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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, February 18, 2010

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. Guide us so that we may use the privilege given us as elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. Give us the strength to labour diligently, the courage to think and to speak with clarity and conviction and without prejudice or pride. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly former member 607, Mr. Mike Cardinal, who is seated in your gallery. Mr. Cardinal was first elected in the general election held in 1989 to represent the constituency of Athabasca-Lac La Biche, re-elected in '93, '97, and 2001 to represent the constituency of Athabasca-Wabasca, and re-elected in 2004 to represent the constituency of Athabasca-Redwater. Mr. Cardinal served in six cabinet portfolios, and I'm proud to say he did an excellent job. He's left some very big shoes for me to fill as he's my predecessor. I'm also proud to say he's my friend and mentor and has served Alberta very well. He's accompanied this afternoon by Peter Bidlock, a prominent businessman in Edmonton who is a member of Travel Alberta's strategic marketing council. I'd ask them both to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of nine interns who are currently learning on the job within my Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology. These interns come to us from a variety of Alberta postsecondary institutions and programs, so we know they have the knowledge and skills to succeed. In fact, they are already valuable assets in the divisions where they work. I'd ask them to rise as I call out their names. We have Krista Comfort, Alisha Cupido, Crystal Lee, Jo Tolentino, Stephen Boyd, Angela Ta, Olga Romero, Lindsay Manz, Brent Wellsch, Ameer Persson. They are all in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they all rise, as I said, to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House two people who are very important to me. First of all, my wife, Wanda, who is visiting question period this afternoon, and also my son Barry, who is on reading week, taking the week off from the Lethbridge community college where he is studying business. I'd ask them both to rise and enjoy the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a special guest seated in the members' gallery today, Mr. Ron Boutin of the Edmonton maximum security prison, in my riding of Edmonton-Manning. I will tell the Assembly more of what Mr. Boutin has been doing at the Edmonton maximum security prison in my member's statement. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Boutin last year. I was impressed by the operation. I would like to formally introduce him to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. Please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased on behalf of the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations to introduce some very special guests who are joining us in the Assembly this afternoon. They are students of Brentwood elementary school. There are 62 visitors, and they're seated in the public gallery. If I could, I would like to acknowledge the teachers or group leaders that are with them: Mr. Vantour, Ms Capton, Mrs. Rossman, and Ms Oseen as well as parent helpers Mr. Fehr, Ms Jacobson, Mrs. Keirstead, and Mrs. Peters. I'd ask this group to rise so that all members can give our traditional warm welcome to this group of outstanding young students from Sherwood Park.

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

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure today to introduce two Albertans. The first is no stranger to this place – she's worked in the Legislature for many years – Evelyn Oberg. Evelyn is working in my office here in the Annex. I'd like to ask Evelyn to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. Evelyn, thank you.

As well, indeed a new Canadian, who has been in Alberta for over two years. He also is working in my office, and that is Rolando Nicolas. I'd ask Rolando to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one other introduction I would like to make, and that is a group of student representatives that are in the Legislature today doing their work, representing students from across this province, talking to members about postsecondary education and their concerns and bringing them forward, and I certainly do encourage them to do that.

They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'll read their names off very quickly: Ms Carol Neuman, who's the executive director of the Alberta Students' Executive Council. We have Mr. Robert Jones, who's the chair and VP external, Mount Royal University; Miss Amber Herman, vice-chair, VP events, Medicine Hat College; Mr. Timothy Jobs, director of finance and VP of academic at NAIT; Ms Kerri Hartman, who's their treasurer and VP campus life of Grant MacEwan University. We have Steven Kwasny, who's director of policy and also president of Red Deer College; Mr. Colin Rose, director of advancement, president of SAIT students' union association; Miss Heather MacBeath, director of marketing and communications, VP academic at SAIT; Mr. Travis McIntosh, who's the president, Students' Association of Mount Royal University. We have Mr. Brady Schnell, president, Medicine Hat College; Ms Sage Wheeler, president, Alberta College of Art & Design Students' Association; and Mr. Geoff Tate, who's the president of the NAIT

Students' Association. I see they have risen in the gallery. I would ask all members to give them a warm appreciation for what they do.

The Speaker: Hon. members, please as well join me in recognizing the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who's celebrating a birthday anniversary today.

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, I think we have some folks here from the Lakeland country home school, located in Vermilion. These students are from around different areas of Alberta and provide a tremendous asset to many of the families around Alberta. If they're in the gallery, I would please ask them to rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

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

Lethbridge Technology Commercialization Centre

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and speak to this House about a new partnership in Lethbridge that will help the city attract new technology-based start-up businesses. Thanks to a \$4 million grant from the federal government's community adjustment fund, a commitment of funding from the city of Lethbridge, and an investment of \$1 million from Iunctus Geomatics, Lethbridge will see the creation of a new incubation centre to help draw and foster new high-tech businesses.

The Technology Commercialization Centre will be based in a 10,000 square foot facility designed to offer flexible space and support services to start-up technology businesses. Iunctus, which is a Lethbridge-based company that has grown exponentially over the past decade, will move its operations to a second structure while a third will be built nearby as home to a secure data centre with a backup power supply. As Iunctus president Ryan Johnson puts it, his company has grown up in Lethbridge, and this is an opportunity to partner with the community that has helped it become the success it is today.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, this partnership is truly a win-win situation for the city of Lethbridge, the province of Alberta, and Iunctus Geomatics. By attracting new support businesses to Lethbridge, the centre will bring jobs to the city. It will also provide opportunities for graduates of Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge. At the same time these new highly specialized businesses will be able to support Iunctus Geomatics and supply the company with the qualified workers they need to continue to grow. As Mayor Bob Tarleck stated, the centre will "strengthen existing industries and attract new businesses as part of [Lethbridge's] commitment to developing a globally strong, knowledge-based economy."

Mr. Speaker, Lethbridge and the surrounding area have long been known as the hub of the agricultural and food processing industries. With the advent of the Technology Commercialization Centre, it is well on its way to developing an even more diverse economy. In doing so, the city of Lethbridge is taking to heart the priorities outlined by this government to diversify and develop a leading-edge economy that will take full advantage of all of the resources of Alberta.

Thank you.

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

Ron Boutin

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I introduced Mr. Ron Boutin of the Edmonton maximum security prison earlier today, who is here to watch question period. Mr. Boutin is the warden of the Edmonton maximum security prison. He has devoted the last 30 years with the Correctional Service of Canada to ensure public safety. He was appointed warden in August 2007.

Edmonton maximum houses approximately 250 offenders, all of which have sentences of over two years. Mr. Boutin has faced many challenges in his role. One of the major issues has been finding ways to deal with offender aggression. The solution that originated at the Edmonton maximum security prison has become a national policy for all maximum security prisons throughout Canada. More attention is paid to an offender's eventual return to the community, and they are being taught job skills, such as welding and carpentry. There is also more accountability for prisoners through the offender disciplinary process.

Mr. Boutin is known for the pride he has in his dealings with the public, for his fairness, and for his willingness to listen. I am proud of Mr. Boutin's progress at Edmonton maximum. It has made the prison a safer place, which certainly has a positive impact on our city as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Grandparents' Rights of Access to Grandchildren

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It takes a village to raise a child, or an extended family at least. In Alberta certain members of an extended family can be shut out of a child's life, and I'm talking about grandparents. Over the years I've heard from numerous grandparents who are grief stricken at being denied access to their grandchildren. It is argued that it is in the best interests of the child to be acquainted with their extended family and to have a place in that family. Access is the child's right and should not be used as a form of punishment by the parents or the grandparents for wrongs either real or imagined.

Yes, grandparents can at their own cost go to civil court and try to convince a judge to allow them access to their grandchildren, but this is onerous, expensive, time consuming, and some would say unnatural. Access, custody, and guardianship is governed by half a dozen provincial statutes and three different courts, a bewildering maze to work your way through for a nonlawyer, especially when all you want to do is have a relationship with your grandchild. The Provincial Court Act does contain a specific provision for grandparent access, and it describes the process of access and custody for a child and the criteria for the best interests of the child. However, the Family Law Act allows the parents the right to determine the individuals they want their children to associate with, and the court can only grant a leave of application for contact with the child if it's determined to be in the best interests of the child.

It's bewildering, frustrating, and heartbreaking. We need a better, nonadversarial method to address this situation. On behalf of grandparents, including one of my constituents, Wendy Walker, I ask the government to work toward an improved role for grandparents, one that is not defined by court litigation.

Thank you.

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

Immigrant Employment Mentorship

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is expected that Alberta will have a labour shortage of 100,000 workers by 2013, and projections suggest that by 2011 Canada could be completely reliant on immigration for its net labour force growth. Many of the skilled immigrants in Alberta have valuable skills and experiences but have difficulty finding employment commensurate with those skills and experiences. Lack of employment networks and unfamiliarity with the Canadian workplace culture and expectations are two of the significant barriers they face.

I'm pleased to inform you that action is being taken in Calgary and in Edmonton to ensure that skilled immigrants coming to our province are well positioned to respond to Alberta's labour market needs and that employers are aware of the rich potential of the immigrant demographic. The recently formed Calgary region and Edmonton region immigrant employment councils are nonprofit organizations dedicated to ensuring immigrants' meaningful participation in our labour market.

The councils have each identified mentoring as an excellent means by which skilled immigrants can become better prepared for employment in their field and a way for employers to better understand the advantage of having these workers. The councils are each launching mentoring programs to connect these skilled immigrants with people already employed in their field in March. The findings from these pilot projects will be shared at a mentorship summit in September 2010.

Mr. Speaker, full employment of immigrants is good for our economy. Because of the Calgary and Edmonton immigrant employment councils most skilled immigrants will be able to obtain employment that matches their education and skills, benefiting themselves, our communities, and Alberta's employers. I'm pleased to note that the Ministry of Employment and Immigration has supported both immigrant employment councils, joining other funders like Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The Calgary and Edmonton immigrant employment councils are unique initiatives offering practical solutions to our province's future labour needs.

Thank you.

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

Competitiveness Review of Royalties

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The government appointed the Alberta Royalty Review Panel, which urged the government to increase royalties by about 20 per cent, an additional \$2 billion per year. Later that month the government announced an increase to royalty rates of not \$2 billion but \$1.4 billion, instead.

Three months later they decided even that was too much, and they announced their first rollback, a new contract with Suncor that would have reduced our take by about 40 per cent per barrel as they went to a bitumen basis of calculation. Three months later they announced another rollback, this time for deep drilling, costing Albertans \$37 million a year. Seven months later there was a new deal with Syncrude and another rollback. Our take per barrel was cut nearly in half. The next day there was another rollback. This time new wells would see a royalty exemption of \$172 million in the first year and more than half a billion by 2013. Last March there was yet another rollback for oil and gas, which would cap royalties at 5 per cent regardless of the price of oil or the profit margins of the companies extracting our resource.

The Premier has rolled back royalties at least five times, and government admits that it cost the province about \$2 billion a year

so far. The Premier even bragged about saving industry about \$500 million in one quarter.

We have seen delay after delay to the competitiveness review, which is being hammered out behind closed doors with the oil and gas industry. The citizens who own the resource are being kept in the dark and excluded. When I asked the minister during estimates why these changes were being made without Albertans involved, he said: Henry and Martha would be so lost. Mr. Speaker, they're trying to lose us.

