.

**Mr. MacDonald:** No. I just wish to participate in the debate, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All right. Does anybody wish to join the questions and comments? We still have one or two minutes.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the bill.

5:50

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, Bill 45 is interesting. We could wait before we proceed with this commission, but for reasons known to themselves, the government has decided that now is the time. With this bill, of course, we are proposing another boundaries commission to be established no later than the middle of the summer. We're going to have the five-member commission prepare recommendations to divide our province into 87 proposed provincial electoral divisions, an increase of four divisions, or four constituencies.

Well, certainly, I have listened to the discussion to date. Since we increased the size of the Legislative Assembly to 83 seats, there has been a significant change in how information is exchanged whether it's between individuals or between an elected representative and their constituency. There has been significant improvement. Some days when I look at my e-mail and there are dozens and dozens of e-

mails, I doubt that, but overall the electronic age has certainly made it much easier for each and every representative to have a dialogue with their constituents. For that reason and that reason alone I don't think it's necessary that we increase the size of the Legislative Assembly by four seats.

I certainly think that there should be a fair redistribution. The hon. member across the way talked about urban, rural areas, and there are sparsely populated areas. We all know that Alberta was one of the areas of Canada that was slow to urbanize, or change from rural to urban. Now we see the dramatic growth in Edmonton and Calgary, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat . . .

**Dr. Taft:** Red Deer.

**Mr. MacDonald:** . . . Red Deer, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray, and it's only logical that we would see a redistribution of the electoral map. I don't think it is necessary to add four additional seats.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, as it was correctly pointed out by the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*, was looking for some efficiencies and looking for ways that we could perhaps save a few dollars. Well, that's one of them. We may have to look at this. Certainly, a way we could save money is by maintaining the present number of MLAs in the Assembly.

We all know that Edmonton was a loser in the last boundaries commission. It was astonishing to think that a central part of Edmonton would lose its representation. No one is saying that Calgary should not have gotten additional seats. The dramatic population growth was there, and it was evident. Calgary had to get an increase in representation.

This gets to my point where one of the basic principles of democracy is representation by population, Mr. Speaker. Where the population is is where the representatives are. Rural areas, sure, they have unique circumstances, but so does the constituency of Edmonton-Riverview, so does the constituency of Calgary-*Varsity*. Both of them have large postsecondary institutions. Actually, Calgary-*Varsity* has less than Edmonton-Riverview, but they are unique. Calgary-*Buffalo* is a downtown, urban constituency with a lot of issues around new Canadians. There are issues around homelessness. There are issues around the care centres that are to provide for people who are, unfortunately, in circumstances that do not allow them to participate in the job market. Edmonton-Gold Bar. A complete section of our constituency deals with file after file after file on social services and access to affordable housing, access to adequate medical care, access to homeless shelters. Each and every area and each and every neighbourhood has interests that should be looked after by their respective representative.

When you look at the basic principle of representation by population, a commission is going to have to make some tough decisions. I think we are going to have to look at Fort McMurray and the whole Wood Buffalo region. I'm not saying that the hon. member that's elected there is too busy, but there's been a dramatic increase in the population there, and I'm confident there will be in the next few years, so that has to be reflected in the new map.

I know, again, that Alberta's population has increased by more than 1 million since the last time the constituencies were changed or increased. We're looking at 23 years, I believe, since that was done, Mr. Speaker. In that 23-year period we have gone from a computer the size of a truck, even larger, to one that the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill can just pack up in 30 seconds and away he goes. So that's how much the information age has changed. I think the information age allows us with larger constituencies to represent them effectively.

Now, I don't know whether we're looking at increasing the number of seats to 87 to see if we can avoid a court challenge. I was surprised after the last boundary redistribution that there was not a court challenge because we are not in balance. There is not a balance by the principle of representation by population. If this proposal becomes law and the boundary commission is struck and it makes its recommendations, then by this time next year we'll have a good idea as to what they are. If there is still what I think is an imbalance between rural representation and urban representation, then I think there will be well-meaning, concerned citizens who will consider taking this matter through the courts.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed bill contains the legislative means to allow the commission process to start so that they can meet the deadlines that have been outlined. This is in section 2. Section 3 of the proposed act, which would amend the current section 12, allows the commission to rely on several forms of census that they would be unable to use, as I understand it, under the current act. The new statistical data relied upon would incorporate municipal statistical information, which is gathered with greater frequency, and would

allow the commission to have a more up-to-date perspective of conditions on the ground in each constituency in the province. I think that's a fine idea.

In fact, I was driving just before dark last night out in Edmonton-Sherwood Park. I shouldn't say Edmonton-Sherwood Park – not until we get that Bill 36 passed; then it will be Edmonton-Sherwood Park – but the Sherwood Park neighbourhood. I saw the sign that alerted citizens to the census. They had two ways that they could participate in the census. They could wait until someone came to their door, or they could do it on the Internet, another example of how the Internet has changed our lives. Having this census information is really important . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The chair hesitates to interrupt the hon. member, but it's 6 o'clock, so the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]





## Table of Contents

Introduction of Visitors .....	1071
Introduction of Guests .....	1071
Members' Statements	
Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor .....	1073
Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta .....	1081
National Nursing Week .....	1081
Lyn Radford Madiha Mueen .....	1082
Go Green Eco Expo .....	1082
Rosie Templeton .....	1082
Oral Question Period	
Oil Sands Royalties .....	1073
Definition of Human Sexuality .....	1074
H1N1 Influenza Virus in Pig Herd .....	1074
H1N1 Influenza Virus in Humans .....	1075
Advocate for Seniors .....	1075
Deerfoot Trail Traffic Congestion .....	1076
Health Services Budget for Nurses .....	1076
Carbon Emissions from Coal .....	1077
Fundraising Dinner Sales Committee .....	1077
Staffing of Long-term Care Centres .....	1078
Timber Harvesting and Reforestation Certification .....	1078
Access to Medical Services .....	1079
Wind Power Generation .....	1079
Condominium Property Act Consultation .....	1079
Knowledge Infrastructure Program Funding .....	1080
School Construction and Renovation .....	1081
Tabling Returns and Reports .....	1082
Tablings to the Clerk .....	1083
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 47 Appropriation Act, 2009 .....	1085
Bill 27 Alberta Research and Innovation Act .....	1094
Bill 45 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2009 .....	1098

**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  
 MacDonald

**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](http://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.