We have no choice but to conclude that this government is letting oil and gas write its own ticket. The oil industry has been funnelling money to a party that's even further to the right of the Progressive Conservatives to put pressure on the government on royalties. It is obvious that when faced with this threat, the government is prepared to fold like a cheap tent.

Oral Question Period

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

Postsecondary Education Funding

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the House the minister of advanced education said, "the base operating grants of every institution in this province [are] protected." This morning, however, it was revealed that by consolidating a series of separate grants, the government has effectively hidden a reduction in expected grant funding of \$27 million to the University of Alberta. If the minister won't give Albertans a straight answer, perhaps the Premier will. Students in postsecondary institutions have ridden this government boom-and-bust fiscal roller coaster for far too long. When is the Premier going to start treating postsecondary education as an investment by delivering a plan for stable, predictable funding?

1:50

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology has met with all of the postsecondary institutions and gave them good information on what to expect from this year's budget. He is continuing to work with them to ensure that postsecondary education remains a priority for this government.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, this government's incompetent management is close to creating a crisis in postsecondary education. Cutbacks and tuition hikes are not the solution. Why isn't this government exploring constructive options such as low-interest loans for postsecondary institutions, that would allow them to maintain capacity as Alberta's economy recovers?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd be more than happy to correct some of the gross errors in the preamble. Number one, the tuition increases this year are based on the CPI cap. We are maintaining that cap as an investment in this province's future. Number two, the base operating grant for all of the postsecondary institutions in the province of Alberta for the past six years has gone up 42 per cent, and we protected that. That's a great investment in the future of this province.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, this government has also eliminated targeted funding to high-demand programs which produce skilled workers. Alberta will need these workers as we emerge out of the recession. Is the Premier not concerned that in addition to running

up a massive budget deficit, his legacy will be presiding over a massive skills deficit?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm not exactly sure where the hon. member is doing his research, other than perhaps the *Edmonton Journal*, which I would advise is probably not the best place to do his research given the fact that what he's talking about is probably rumour as opposed to actual fact. The training part of it in terms of apprenticeship is based on the demand of the number of apprentices that are showing up at the postsecondary institutions. We have a very good handle on where that's going, and this province does more training of apprentices per capita than any other province in the country.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Postsecondary Tuition Fees

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has been a tradition across Canada of sharing the costs of postsecondary education between provincial governments, which pay two-thirds, and students, who pay one-third. But as the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has demonstrated, this balance is being jeopardized as the government downloads more of the cost to students. To the minister of advanced education. The government's failure to invest in postsecondary institutions is forcing them to ask for massive hikes to tuition in professional faculties. Why is the minister not coming forward with a clearer position on these increases?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how much clearer I could be on this issue. The institutions told us that when we froze tuitions at the 2004 levels, there may have been some areas where we made an error. I simply said to them: "If you believe that there was an error made in 2004, present those facts to me and to the students, and let's have a look at them. If there was an error, we'll fix it." That's the only adjustments we're talking about. The CPI cap on tuitions of 1.5 per cent for this year stands.

Mr. Chase: Given that postsecondary institutions are trying to make up for their reduced provincial funding by raising additional fees, will the minister solve both the students' and institutions' dilemma by investing the necessary funds to eliminate the need for mandatory fee hikes?

Mr. Horner: Today, as I stand here, I know of one, maybe two institutions out of the 26 that we work with within the province that are talking about external fees of, you know, a significant nature. We're still working with the postsecondary system and crunching the numbers to ensure that we have accessibility, that we have affordability for the students. So to say that the entire system is looking at these huge increases is simply not correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. In response to my questions yesterday regarding postsecondary funding, the minister stated, "Unfortunately, he hasn't been reading the truth." My quest for the truth continues. Given that students need to make admission decisions and institutions need to set their budgets, when can they expect definitive answers from this minister?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said to the hon. member several times with regard to the market modifier question, which is what he's after, so far I believe I've received from three institutions their proposals. We're reviewing them as we speak, and within weeks we will be able to deliver what we think is going to be the appropriate response to those postsecondary institutions so that they can ensure that they have their tuitions in the calendars at the appropriate time so that students and parents can make the appropriate decisions as to where the kids want to go for their postsecondary.

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

Funding for Calgary Hip and Knee Surgeries

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The minister needs to answer an obvious question that he completely evaded yesterday. Why is Calgary receiving funding for an extra 200 hip and knee procedures in the next six weeks while Edmonton is receiving funding for only 16?

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, the simple answer is that the surgical teams are ready and able to do those extra surgeries in Calgary. In Edmonton we spoke with the Royal Alex this morning, and they would tell you that they have a temporary shortage of anaesthetists.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Taft: Well, thanks. It's interesting that he spoke to them this morning because this announcement was made several days ago. To the same minister: given that he's admitted, or indicated, that waiting lists are kept by local surgeons, which local surgeons in Edmonton were consulted about their wait-lists before this morning?

Mr. Zwodzesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I was actually in a different meeting when I phoned for other purposes, and that's where that information came from, but I'll try and get that answer for you, hon. member. I know that we talked with a lot of people across the province, and if you want a definitive list of doctors, I'll try and get that for you. It wasn't I who did the phoning – it was Alberta Health Services – but I'll get that information for you.

Dr. Taft: Okay. I'll look forward to that being presented in this Assembly.

Again to the same minister: while he's tabling the list of surgeons that his people consulted in making up this 10 to 1 discrepancy in favour of Calgary, will he also table the wait-lists and the wait times for hip and knee surgeries at all Edmonton and Calgary facilities so that we can know whether or not this decision was based on good evidence or on politics or on strategic marketing by HRC?

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, I believe what I indicated yesterday and perhaps in days earlier is that staff with Alberta Health Services had talked with doctors and surgical team members and/or staff or whomever in various parts of the province, so I'll try and get that list more definitively defined for you. I'll try and get you more information on the question you've just asked as well. Those are details that are really in the hands of Alberta Health Services, but I'll see what I can do to help you out.

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

Provincial Fiscal Policy

Mr. Anderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Albertans young and old are concerned about our province's return to large deficits and debt. These people are worried not for themselves but for their kids and grandkids. They want them to have the same Alberta advantage that they enjoyed, and they see that advantage slipping away. This week the President of the Treasury Board suggested that those Albertans voicing concern over skyrocketing debt levels are only concerned about themselves. Although this statement is as laughable as the minister's handling of the public purse, does the minister actually believe that those concerned with piling debt on our kids' backs are only thinking about themselves?

Mr. Snelgrove: You know, I'm as equally concerned about people who do not wish to share facts.

Mr. Anderson: Well, I guess I'll have to explain that point of view to my four kids when they're old enough to understand what higher taxes and fewer jobs in Alberta mean.

Mr. Speaker, one need only look to Saskatchewan for how a competent conservative government would manage our finances. Yesterday Premier Wall announced that his government would limit health spending to – wait for it – inflation plus population growth and would freeze overall spending at current levels in order to balance their books. To the same minister: why aren't you following the example of our neighbour and national economic leader, I might add, by reining in our deficit? Or does Premier Wall care about only himself?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, probably a couple of reasons. One, Albertans have worked very hard to put ourselves in the opportunity we're in, to be able to provide world-class leading health care, publicly funded in this province. I'm not prepared to turn around and tell Aunt Martha and Uncle Henry, who need their hips, just to wait because Saskatchewan is now leading the way in health care.

Mr. Speaker, these are the people that say, "We're only going to cut \$1.3 billion out of health care" in their recently released budget, "and it won't affect health care at all." They need to come clean. What 30 or 40 hospitals are they going to close? What major facilities in Edmonton and Calgary are they going to close? Just come clean.

2:00

Mr. Anderson: The hon. member knows that we would not cut anything. We would raise health spending by inflation plus growth. He knows that. He's misinformed as usual.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that this government's spending is irresponsible and out of control, and Albertans know it. To the Premier. You've already broken your promise this year that you made to Albertans at your party's AGM to limit spending increases to inflation plus population growth. Will this open-buffet spending policy continue next year as well, or will you follow Premier Wall's example and help us get back on the road to sound fiscal management?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, with respect to population growth and inflation we did something this year that is quite unique in the country of Canada, and that is to assist the Alberta Health Services Board in a long-term plan to provide health services in Alberta by eliminating the accumulated deficit of the board and giving them five years of committed funding. We're the only jurisdiction in Canada to do that. In fact, I know it's very easy for other Premiers,

perhaps, to try and balance the budget, but just look at the many people that are in the Maz centre and over at the Royal Alex in the neonatal unit from neighbouring provinces that come here to Alberta to get the best health care in Canada.

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

East Calgary Health Centre

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The residents of east Calgary are inquiring on a daily basis about the east Calgary health centre. This centre was built and designed to provide flexible, integrated, co-ordinated services, being respectful of the diverse nature and needs of the population: individuals, families, and the community of east Calgary. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: what is the status of the east Calgary health centre?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the status of the east Calgary health centre is that it is still on our capital plan. It's being reviewed right now along with dozens and dozens of other health facilities that are also in the plan and some new ones that wish to become part of the plan, and we'll have that finalized very soon.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The shell of the centre stands vacant since about mid-2009. Seventy-five thousand square feet of interior space in this building remains in its raw state, uncompleted, yet it is my understanding that the capital budget provided funding allocation for the completion of this centre. To the same minister: can the minister tell the residents of east Calgary when they can expect to begin accessing services in this centre?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that we'll have the health facilities capital plan completed, I hope, by March 31; that's the date that I've committed to. At that time we'll be able to provide information about that particular east Calgary health complex along with all the others throughout Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Mr. Minister, for this answer. The east Calgary health centre was to provide services in many, many areas, including mental health and addictions, seniors' resources, diverse services: home care, primary care, primary medical care, well-child services, community development initiatives, and childhood obesity intervention. To the same minister: where are these program services being delivered to meet the needs of the residents of east Calgary?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that for the time being the residents would find those services either at the Peter Lougheed health centre or perhaps at the Rockyview hospital or some other one that's not too far away. The important thing here is that our capital plan is undergoing very close scrutiny at the moment, and as soon as we have it ready, I'll inform this member and all members of the House about the progress.

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

Electoral Reform

Mr. Hehr: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Albertans know their electoral system is badly broken, yet the government keeps applying tiny bits of Scotch tape to the Election Act instead of enacting real reform. To the Minister of Justice. You were quoted today as follows: we believe the system that we have now serves Albertans well. How can you justify that statement given the well-documented problems in the last election?

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

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand by that statement. I believe that the most important thing that Elections Alberta needs to do is to ensure that there is a system that Albertans can have confidence in to elect a government, and I believe that that is what happened. That doesn't mean to say that there isn't room for improvement. We have of course received recommendations from the former Chief Electoral Officer with suggested changes that related to the last two elections, and we'll be responding in due time.

Mr. Hehr: Well, I thank the political minister for that answer, and I'd encourage her to implement some of those 182 changes she mentioned of the last gentleman who actually held the position before.

Of those 182 recommendations one was fixed election dates. Can we look forward to seeing those? Many of my constituents really have expressed an interest in seeing that coming forward.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that there are a number of opinions with respect to fixed election dates. The opinion of this government is that they are not necessary for us. We believe that it is possible and quite reasonable for elections in Alberta to be run according to when it is appropriate to call an election. We've seen in other provinces criticism that once you have fixed election dates, the government agenda tends to drive toward that date, and I think it impacts good government.

Mr. Hehr: Now, I guess my follow-up question to the answer would be that if you deem that fixed election dates are not necessary, is that you answering as the political minister or as the Justice minister when you answer that question?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My job with respect to the Election Act is to be the Justice minister. My job is to ensure that we respond to the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer, and that is the job that I will do.

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

Podiatry Surgery

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of my constituents are asking me about costs for foot surgery. It seems that these costs are covered in one part of the province but not in other locations. Therefore, I have to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness a question. Why are my constituents being told that they have to pay for foot surgery if it is done in Edmonton but not if it's done in Calgary?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, if a procedure is covered in one part of the province, it should be covered throughout the province. This particular case, obviously, needs to be looked into. Typically, podiatry services is one of the complementary services, and as part of the Alberta health care insurance plan there are certain types of foot surgery that are covered. I'd be happy to look into that further.

Mr. Sandhu: First supplemental: will the announcement you made yesterday help address this type of surgery?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, yesterday's announcement dealt more with urgent surgeries such as cancer surgeries and so on, but I will look into the specific case if the hon. member will provide me with some additional details. I'd be happy to pursue it for him.

Mr. Sandhu: The final: what will you do to clear up my constituents' confusion? They are very concerned.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, hon. member, if you like, we can sit down and have a meeting with them and get the particulars: get the date, get the description, find out some information from the referring doctor, and so on. Then we can address it and deal with it as quickly as possible.

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

Water Use by Oil and Gas Industry

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The issue of industry water use continues to be a concern. We still have oil sands production using a minimum of two barrels of water per barrel of oil, and other methods of resource extraction anticipate using more water, not less water. My questions are to the Minister of Environment. How can the minister be certain that the current system is able to handle increasingly water-intensive unconventional oil and gas production?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, the issue of the use of water is dealt with in two ways. First of all, we have a requirement in place, particularly for injection uses – and the member referred to the new types of oil exploration and industrial work that require water – that they have as first choice and be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the department that saline water is not available. So that deals with part of it. The other part is that we put maximums on the amount of water that can be withdrawn to protect the integrity of the stream itself.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. Well, given that some of Alberta's biggest oil sands producers have said that they would not voluntarily stop pulling water during low-stream flow, is the government going to make compliance compulsory to save our water? It has to be compulsory.

2:10

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, the issue here is that the total amount of water that is currently under licence in the Athabasca River is a minute portion of the overall stream flow. What we're talking about is future users that will come on stream. In that respect we've made it very, very clear that the in-stream flow needs of the

Athabasca River and virtually any other river in Alberta will have to be recognized before there is industrial use.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Back to the same minister. Some companies are still using fresh water in deep formations for enhanced oil recovery. Will the minister ban this practice?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, it's not so black and white. It would be nice if it were. The fact of the matter, as I've already indicated in the answer to my first question, is that there is a requirement that the primary source of water for these kinds of facilities would be saline water, would be brackish water, would be salt water. There are certain circumstances where there is not access to that source of water, and in those circumstances and those circumstances only they can receive a waiver.

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

Public-private Partnerships

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There's been discussion in this House that has stated that we will incur \$5 billion-plus in P3 debt or unaccounted-for capital expenditures. To the President of the Treasury Board: can you please explain? We have billions in the sustainability fund. What are we borrowing and, for goodness sakes, why?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, with regard to P3s this government has made very effective use of the P3 process in building the ring roads and building some of the schools. It's not just about the capital costs that come with building the P3; it's the built-in guaranteed operational costs that accompany the P3 process that give certainty to the taxpayers on both ends of the equation. It's our responsibility, even encouraged by the Auditor General, to look into and verify and use all available means at our disposal to achieve the best possible cost for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. There seems to be considerable confusion as to how this is accounted for in our books. Can you please explain to my constituents how this is reported in the financial statements?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, our P3s are accounted for in the line in our books that very clearly spells out the total cost of our P3s. As a matter of fact, going into this year, total financial asset liabilities on capital was around \$2.9 billion. In three years if it stays the same, our total financial liabilities on capital projects would be about \$5.9 billion, or an increase of \$3 billion. That's very small when you consider our net asset liabilities exceed \$20 billion.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you. My last supplemental is to the same hon. President of the Treasury Board. If the only reason that we are borrowing again is to support capital projects, why not just slow down on construction and stay out of debt?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes a good point. The fact is that we are only borrowing for capital. We are not borrowing nor have incurred any operational deficit, so borrowing or, as most would say, smart debt. In Alberta we realize that if we're going to lead Canada coming out of this recession, we need to have the infrastructure that enables industry to succeed, and we will use those tools. When you consider the last ring road in Calgary saved us several hundred million dollars – you know what? Quitting halfway around the city isn't my idea of a good project.

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

Family Farms

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are going in ever-increasing numbers to farmers' markets both urban and rural, yet because of the design of our agricultural industry, often as a result of the government funding structure, small family farms continue to disappear from the Alberta landscape. This government just recently announced Explore Local, a program that's meant to "capture growth opportunities in the local food market." To the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: through this initiative how many dollars will go directly to new and small-scale, locally focused producers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hayden: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will get the number for the hon. member on what would qualify in that particular category, but of course with these programs there are a number of categories that qualify for funding. Those categories that are accessed first by whatever area of the industry will get the money. We have seen an over 30 per cent increase in market garden sales over the past couple of years, and it's a huge opportunity for Alberta.

The Speaker: Hon. member, that number is in the budget, which has already been tabled.

Ms Pastoor: If I'd found it, I would have probably not asked the question.

The Speaker: Please continue.

Ms Pastoor: What is the minister using as a funding definition for farming when small farm-direct producers are not included? I think that was partly in your last answer.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hayden: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We work with a number of small producers. We have people that are working off of acreages right now, and the hon. member and others have given me names of producers that want to access our programs. Some of these are becoming very profitable, and the understanding within the community in Alberta of the value of the safety and quality of the food that's produced here is really being showcased in those markets.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. When will the minister introduce farm-direct initiatives that will help small family and unconventional farmers compete against the huge industrial farms?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hayden: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we already do. What you would consider large operations in the province, about 20 per cent of the agricultural operations in Alberta, produce about 80 per cent of the agricultural goods. The remainder are what would be considered smaller or medium-sized operations. When we talk about that and think about the size of those things, an average livestock operation provides the protein requirements for about 900 people. So these may be considered small, but in fact they're very big operations.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Postsecondary Education Funding (continued)

Mr. Mason: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This government's ongoing cuts to postsecondary education will reduce access to school for students. The University of Alberta is already coping with a \$59 million deficit, and this government saw fit to kick them while they're down with an additional \$20 million cut. Teachers who've been promised jobs will be laid off, and students who've been promised affordable education will be unable to afford it. Why is the minister of advanced education making postsecondary school less affordable for students?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I could ask the hon. member to refer to my answers earlier because it's the same question that was asked by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. Really, postsecondary in this province is second to none in any jurisdiction, I would wager, in North America. We have also been very, very generous in terms of the support to our postsecondaries; as I said, a 42 per cent increase over the last six years. We've maintained that momentum. The University of Alberta was in the headlines today, and that's where the question came from.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the minister didn't answer the question the first time, and he didn't answer it the second time. It's ridiculous for this minister to claim that he can meet a commitment to create 16,000 new student spaces in postsecondary schools while delivering blow after blow to their budgets. How will this minister be able to keep his commitment to create 16,000 new student spaces given the cuts to postsecondary education contained in this budget?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member to actually take a look at the numbers, which I know he hasn't done, that are based on what the University of Alberta received last year less prepayments for things that were done in the year before, and then look at the base operating grant that was provided to the University of Alberta versus the dollars that they received this year versus the number of other projects that are coming forward. The point of my answer is that it isn't just, well, \$20 million is off because that's what the headline was. We're still working with the University of Alberta to ensure that we can meet our commitments across the province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, I read the provost of the university's letter. Mr. Amrhein wrote a letter in which he is contradicting what the minister is saying about the funding for the University of Alberta. Now, the university's plan is to recoup some of these costs, and that'll cost students an additional \$550 a year in fees on top of very expensive tuition fees already. Many students will simply be unable to afford it, Mr. Minister. Why won't the minister admit that rather than improving access to postsecondary education in this province, he's placing it out of reach for more and more Albertans?

2:20

Mr. Horner: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, the University of Alberta is not the entire Campus Alberta. The University of Alberta has put a proposal in front of their board and in front of us and the students for this fee across the board. That is not, by any stretch of the imagination, yet done. The University of Alberta has put a proposal in front of the ministry and the department as it relates to market modifiers, or some professional tuition increases. That is not yet done. The university has talked about the sticker shock that they've got. We're still working with them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Municipal Election Campaign Financing

Mr. Vandermeer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are concerns among municipal councillors and mayors about changes to the municipal election campaign contributions act. My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Don't tell me this means that if an individual intends to run for mayor or councillor, he or she can't fund their own campaigns.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Goudreau: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you are aware, Bill 203, a private member's bill, was adopted by this House nearly a year ago. My ministry staff is working very hard to ensure that the Local Authorities Election Act is workable and practical. As it stands now, an individual can spend up to a maximum of \$5,000, and that's contributions from any one source. As I have previously indicated, we plan on introducing amendments to the existing legislation this spring to ensure that this is workable and practical.

Mr. Vandermeer: To the same minister: can the minister explain where this legislation is as far as being implemented right now?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the bill was passed about a year ago. We sort of feel that the members of the House believe that accountability and transparency of local governments are extremely important. The work that we did with Albertans indicates the same thing. So we are presently looking at a practical approach to levelling the playing field so that all municipal candidates in Alberta are governed by the same election campaign rules. Now, the guidelines will further promote strong and vibrant municipal governments that serve all Albertans.

Mr. Vandermeer: To the same minister. My supplementary question: will these proposed guidelines also affect school trustees, who are governed by the Local Authorities Election Act?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no. These proposed provisions will not affect the school board trustees' elections. They are all aimed at the municipal elections.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Cabinet Policy Committees

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year taxpayers paid each and every government MLA a total of over \$1.4 million to sit on internal cabinet policy committees. My first question is to the President of the Treasury Board. How are government members appointed to the cabinet policy committees?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, the selection of the committee members for the cabinet policy is done by the Premier and Executive Council.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much. Again to the same minister: for the government members appointed to the cabinet policy committees by the Premier through Executive Council, are they appointed by order in council, by regulation, or ministerial order?

Mr. Snelgrove: I guess I'm just from the old club, Mr. Speaker. When somebody tells me to show up at a committee meeting, I go. I really didn't ask who appointed me.

Mr. MacDonald: Again to the President of the Treasury Board: will the hon. minister provide to this Assembly the statutory instrument by which these members were appointed to these five separate cabinet policy committees and received last year over \$1.4 million in payment?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, we can provide and have provided to this Assembly what every member of this Assembly gets paid from different committees. If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has forgotten his particular amount, I see here he was paid as the chair of the legislative Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Mr. MacDonald: That's public.

Mr. Snelgrove: Yeah, it is public, as we were all paid. Who appointed you to that? Amount paid for policy field committees: \$11,000, \$16,750. Who appointed you to those?

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

Bison Industry

Mr. Allred: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta livestock industry has suffered several setbacks in recent years, and it is now questionable whether ranchers can even make a living from cattle ranching. Buffalo – and I know the proper term is bison, but I prefer the term buffalo because it has more of a frontier ring to it – has a number of advantages over beef. Buffalo meat has less fat and produces less cholesterol. Ranching of range buffalo on native grasses will restore habitat for endangered species and eliminate the reliance on high grain prices. My question to the hon. minister of agriculture: has the minister investigated the market for buffalo products?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hayden: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I'm pleased to report today that the bison industry is one of the bright spots in the agricultural industry, and it's grown large. There are in excess of 85,000 bison in Alberta. We work with the United States and with European nations to promote the markets there. This past year, as a matter of fact, 10,000 live bison were even shipped out of Alberta into other countries for programs. So it's a bright future indeed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Allred: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question to the same minister: could the existing federal and provincial programs be modified to promote and accommodate the raising of buffalo for commercial markets?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hayden: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the programs that the province of Alberta has designed and that the federal government has designed put bison in the same categories as all other livestock groups, so bison qualify for every type of funding that's available for other livestock groups. We, of course, in the province of Alberta have programs above and beyond what the federal government and other provinces have in place also.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Allred: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question, again to the same minister: in the minister's discussions with our trading partners – and I'm speaking more of the Asian trading partners than American partners – has the minister raised the issue of exporting buffalo products to Asia and other countries?

Mr. Hayden: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Any opportunity that we have when we're speaking with trading partners from throughout the world, we of course mention the bison industry in Alberta and we promote it. ALMA promotes it. We work hand in hand with the bison industry associations in the province to promote their product around the world.

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

Oil Sands Image

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There seems to be a bit of a misplaced focus when it comes to addressing the negative reputation that the oil sands are getting. On the one hand, this government is putting out promotional pamphlets in Alberta schools, and the Ministry of Energy is measuring their performance in shaping Albertans' knowledge of the energy industry. But the danger to our industry comes, I think, from ignorance from outside the province. To the Minister of Energy: why the misplaced priorities?

Mr. Liepert: Well, I wouldn't agree with that statement, Mr. Speaker. It's not one or the other. Clearly, one of the things that we need to do is continue to inform and ensure that Albertans understand the importance of the energy industry in this province. There have been and will continue to be initiatives externally. That's not going to change.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week in budget debates the Minister of Energy acknowledged that the government was not doing enough to promote the oil sands. We agree. What is this minister going to do differently from the last Minister of Energy in that regard?

Mr. Liepert: I missed part of that question, Mr. Speaker, but I think that in essence it's: what are we going to do? I would suggest to the member that we're going to do many of the things we outlined in our business plan and more.

Mr. Taylor: To improve the reputation of the oil sands, the minister has to concentrate his efforts beyond Alberta's borders. Given that, is the minister concerned about the clear failure of our lobbyists in our offices in Washington?

Mr. Liepert: Well, that's not a fair statement, Mr. Speaker. You know, the world is – what? – 8 billion people or whatever it is. It's a massive task to counter some of those well-funded organizations that want to destroy our industry. We need to do everything we can to fight back.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

2:30 Value Review of Government Departments

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Treasury Board has recently undertaken spending reviews within each department, leading to about \$1.3 billion in savings of taxpayers' money. This is certainly a positive step. My question is to the hon. President of the Treasury Board. In what areas were savings achieved, and how were they identified?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, in one way I think the success of the value reviews is the fact that very few in the public or even in our government would actually have known where they came from, showing that they were very effective in removing them. We looked at accommodation, we looked at some of the granting opportunities or synergies in some of the grants, we looked at internal financial accounting and procurement, but mostly we worked with our departments collectively.

Mr. Fawcett: Okay. Well, Mr. Speaker, since the minister was going to give me an example from Service Alberta, I'll ask the minister directly. What changes are you planning to make, knowing that your budget has seen a 15 per cent reduction, that will actually improve service to Albertans and not negatively impact front-line services?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're planning to introduce a number of efficiencies. Some of the areas include simplified and standardized government contracts; more electronic invoicing; standard vendors for computer hardware, cellphones, and hand-held devices; software licences for the whole government, not just licences per department. This won't impact front-line services because it's going to make it easier for companies to do business with government.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay. Let's go back to the hon. President of the Treasury Board. It's great that our dollars are being spent more efficiently where they are currently allocated, but it may be true in many or some instances that we do not need to spend this money at all. Are there plans in place to examine the value and relevancy of specific programs within each department?

Mr. Snelgrove: Absolutely. Mr. Speaker, I think it was a mindset change to go from what is easy and typical government to grow and to not re-establish priorities. I can absolutely commit to the hon. member and all hon. members that we are going to continue the work of the internal review. If it means program elimination, we just want to be darn careful that we don't have an unintended effect on a different department by cancelling a program in one area. We want to think these things through and make sure that we use a scalpel as opposed to an axe.

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

PDD Funding for Community Agencies

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When you look at all of the places where Albertans invest their hard-earned tax dollars, a very healthy amount of funding goes to the Seniors and Community Supports department. Yesterday I attended the main estimates meeting with the minister, and I have to say that I appreciated her directness and her candour. My questions are to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Given the concern that exists across this province with PDD groups, can she please confirm that her department will not enter into new contracts and then cut the funding during the budget year?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, the PDD program is a very important priority for this government and especially for myself and my department. The contracts that we develop through our community boards – and there are six regional community boards – are pretty important contracts. I've said in the past that we will honour our contracts, and I maintain to this day that we will honour our contracts.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Groups that the government contracts with to provide supports to communities across the province need certainty. They need to hire staff. They need to ensure proper training is in place and be able to deliver on the programs that their clients, Albertans, rely on. My question, again to the same minister. Groups across this province are contacting me because they are afraid that some of the reviews that will take place this year are simply an exercise in service reduction. What is the goal of the minister and the government as it relates to these social assistance based reviews?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to express my appreciation for all the service agencies that provide the supports and services to our people with developmental disabilities. They work very closely with our boards, and they do a great job. I understand their concerns.

Any of the reviews that we're doing are for the benefit of the people of Alberta. Any reviews that are being done in my department are for purposes of clarity and consistency, efficiency and effectiveness, and sustainability in the programs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the decision by her department to seek funding cuts from PDD agencies last year, these groups are justifiably concerned that the government's signature on a contract may not mean much. To identify areas where her department can improve its effectiveness, reduce administration, and maximize front-line services, will the minister commit to having an independent audit completed on the community boards' direct operations and PDD provincial operation budgets?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, we have six regional community boards. They all do an excellent job. They all send in their reports to my department. I want to reiterate that when we have a contract, we honour our contracts. We honoured all of our contracts last year, and we appreciated the co-operation from the agencies that work with the community boards.

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

Education Funding

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education is shortchanging students by deliberately underfunding Alberta's public education system. By the time September rolls around and teachers are due for a salary increase, this minister will have racked up at least \$175 million in an education funding shortfall. Why is the Minister of Education taking resources out of the classroom instead of doing what's right and providing sufficient funding up front to ensure our children's education isn't made to suffer?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, we're not taking resources out of the classroom. In fact, budgets for school boards this year are the same overall as budgets last year. There is a requirement that school boards do have contracts with teachers for salary increases, and we're going to have to work with the teachers and with school boards to find in the long-term how we deal with those salary increases in a time of fiscal restraint. But the budgets are the same as last year: no monies, no cuts.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've seen the letters that school boards are sending home with children. Parents are fearful of warnings that school staff and resources will be cut back because of this minister's failure to adequately fund education. To the minister. You have had two years to plan for these cost pressures. Why do parents, teachers, and kids have to wait another several months for you to figure it out, all the while worrying about the future of their education?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, parents and students shouldn't have to worry about the future of education. We've talked to school boards. The school boards in this province are on the strongest financial footing anywhere. There is approximately \$360 million in operational reserves in the school system in this province. What we've said to school boards is . . . [interjection] Edmonton-River-view is very rude today, Mr. Speaker.

What we've said to school boards is: "Do not adjust the student-teacher ratio. If you need to draw from your reserves, do so. If you need to go into deficit, do so." We'll work on the long-term agreement with teachers because there are always questions with respect to wages and resources.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the school boards' surplus is not this government's personal piggy bank. Now, schoolchildren are coming home with fearful tales that cuts are coming and that their education will suffer. Parents and school boards are worried, and this minister is trying to scapegoat the teachers by failing to fund a salary increase that he signed off on. Why is the minister sacrificing the quality of our children's education instead of funding current education levels like he promised?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, far from sacrificing the education of students today, I'm fighting hard to make sure that we improve education for students today. I'm working with school boards and with the ATA to make sure that happens. We do need to work through a period of time where we've got because of the arbitrated process, we understand, the adjustment from the average weekly earnings index. We do have some work to do, both short term and long term, in terms of how we finance that. Basically, there is only so much money, and the money can go to wages, or it can go to numbers of teachers. Either way we have a one-year period to do what the school boards are quite adequately funded to deal with. Over the longer term we'll deal with what those increases are over the first, second, third, and fourth years.

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

Postsecondary Satellite Campuses

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We keep hearing about the harmony in Alberta's postsecondary system through the concept of Campus Alberta. However, it appears that there is a great deal of competitiveness for students, with institutions like the University of Lethbridge having a presence right here in Edmonton. My question today is to the Deputy Premier and Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. Is this kind of competition a waste of taxpayer dollars when a community like Edmonton already has two universities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, Campus Alberta is about providing students with the opportunity to achieve their dreams wherever they are in the province from whatever institution they want. It's a system that doesn't have borders. Certainly, choice and accessibility for students is our top priority. The University of Lethbridge has had a presence in Edmonton for some time and has had success in the entire Edmonton region. We trust the institutions to know what's best for what their own budget is and where they need to be.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second question to the same minister: was the heightened level of competition the reason the University of Calgary closed their office here in Edmonton?

2:40

Mr. Horner: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the decision of the University of Calgary to close one of their satellite offices here in Edmonton is a budgetary one that the University of Calgary is perfectly capable of making, and they should be making those kinds of decisions.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: instead of competing, why aren't we looking at expanding institutions based on enrolment demands, regions, and limiting the growth of others?

Mr. Horner: Well, in effect, Mr. Speaker, the last couple of years we've put into the Post-secondary Learning Act the sectoral categories that we have for postsecondary institutions in the province of Alberta, Campus Alberta. That six-sector model aligns and focuses the institutions so that they can concentrate on students who are looking specifically for programs that are offered in their sector. That helps us allocate resources. It also helps us respond to student demand, and that's exactly where we're going.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness would like to supplement an answer given yesterday, which will allow, then, a member who raised the question in the exchange with the minister to raise an additional question.

The hon. minister.

Health Care Funding

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday during the cut and thrust of question period and specifically in response to a question from the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere I said that we have paid off or are covering the entire \$1.3 billion deficit that the current provincial Health Services Board inherited from the previous regional boards. In fact, I should have said \$0.3 billion, not \$1.3 billion. Therefore, I just want to apologize for that error.*

I would also like to note that I did say it correctly later yesterday afternoon during debate, on page 156 of *Hansard*, when I said, "The provincial board inherited certain deficits." So I apologize once again, and I invite the member's questions, as you've indicated.

Mr. Anderson: Thanks, Minister. No need to apologize. But I am still puzzled by some of the statements from yesterday, specifically your saying that the Health Services Board has saved us \$600 million or \$700 million. I don't see how that is consistent when you just announced a \$1.7 billion increase just in operating expenses, not to mention the debt portion. How are those numbers consistent? A \$1.7 billion increase in spending doesn't equal \$700 million in savings.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Health Services Board has indicated to me through their chair and their CEO that they feel they have about \$600 million to \$700 million of annualized savings as a result of common procurement procedures, a forthcoming centralized payroll system, and stopping the issue of doctor poaching, as it's sort of commonly referred to. Now, those are their numbers, hon. member, so we'll get more information if you like.

With respect to the deficit, Mr. Speaker, when you go back to about the period of '07-08, '08-09, somewhere in there, you can see where the deficits started to accumulate. What we've said is that we'll eradicate about \$0.5 billion of that deficit this year, right now, and we'll look after \$0.7 billion plus in the coming year. Then we're ramping up their adjusted base, and then we're giving them 6 per cent on top of that.

The Speaker: Hon. members, not counting the last three, 19 members were recognized today. We had 114 questions and answers – that's very significant – and 12 opposition members,

seven private members were recognized. We're going to continue with the Routine.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Canadian Troops at Vancouver Olympics

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know I've not been the only one recently watching some of Canada's finest athletes, a number of which are Albertans, compete in Vancouver, where we captured our sixth medal last night. However, there's another group of Alberta's and Canada's finest present at the games this year, members of the Canadian armed forces. Some were deployed as early as January 6, and most will spend around two months away from their families, starting to return home the first week of March. There are also those who will stay on for another month, continuing to serve throughout the Paralympic Games.

There are three elements representing our forces at the 2010 games – the army, the navy, and the air force – totalling about 4,500 members, about 1,400 of which are soldiers from the army. About half of those are from the Canadian Forces base in Edmonton and my constituency.

The soldiers' mandate is to assist the RCMP with two unique skill sets. First, they are the eyes and the ears of the RCMP in the backcountry for multiple events, where they'll not only be on foot and on skis but on Ski-Doos and quads. Secondly, they have a mobility directive to ensure that the RCMP are moved quickly from one location to the other safely.

Our soldiers at the Olympics are led by our own CFB Edmonton's Colonel Andre Corbould, and he is supported by Brigade Sergeant Major, Chief Warrant Officer Ken Hodge. Typical of our dedicated members of our military and the duties that they carry out across the globe, most of the work they're doing at the Olympics is out of the spotlight.

I would ask that all Members of this Legislative Assembly join me in publicly thanking these men and women for yet another service that they provide to our country, to Albertans, and indeed to the whole world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Bill 4

Dangerous Goods Transportation and Handling Amendment Act, 2010

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 4, and that's the Dangerous Goods Transportation and Handling Amendment Act, 2010.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important piece of legislation for industry. It doesn't add regulatory burden for industry. It actually provides some protection to industry by harmonizing our legislation with federal legislation which was amended in June of 2009. The rules already exist in federal legislation, mandated by the federal government, but matching our legislation with the federal legislation as much as possible helps to achieve standard conditions for the movement of dangerous goods within provinces and across Canada.

By mirroring the federal legislation, we're able to ensure our place in enforcing the rules and monitoring industry. If we don't mirror

*See page 153, right column, paragraph 7

the federal legislation, we run the risk of losing our jurisdiction over industry in Alberta and our ability to enforce these rules the way we see appropriate. The legislation actually provides some protection to industry here in Alberta. The changes are minor and mainly administrative in nature. As I say, this legislation will ensure to industry that it continues to be business as usual in Alberta.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 4 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings from constituents today. The first is an e-mail from Amanda Hollman. She wishes to express her disappointment with recent changes to the funding regarding postsecondary. She has been upgrading herself, earning her GED, and is now in the top 10 per cent of high school graduates and achieving honours in the medical office assistant program, but she doesn't think it's going to be realistic for her to continue further without the student loan relief program. There's one story.

The Speaker: Hon. member, another one?

Ms Blakeman: Yes. The second tabling is also from a constituent, Donald R. MacRae. Mr. MacRae is expressing his distress at the government's decision to close Alberta Hospital. He reminds us that a quarter of the street people used to be institutionalized, and he wonders if, with the beautiful grounds that the hospital sits on, there isn't a condo grab or some similar undertaking going on here.

Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a copy of a document titled Securities Regulatory Proposals Stemming from the 2007-08 Credit Market Turmoil and Its Effect on the Asset-backed Commercial Paper Market in Canada.

The second tabling I have is on behalf of a constituent of Edmonton-Gold Bar. The constituent's name is Karen Durda, and she has provided written permission for me to table an e-mail urging there to be no cuts in funding to schools throughout the province.

Thank you.

Projected Government Business

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Under Standing Order 7(6) I would request that the Government House Leader share with us the projected government business for the week commencing February 22.

Thank you.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the week commencing February 22, we anticipate that on Monday Bill 5, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2010, will be introduced for first reading.

On Tuesday, February 23, 2010, we will continue consideration of His Honour's Speech from the Throne – that will be day 8 – and then second reading of the Alberta Competitiveness Act as well as the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act and, time permitting, bills 2, 3, and 4: the Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 2010; the Fatal Accidents Amendment Act, 2010; and the Dangerous Goods Transportation and Handling Amendment Act, 2010.

On Wednesday, February 24, in the afternoon again consideration of His Honour's Speech from the Throne, day 9, if there are any remaining who wish to participate; second reading for Bill 1, the Alberta Competitiveness Act, Bill 4, the dangerous goods transportation act, and in Committee of the Whole the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act and, time permitting, the Professional Statutes Amendment Act and the Fatal Accidents Amendment Act.

On Thursday, February 25, in the afternoon again consideration of His Honour's speech – it will be day 10; therefore, the engrossing motion will come forward – second reading of Bill 1, the Alberta Competitiveness Act; third reading of Bill 5, the Appropriation Act; and, time permitting, Bill 4, the dangerous goods act, at whatever stage it's at. We've provided for committee and third reading of bills 2 and 3 or whatever stage they're at.

Statement by the Speaker

Adjournment of Debate and Assembly by Same Member

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call Orders of the Day, I have a little statement with respect to a process procedure in the House. While this Assembly draws on hundreds of years of experience from parliaments around the world and over a hundred years in Alberta, we're still a dynamic institution open to change and, therefore, must continually assess our practices to ensure that they are appropriate for the Alberta Legislative Assembly in 2010.

The need to reassess one such practice arose on Tuesday, February 16, this week, when at the end of the sitting the Government House Leader moved to adjourn the debate on Bill 1 and then moved to adjourn the Assembly, all of which can be found at page 142 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day.

Over the years the chair and other presiding officers have consistently applied paragraph 465(9) of *Beauchesne's* sixth edition, which states that a member who has moved adjournment of debate "cannot afterwards (during the same debate) rise to move adjournment of the House." In order to revisit the appropriateness of this statement, the chair scoured the more obscure references in *Beauchesne*, which led him to the most recent edition of a venerable Canadian authority, the fourth edition of *Bourinot's Parliamentary Procedure and Practice in the Dominion of Canada*. This most recent edition was published in 1916.

In reviewing the dusty pages that are the authority for the passage in *Beauchesne*, the chair and table officers found it ambiguous as to whether the adjournment of the Assembly could be moved by the same member who successfully moved adjournment of debate. After reviewing the possible consequences that could arise and canvassing other authorities, the chair has determined that the procedure set on Tuesday can continue. To restate, the same member who moves adjournment of debate may move adjournment

of the Assembly, but these would still have to be separate motions. It only took, hon. Government House Leader, nearly 100 years to apply this.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Orders of the Day Government Motions

Committee Membership Changes

10. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that the following changes to:

- (a) the Standing Committee on Private Bills be approved: that Mr. Lindsay replace Mr. Rodney;
- (b) the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved: that Mr. Groeneveld replace Mr. Bhardwaj, that Mr. Griffiths replace Mr. Johnson, that Mr. Xiao replace Ms Woo-Paw, that Mr. Elniski replace Mr. Weadick.

The Speaker: This is a debatable motion if anyone wants to participate. None? Then shall I call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Government Motion 10 carried]

Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mr. Bhardwaj moved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour the Honourable Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate February 16: Mr. Mason]

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

Mr. Mason: I've completed, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Completed? Okay.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise in response to the Speech from the Throne, read February 4, 2010, by His Honour Norman Kwong, Alberta's Lieutenant Governor. Along with my colleagues I want to thank Their Honours for their service to our province. We share your family's pride in both of you and the class and the infectious humour that you brought to your office.

In the past 105 years since our province was created, we've come a great distance. We've got a lot to be thankful for. The Speech from the Throne contained the following statement: "Our world may have changed, but our people have not. They remain hard working and innovative, entrepreneurial and compassionate, and, most of all, confident about our province and its future." Looking back through Alberta's history, this could not be more evident.

In the 1919 Speech from the Throne the Lieutenant Governor reflected on the end of the First World War and how Alberta's part

throughout the four and a half years had been an honourable and important one, how, moving forward, we needed to address the concerns of employment, agriculture, health care, education, and infrastructure. It's not surprising that 91 years later these are still our top priorities.

Mr. Speaker, I've very seldom stood up in response to the Speech from the Throne, but as a member representing Little Bow, I today am pleased to give an agrarian or an agricultural viewpoint to this speech. This past weekend made me reflect on the changes that have occurred over the past 112 years. Our family celebrated the life of my aunt at her funeral last week. Barb was the last of the third generation of my paternal great-grandfather, who came to Alberta from Ireland to his homestead via York, Toronto, in 1898 along the Waterton River in the Yarrow district south of Pincher Creek. It's reported that his homestead raised beef for the North West Mounted Police at Fort Macleod. Their home was a visiting place for Father Lacombe and Kootenai Brown.

Today I can't imagine the hardships that pioneers of that day endured. There were no SUVs. There were no LRTs. There was no Greyhound bus or air bus air travel. Travel was by horseback or shank's mare. In other words, Mr. Speaker, they walked. Joseph Patrick McFarland's brother-in-law is reported to have walked from a sheep ranch in Montana, past Chief Mountain south of Cardston, all the way up to Calgary. When he found that Calgary wasn't to his liking, he walked back to the Yarrow district to help establish his ranch.

People of that era helped each other. They built their own churches, and they took care of one another. In 1906 Alberta spent \$18,466 on agriculture. They spent \$10,680 on education and \$33,500 on public health. That was on behalf of 185,412 Albertans. In 1910 Alberta's population had doubled to 374,663 people, and agriculture's budget had blossomed to \$24,000, 7 cents a person; \$20,000 was spent on education, 6 cents a person, while public health care got \$84,700, 23 cents a person.

Around that time two of the communities that I'm proud to represent had already been established for a couple of years, but in 1910, 100 years ago, the villages of Carmangay and Barons were formally incorporated. Fortunately for me, my grandfather started farming in Bindloss, Alberta, but moved to Barons, where Barb and her four siblings were raised. In those early years there were Norwegians, Swedes, Estonians, Finlanders, and even one French family, my wife's great-grandfather. All of these people adopted their new country and the language that was prevalent at the time, English, and the laws without any reservation.

As my dad and uncle grew up and married, they moved to Carmangay, where each of them started their own farms. My uncle John, who I really looked up to, never thought for once that he was building this country. I think I remember him saying that he was too busy paying for the farm, raising his girls, hoping someday to put them through university, and keeping the banker happy.

3:00

In the late 1920s my best friend's mom had emigrated from Czechoslovakia to Kuroki, Saskatchewan, with her parents as a young girl. His dad would immigrate to Raymond with his parents in 1930. Once again I marvel at what we have today and how some people today receive a government program or benefit and over a period of time then look upon it as their entitlement. If you were to have asked John and Jo what their biggest challenges were as newcomers to Canada, they would tell you: language and existence. There were no ESL programs, no programs to preserve their culture, and no food banks. They had to learn a new language on their own.

They preserved what few keepsakes they had from their home country in their own house, and if you wanted to see them, you were welcome to see their Czech culture in John and Jo's house. They preserved what they had, and without the help of neighbours, Jo would say, they wouldn't have made it. The neighbours provided them with cabbages, potatoes, and meat.

There were no government programs to help them establish a business. Later in life, after they married, the Carmangay Lions Club approached them and encouraged them to take over a local grocery store that had gone broke. There was no formal purchase agreement. The agreement was verbal, and the only condition was that they had to provide free locker service to the patrons that had prepaid for their locker supplies. In those days you didn't have deep freezers. You had a locker in a plant. It was a little wooden container, and that was where you kept your cold meat. John and Jo later added a meat butchering service and later dry goods to their store. Without any government help or assistance, they operated this family business and raised their three children until their retirement.

Today we spend millions of dollars provincially on ESL, cultural programs, seniors' benefits, programs for the less fortunate, children's services, and I often wonder: were these essential at the time when our pioneer parents helped establish this country?

My maternal grandparents had moved to Carmangay from Wisconsin in the early 1900s. You might be interested, as I know you are with a lot of people that hold higher office, that my grandfather's brother moved to Washington, and he would become the great-grandfather to the past governor of Alaska, Sarah Palin. One-room schools were the norm in the years that my grandfather farmed in the Carmangay district. He himself held office as a school trustee and the school board chairman for many years. I've seen the contracts, Mr. Speaker, that he signed from 1915 until the early 1930s. It's amazing to think that in those days a teacher's salary was \$700 a year. Today we spend over \$16 million a day on education. That's about \$1,600 per person for every man, woman, and child.

We tend to think that regionalization is new, but that's not even true. In the early 1940s, when my grandfather was seeing the demise of the one-room school, they created the Lethbridge school division, which actually ran from Lethbridge-West to Fort Macleod up north past Carmangay. It was a huge distance then.

Looking at some of the old documents, we found that a vehicle registration for a 1943 Dodge cost \$23. Today it's \$78, not a bad change.

Around that time, my dad and my father-in-law also took their turns serving their village councils, and it wasn't uncommon for either one of them to jump into a trench when a waterline was broken and help the town man repair it because everyone wanted to have water, and money wasn't the issue. Per diems weren't even thought of, and there were no union jobs saying that you shouldn't go down and help in the trench, and I'm sure there weren't any scaffolds or anything else to protect them.

Moving forward into my generation, I have to look back and admire the pioneers. These were truly the people that built this country, not today's version of a senior.

Moving forward, as I said, I've seen change since 1972, when I and my wife started our own farm. We started from scratch. We sold rye for a dollar a bushel, barley for 90 cents a bushel. Diesel was 25 cents a gallon. That's 5 and a half cents a litre. Anhydrous ammonia was \$40 a tonne. A 100-horsepower tractor cost \$8,700. Interest rates a few years later hit 23 and three-quarter per cent in September 1981. I think the Premier and I shared that little bit of history together.

Yesterday barley was \$2.90, rye was \$3.63, fuel was 78 cents a litre, anhydrous is \$580 a tonne, and a 100-horsepower tractor is

\$140,000. Our population is now 10 times larger than it was in 1905. Our Agriculture budget is \$1.1 billion. Our Infrastructure budget is \$1.1 billion. Education is \$6.1 billion – and I think it bears repeating – \$1,600 for every man, woman, and child in Alberta. Health, \$15 billion a year, over \$4,000 for every man, woman, and child.

As John F. Kennedy was quoted, "The farmer is the only man in our economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale, and pays the freight both ways." I salute our farmers today, who continue to help feed a nation.

Alberta is a leader and will continue to be the production leader of clean energy, striving to meet the demands put onto our energy sector by people who would have it go another way. Our education is world class, from elementary schools straight through to our postsecondaries. We know that a well-educated workforce will keep us competitive in today's market, and we're looking forward to ensuring that all Albertans have the greatest advantage compared to our trading partners.

Our tax system is competitive and enticing towards the global economy, and I dare say our business incentives keep us competitive, and our personal tax structure is by far the most advantageous. Our personal income tax structure in Alberta is the most advantageous, in my opinion, for all Albertans. The world around us is definitely changing, and the goal of our government is to help Albertans change with it.

Again, I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to wish His Honour a very much well-deserved rest. He has served us well. He has been a dedicated servant to the province and a true representative, and I admire his culture and those of his pioneering forefathers.

Thank you.

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

Then I'll recognize the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay and the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise on behalf of the constituents of Airdrie-Chestermere to respond to this government's Speech from the Throne. It has been one of the most remarkable and humbling experiences of my life to represent the teachers, health professionals, entrepreneurs, neighbours, friends, and family in my community to whom I owe so much for my own upbringing. It is an honour unlike any other that I've ever known to serve these people, and I pledge to do so to the best of my ability, however imperfect it may be. My remarks today are derived from the now thousands of conversations I've had with my constituents. I feel that my vision for this province is merely a reflection of the hopes and dreams that the majority of my constituents share.

My constituents are very entrepreneurial in nature. They are concerned that our province is losing its competitive advantage as the best place in Canada to start up and run a business. They are burdened by excessive and growing amounts of government regulation. Many own or work in our province's energy sector, which has been hit hard by lower commodity prices and this PC government's energy policies.

3:10

Given that oil and gas remains the primary driver of our economic engine, an important balance must be struck between creating a business environment that encourages ongoing exploration and development activity while at the same time ensuring that Albertans receive appropriate compensation for these resources. Unfortu-

nately, our current provincial government has demonstrated by its actions that it has no understanding of how to strike this critical balance. Tens of billions of dollars in energy investment and tens of thousands of jobs created thereby have fled to neighbouring provinces due in large part to the new royalty framework, one of the most misguided and mishandled policy debacles in Alberta's history. Aside from reversing the damaging royalty hike imposed on our conventional oil and gas entrepreneurs by the current government, I'm committed to advocating for policies that create a business environment in which energy entrepreneurs can thrive and create jobs for all Albertans. Doing so is essential to the continued prosperity of our province.

My constituents are also concerned about our health care system. Improving our health care system is a top priority for almost every one of them. They know that we are increasing health care spending at a rate that is entirely unsustainable for young Albertans, especially given our aging population, and they also know that despite all the spending, wait times to undergo important medical procedures continue to increase.

Albertans deserve better, Mr. Speaker. We need a health care reform strategy that is centred around the needs of patients rather than the whims of a large, centralized bureaucracy in Edmonton. Meaningful health care reform is extremely difficult at the best of times, but it is made infinitely more challenging by our current provincial government's lack of a coherent plan. I'm of the view that a competent and responsive provincial government would articulate a clear plan for health care that voters understand. Such a government would first consult with provincial stakeholders, including doctors, nurses, home-care workers, patients, and others, in developing its plan. This has not been done.

After developing the plan, an effective government would communicate the specific health care goals they intend to achieve and why these goals are necessary. It would show how they intend to achieve these objectives and what timelines and milestones to expect along the way. The current government has failed to do this also.

An effective health care reform strategy would give Albertans a personal stake in health care reform. Just as Albertans were willing to pull together in support of eliminating our debt in the '90s, I believe Albertans would be willing to do the same to save our public health care system today but only if they are first consulted with and the overall health reform strategy is explained clearly to everyone up front. We can reform our health care system into one that is accessible and patient-centred without compromising universal accessibility. Dozens of western European countries have successfully tackled health care reform without abandoning their commitment to a public system. With Albertans' entrepreneurial spirit there is no reason why we cannot do the same.

In order to achieve this result, any Alberta health care reform strategy should set principle-based guidelines around which an acceptable plan can be developed. As a starting point I would include the following principles. The system must be sustainable for ourselves and future generations financially over the short and long term. The system must measurably improve the quality of our health care, including shorter waiting times for medical procedures and improved patient outcomes as well as increased access to family doctors and specialists, and these should be tracked. The system must allow each individual the maximum amount of choice regarding their personal health care decisions. And the system should ensure that the best health care professionals and facilities remain available to every individual regardless of ability to pay. It's time to start building a health care system that we can be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency is the fastest growing and among the very youngest in our province. We value the education of our children so very much. In my view, ensuring that all of Alberta's children receive a world-class education is one of the most important roles our provincial government can play in building our province. In partnership with the important core values taught by parents, education provides a launching point for a healthy and contributing citizen. To deny a child the proper education is to greatly increase the risk of losing that child to ignorance, poverty, and even crime.

The provincial government spends more per capita than any other province on education. The problem is that tens of millions of those dollars are wasted on what is a massive, centralized bureaucracy in Edmonton. For example, in my view, we spend millions on unnecessary standardized testing for grade 3 students. We spend millions more finding ways to burden our classroom teachers with additional paperwork, record keeping, and other make-work projects. Personally, I want our teachers spending their time teaching rather than filling out forms.

It is my view that the provincial government should work on moving millions of dollars in funding away from centralized bureaucracies and towards front-line teachers and staff in our children's schools. This means flowing more funding directly to individual schools, where principals, teachers, and parents know best where it is needed.

Mr. Speaker, a distinguishing and important feature of Alberta's education system is that it provides parents with a greater range of educational choices than do other systems in North America. Although strong public schools are critical to our education system, charter schools, private schools, and home-schooling provide educational opportunities and teaching methods that are sometimes unavailable in our public system.

In fact, our public school boards have responded to competition from charter, home, and private schooling by rolling out a diverse range of excellent core and optional courses that are second to none in North America, which is why Anita and I send our oldest and plan to send our younger three when they are old enough to a public school in our community. Our public schools have proven themselves to be able to compete with the best that charter, home, and private schools have to offer. Continuing to foster this culture of educational innovation and competition will pay dividends for our teachers, parents, and children for decades to come.

Mr. Speaker, one of these educational innovations that I think we should explore more in this province involves student-centred learning. As Internet and computer technologies continue their exponential advances, it is becoming clear that current teaching models need to be altered. For over a hundred years the traditional classroom model of a teacher lecturing students in front of a chalkboard served as the best way to teach large numbers of students simultaneously. However, this traditional model also has its limitations. It often results in gifted students having their potential restricted by peers who may not learn as quickly. On the opposite end of the spectrum, some students who fail to grasp key concepts are moved on to higher grades and more complicated subject matter regardless of whether or not they are ready. This can result in frustration, the domination of a teacher's time by a few struggling students, perpetual poor grades, and even behavioural problems.

I believe Alberta has the opportunity to lead the world in the way we deliver education to our children. Using emerging technologies to complement the work of our teachers will fundamentally alter for the better the way we educate our kids. Imagine an education system where the classroom is entirely centred around the learning needs of each individual student. Imagine a learning model where a student can take the time needed in select pedagogies specific to

his or her learning capacities to master a specific competency before moving on to new material. Gifted students would be given the tools to reach their full potential. Students who need more time and practice to master basic concepts would receive such before moving on. In short, our children would be able to learn at the right pace and in the right way for them rather than participating in the traditional one-size-fits-all approach. Big changes such as these are difficult; I know that. However, I'm convinced that Alberta's teachers and parents are up for the challenge.

Mr. Speaker, we can only build the public health and education systems Albertans want if we have the money and provincial wealth necessary to pay for it. During the '90s Alberta established itself as one of the best places in the world to do business. We limited government spending growth, paid off the debt, lowered taxes, and provided tax incentives to attract new businesses and industries. The people of our province proudly referred to this as the Alberta advantage. Although Alberta still possesses some of these same features, our edge has slipped dramatically over the last decade. Our personal and corporate tax advantage has decreased and will soon be surpassed by several provinces, specifically on the corporate side, and our provincial government has no plan to regain that advantage.

Only a few short years after declaring Alberta debt free, the provincial government has taken on billions of new and unnecessary debt, with no commitment to paying it off over the short term. As mentioned previously, tens of billions of dollars in investment in Alberta's energy sector have fled to neighbouring jurisdictions, due in large part to the new royalty framework.

Provincial government spending has been growing out of control for some time. Over the past several years we have spent far more per capita than any other province in Canada. Government spending increases have been more than double the rate of provincial inflation plus population growth. By refusing to control spending to sustainable yearly increases, this government now finds itself in the position of both taking on massive amounts of debt while facing the prospect of cutting the promised programs that Albertans have come to rely on.

The current government's failure to plan was a plan to fail. Despite the recent damage done to our financial reputation and well-being, it is not too late to turn things around. An obvious first step would be to reverse the damaging royalty hike imposed by the current government on our oil and gas entrepreneurs. However, we must also develop and implement a long-term financial plan to become more economically competitive with jurisdictions around the world. In short, it's time to restore the Alberta advantage.

3:20

The first component in a long-term financial plan for our province is to stop the financial bleeding. The current provincial government is spending beyond its means. It's accruing debt for future generations to pay. In my view, piling up billions in debt on the backs of future generations to dull the pain of a self-inflicted spending hangover is the height of irresponsibility. So, too, is expanding the size of government entitlement programs to the point where the only way to adequately fund such is to raise taxes or increase debt on future generations. Over the past several decades we have relied on nonrenewable resource wealth to lower taxation rates while increasing spending on infrastructure and social programs. Continuing this course is unsustainable. We must diversify our economy and decrease our reliance on nonrenewable resource revenue.

So how do we do this? In a global economy entrepreneurs, businesses, and ideas flow to where the best opportunities for success exist. The best minds don't necessarily work where they graduate. Skilled workers are highly mobile and will go wherever

the best opportunities arise. A technological breakthrough is often not commercialized where it is created. When contemplating where best to develop a new technology or product, entrepreneurs and corporate executives generally seek out jurisdictions where levels of taxation and burdensome regulations are low. Historically governments who gamble taxpayer money on investing in the next big idea or industry generally end up with a bill and nothing to show for it at the end of the day. If Alberta wants to successfully diversify its economy, we must make our province more fiscally attractive to the brightest people, best entrepreneurs, and most successful businesses.

I want to see an Alberta where my children and grandchildren will have jobs in industries that people are just now starting to dream about. We need to start planning today to make this a reality. A long-term financial plan for Alberta will be needed to accomplish this goal. I believe that any such plan should include the following three components: first, limit yearly government spending increases to the rate of inflation plus population growth; second, as economic growth increases and government revenues begin to outstrip newly restricted spending levels, invest the majority of resultant budget surpluses in Alberta's heritage fund; and third, as annual earnings from the heritage fund increase, thereby replacing our reliance on nonrenewable resource revenues, gradually begin lowering personal and corporate income taxes, thus attracting new people and new business. This kind of sustainable fiscal planning will accomplish the goal of diversifying our economy and will leave our children with even greater opportunities than we enjoy today.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for Alberta to step up and lead again. It is time to restore the Alberta advantage. We can and we must do better. We owe it to generations of Albertans past, present, and future to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. I appreciated the comments from the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere and value his commitment to public education and so on.

There's been a lot of debate about the merits of containing government spending to a combination of inflation and population growth. There's a sort of intuitive appeal to that, and I can see that as a short-term way to control spending, it could be a tool.

My concern is that that, then, doesn't account for growth in the economy. That means that your government will never ever participate in the growth of the economy. If we adopted that level, say, this year, then forevermore the Alberta government spending would be stuck at the levels of this year in real per capita terms, and the people 10 or 20 or 30 years from now might be saying: "Well, you know, why are we funding our schools at the levels of 2010 or building roads at the levels of 2010? Our economy has grown. Why can't we have public services that reflect that?" I'm wondering how you justify holding that position of keeping government spending to population growth and inflation in light of my comments?

Mr. Anderson: Very good question. This has been done in other jurisdictions. You'll see this in Bill 204, that I'm going to be introducing next week, actually. I agree with you. You don't want to in perpetuity cap spending at inflation plus growth. You want to be competitive with other jurisdictions across the country and be able to hire nurses and doctors and teachers, et cetera, at the same rates as other jurisdictions.

So what I would propose is that you limit it to the rate of inflation plus population growth, which in the short term will keep us above the average of the other Canadian provinces for a long time. But, eventually, if the average per capita spending of the rest of Canadian provinces is at a level and that cap brings us below that level, we should adjust the cap to bring us up to the average of the other provinces.

What we want to do is just make sure that (a) our spending is sustainable. If we don't do that, Member, we are leaving such a debt, not just a physical \$6 billion which is projected debt, on the backs of our kids, but we're also leaving them with a totally unsustainable set of social programs that they will not be able to pay for without losing the advantages that we have.

The reason you don't tie it to GDP, just incidentally, is – actually this government has over the last 10 years generally tied, if you look back, to GDP. That's generally the increase that has been accomplished. As you can see, it is not sustainable. It doesn't take into account things like scales of economy, where, basically, the more people you have, the bigger pot of money you have. You should be able to deliver the same amount of services for a more efficient cost. It doesn't take that into account.

I do believe this has been used in Colorado. It's been used very effectively in Colorado and several U.S. states. You've seen what's happened to California and New York and other states that have not had this in place. Now they're just slashing social spending, education programs, health care benefits. It's mass chaos.

So, yeah, that would be the answer to your question.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just ask the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere whether he could elaborate a little bit on his suggestion that Alberta should innovate and have some health care reforms. I think he alluded to the western European countries, some of whom have different models but still have universal public health care. Would he not agree that the Canada Health Act, which is federal legislation, is somewhat constraining in that regard? How would he propose that Alberta might go about reforming the health care system along some of these other models? Could he be a little bit more specific about what type of models he might be alluding to?

The Speaker: The hon. member, if you wish.

Mr. Anderson: Absolutely. There have actually been several studies on comparing these western European health care systems to ours and what types of reforms we could make that would still be in line with the Canada Health Act. One of them I'm glad to see the minister is talking about, which is activity-based funding. That is important. That is something that's going to create more efficiencies in the health care system, in hospitals. I think that that's just one of many examples. There's not enough time to have that debate right now, but I'm more than happy to talk about that.

The Speaker: I'm sorry, hon. member, but we must move on.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, then Athabasca-Redwater, then Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, then the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today in reply to the Speech from the Throne, so eloquently delivered by our Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Norman Kwong. I heard of the

China Clipper a few years after immigrating to Alberta in the early 70s, and even to this day becoming a successful Canadian professional football player remains rare for Canadians of Chinese descent.

I was trying to follow, so to speak, the hon. Lieutenant Governor starting in the late '80s, when I was organizing and running children and youth cultural and multicultural programs. I came to recognize the barriers and challenges faced by many immigrant and minority youth and how issues impacting visible minority youth are so invisible in the eyes of our institutions. These young people also bear the added challenges of not having the vocabularies or lacking the language to articulate the issues and experiences of exclusion and discrimination.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Then by chance I saw the Hon. Norman Kwong interviewed by a Vancouver television station, and he talked about his experience with racism and discrimination. I thought: this is the guy that my kids need to hear from and learn from, a person in a leadership position who has the audacity to talk about unpleasant, difficult subjects. Though I was not able to commit him to speak to my kids, I was very pleased and honoured to recognize and celebrate his many achievements at the 2001 inaugural Asian Heritage Month event in Calgary, including introducing him and members of the Calgary Stampeders to a gymnasium full of youth from the Chinese community. Mr. Speaker, we are indeed very fortunate to have the Hon. Norman Kwong as our Lieutenant Governor, who also serves as a source of inspiration and dynamism to our evolving, modern, and vibrant province.

3:30

According to Statistics Canada the province of Alberta has seen a population expansion of about 10 per cent every five years since 2001. For the city of Calgary it was at 13 per cent over a five-year period. We are an energetic, youthful province with a healthy number of young families and a median age of 36 for our population. A whole 20 per cent of our population of 3.5 million people is under 15 years old. But our province also mirrors many other industrialized centres that are experiencing declining birth rates combined with more and more people living longer. The abundance of natural resources and a generally robust economy has attracted continuous waves of skilled as well as entrepreneurial people to this province on the prairies.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne, I believe, has responded to and reflects the hopes and values of Albertans. Our government's commitment to act on the recommendations from the Minister's Advisory Committee on Health includes creating the first-ever provincial health act, that would articulate our collective beliefs and values through a set of principles which will guide the development of public health policies and program deliveries. This is a demonstration of our government's responsiveness to Albertans' expectation to be engaged in our ongoing effort to sustain a high-quality, efficient, and accountable health system. The path forward is one of ingenuity, greater predictability, and continuous engagement. Equally important, our stakeholders and citizens alike will gain and share greater understanding and ownership of the public health service that Albertans and our nation hold dear. These, I believe, will be very much welcomed by the constituents of Calgary-Mackay.

Mr. Speaker, it's imperative that our work here also serves to instill a sense of pride in our young people and those who come here for the economic opportunities. In order for us to sustain future prosperity for our province, I believe our government's commitment

to the following areas, articulated through the throne speech, will help us achieve that: to strengthen and ensure the province's leadership role in research and in the innovation system under Alberta Innovates, to continue to build world-class universities of the 21st century, to demonstrate that Albertans take great pride in our environment and that we will be a leader in clean energy production as well as our interest in building public services and transportation systems that unite our communities in commerce and culture. With these investments in our people and infrastructure a modern, dynamic, and energetic Alberta is within reach.

I mentioned in the beginning of my speech that, comparatively, we are a province with a high proportion of younger population. Our government listened to Albertans with young families and responded with our pledge to meet our promise to create 14,000 new child care spaces this year. In addition, our government is launching an exciting new vision for education to ensure that learning is responsive to the needs of our future generations.

Our seniors, that will comprise 15 per cent of our population by 2020, present an urgent need to create the necessary accommodations in a timely manner. Our government is offering Albertans the opportunity to invest in our future through the purchase of capital bonds to build the much-needed seniors' accommodations. Many Albertans agree that this is an innovative and welcoming way to address the needs of our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, Imagine Calgary, which captured Calgarians' long-term vision for the city at the turn of this century, highlighted the city's value of peace, safety, and security. Calgarians identified living in peace, feeling safe in our homes and throughout our city, as a cherished goal. I'm confident the citizens of Calgary would be pleased with this government's continued commitment to the safe communities initiative to sustain safe, strong, and caring communities.

This government understands the importance of being tough on crime, but it also recognizes the importance of strong and effective social programs to help those in need. For example, our government will continue to work to develop 11,000 affordable housing units by 2012 and to work on the 10-year plan to end homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, our strong, competitive economic foundation and our high-quality social programs will continue to attract new Canadians to Alberta. This province has a vision where all citizens feel a sense of belonging and pride and participate in all aspects of this province. After all, our diversity strengthens our competitive advantage. It will lead Alberta into a prosperous future as we work together with trading partners to enhance investment opportunities.

An example of this is our commitment to working towards a western economic partnership with British Columbia and Saskatchewan to create Canada's largest boundary-free investment market. This economic market will be well positioned to trade with the emerging Asian markets, and working together with B.C. and Saskatchewan on the joint trade mission to China and Japan will enhance our economic potential in Alberta and western Canada.

While the global economic recession has provided many challenges – we have experienced the lowest energy prices in many years; we've seen the worst economic recession since the Great Depression – we also have seen a resilient population, willing to tackle today's challenges with courage and optimism. It is this optimism that encourages me, knowing that regardless of what challenges we face, Albertans are up to the task. Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta is well positioned to overcome these challenges and steer towards an even more vibrant and dynamic future.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, the chair shall now recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour and a privilege to rise today to respond to the Speech from the Throne delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. After listening to the eloquent and the compelling words of Her Majesty's representative, I'm certain I'm not alone in having left this Chamber with a renewed admiration and respect. As an immigrant from mainland China I will do everything I can to make this province, this country, a better place for all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege to serve the people of Edmonton-McClung for nearly two years. Time and again they continue to inspire and impress me with their dedication and accomplishments and love for this great province. In many ways the Speech from the Throne captures the spirit of my constituents. They understand that these are challenging economic times not only for the people of Alberta but for all the people of the world. They know that after several years of unprecedented growth our government must continue to build the infrastructure for the future growth of our economy. They know that we must continue to build our great social services such as health care and education so that they will continue to serve our future generations.

Under the dedicated leadership of our Premier I know we can face these challenges with pride. Thanks to the decisions that this government took before the recession began, Alberta is the best prepared province in Canada to emerge stronger than ever. Not only did this government eliminate more than \$23 billion in debt, but it has built up substantial savings of \$17 billion in the sustainability fund. Today this sustainability fund provides us with the financial cushion we need so that Alberta remains unique as the only debt-free jurisdiction in North America.

Mr. Speaker, while our government is fortunate enough to be able to draw on these savings, other jurisdictions in Canada continue to fall deeper into debt, with greater interest payments to maintain that debt. It is by no accident that Alberta finds itself in this fortunate position today. It was the bold leadership of our government with the experience of previous recessions that enacted the policies that now keep this province debt free. I commend this government's commitment to eliminate the deficit within three years so that we can start replenishing the sustainability fund for future economic downturns. With an economy that is already one of the strongest and the most competitive in North America, I know this is a goal we can achieve.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, today Albertans and Alberta businesses enjoy the lowest income taxes, and we are the only jurisdiction in Canada that has no provincial sales tax. This government is keeping its commitment to eliminate health care premiums. With that said, I'm particularly proud of our Premier's pledge to Albertans: no new taxes. However, in a global economy that is becoming more competitive, we must do more, and we will.

The first piece of legislation that this Assembly will consider is the Alberta Competitiveness Act. As His Honour stated in the throne speech, it will send a powerful message of our resolve to make Alberta the most competitive jurisdiction in the world. To this end, Mr. Speaker, we must continue to minimize the cost of doing business in Alberta. We must eliminate unnecessary regulations and barriers that restrict our economy from reaching its full potential.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of our government's leadership in building a western economic partnership with our two great neighbours, British Columbia and Saskatchewan. This

partnership will bring lasting benefits to all Albertans not only by building Canada's largest free trade and investment market but strengthening interprovincial collaboration on international marketing, innovation, and procurement. By working together, we will be able to better market our goods in the emerging markets. I also look forward to working with other provinces across our great nation in reducing trade barriers for an even more competitive Canada.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta must also ensure that our energy industry remains the strongest, the most competitive in North America. After decades of development through hard work and sacrifice Alberta has the most secure and stable energy supply in North America. Ensuring that we continue to have an even more secure and stable supply of energy, which has to be developed in an environmentally responsible way, is vital to our future prosperity, and I'm proud to say that Alberta is on the right track, is leading the way. Initiatives such as the competitiveness review and many environmental initiatives are building an even more competitive 21st century energy industry that will benefit Albertans for generations.

Competitiveness also means having the most advanced, world-class infrastructure in North America. In my constituency, Mr. Speaker, we can see the positive results of this government's commitment to Albertans. The completion of the Anthony Henday ring road will provide an efficient transportation network for Edmontonians. Last year funding was approved for the construction of overpasses on Lessard Road and Callingwood Road, while planning continues for the proposed Cameron Heights overpass. Once completed, these overpasses will provide a safer and more convenient commute for my constituents and all Edmontonians. Eliminating these traffic lights will hopefully reduce the level of noise for my constituents who live alongside of the ring road.

Mr. Speaker, a competitive, next generation economy also means having the best education system in the world. Throughout Alberta new schools are being built for a new generation of students. Nearly \$1 billion of funding for the smaller class size initiative has been targeted at lowering or maintaining class size averages. Two of these new schools have been planned for my constituency, Edmonton-McClung. In the Hamptons area the K to 9 Sister Annata Brockman Catholic school will be completed this fall, and in the Grange area a K to 9 public school will be completed in 2011. I'm very pleased that His Honour's speech dedicated our government to develop a new vision for education that will successfully serve a new generation of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, His Honour's Speech from the Throne outlined the bold vision of this Premier for a truly next generation economy. Thanks to the hard work of Albertans and the leadership of this government we are well positioned to be the most competitive jurisdiction in North America in the years to come. While we face the greatest economic recession in over half a century, we will recover. Albertans are a courageous people. I'm proud of this government's plan to prevail from this economic recession and build an even stronger province.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, the chair shall now recognize the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak in reply to the Speech from the Throne, delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. I'd like to join my colleagues who previously spoke in thanking His Honour for his dedication and public service to the people of Alberta these last many years.

Mr. Speaker, while His Honour's speech detailed the challenges we currently face as Albertans, I'm confident that this Premier and this government have the right plan to build a truly next generation economy. Thanks to the responsible and prudent financial fiscal leadership of this government we find ourselves in the strongest position of any government in North America. During years of unprecedented growth this government paid off nearly \$23 billion in debt, saved \$17 billion in the sustainability fund, and invested another \$8 billion in the heritage trust fund. This forward-thinking leadership continues to protect our key social services from the worst recession the global economy has seen in decades. Furthermore, with low taxes our province remains one of the most competitive jurisdictions to raise a family or conduct business in North America.

However, our greatest asset continues to be the hard-working, well-educated, and entrepreneurial people of this great province. With the right tools for success I know that there is nothing our people cannot accomplish together. One of these essential tools is a flexible, strong education system that all Albertans can depend on, regarded as one of the best in the world. A next generation economy demands a renewed long-term vision of education in our province.

Last year I was honoured to be asked by the Minister of Education to serve as co-chair for the Inspiring Education committee to conduct a dialogue with Albertans on the future of education in our province. The objectives of the committee were threefold: to heighten public appreciation of education in Alberta and the value of that education to a strong economy; secondly, to develop a clear understanding of what it will mean to be an educated Albertan in 2030 – in other words, what are the key outcomes that we want out of our education system? What's its purpose? What will it need to deliver in 20 years? – and thirdly, to help create a basis for a broad policy framework describing the overall direction, principles, and long-term goals for education in Alberta.

From April 2009 to June 2009 the Inspiring Education committee met with thousands of Albertans in Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Lethbridge, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Bonnyville, Red Deer, and beyond, right across this province. Others joined in online, and others met in smaller focus groups. Mr. Speaker, when the committee's report is released, I'm confident that it will help contribute to Alberta having the strongest plan in Canada for a 21st century education system, and Albertans can be proud that their input served as the foundation for this new vision for education in Alberta. After all, education is a lifelong journey that belongs to the students.

It's the same approach that the government is taking as we develop a 21st century vision for our publicly funded health care system. The Minister's Advisory Committee on Health recently proposed a new Alberta health act, the development of which would be guided by Albertans. At the same time, I'm very pleased that the government is providing stable, five-year funding to Alberta Health Services. These initiatives will ensure a health care system that is both patient focused and prepared to deal with growing cost pressures. This funding will help ensure that Alberta's seniors and my rural constituents can count on accessibility of health care and health care that meets their needs.

3:50

I'm also pleased that His Honour's speech outlined the government's plan to direct proceeds from the sale of Alberta capital bonds to seniors' accommodations, including continuing care and supportive living facilities. This government's renewed commitment to strengthening the social services that empower our citizens will be key to building a globally competitive economy in the 21st century.

As the Member for Athabasca-Redwater I was particularly pleased that His Honour's speech addressed a key economic driver of our province: our agriculture and agrifood industries. [some applause] Hear, hear. Through hard work, sacrifice, and ingenuity Alberta's agriculture producers have helped build our great province into a world-class producer of safe, high-quality food products. Today these producers face an increasingly globalized economy where competitiveness is crucial to long-term sustainability. Through initiatives such as the livestock and meat strategy we will continue to ensure that our producers are even more competitive to beat the competition from other countries and break into new emerging markets.

Another key driver of our next generation economy will be the continued responsible and sustainable development of our oil sands. As the Member for Athabasca-Redwater I have witnessed first-hand the tremendous economic prosperity they have brought to the province and the tremendous growth pressures. Today, more than 50 per cent of our GDP can be attributed to energy development, and Albertans are grateful for the natural resources our province has been blessed with. From our world-class social services to high-paying jobs energy development has been a primary contributor to our development as a province. As the rightful owners of these resources we must continue to ensure greater value-added development here in Alberta. This will mean Albertans receiving greater value for the resources they own, more jobs, more knowledge-based jobs, and a more competitive, stronger, more stable economy.

Part of this government's strategy to encourage value-added development is the collection of bitumen in kind rather than cash from energy companies involved in the oil sands development. Under current guidelines the government reserves the option to take bitumen in kind rather than cash, just as we do with our conventional oil. Essentially, the government could use this bitumen to stimulate value-added development here in Alberta or diversify our customer base. Mr. Speaker, I'm excited for the opportunities this program will have for the future development as a global energy producer and for my constituency, in particular. With the second-largest proven reserves of oil in the world the oil sands provide a safe and reliable source of energy for our fellow Canadians, the United States, and other emerging international partners.

To ensure the continued leadership of Alberta's economy, including the energy sector, our government is undertaking a competitiveness review to encourage additional investment. In an increasingly competitive global economy I'm pleased that this government is determined to make Alberta the most competitive jurisdiction in North America to invest in and to do business in. Under the leadership of this Premier I know we will succeed. Albertans are by nature a forward-thinking, innovative people who do not settle for second-best, and they want a government with a positive vision that reflects their priorities and fulfills the potential of this great province.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Speech from the Throne delivered that. It outlines the government's vision of a 21st century education system that provides Albertans with the tools to succeed. It outlines the government's commitment to a sustainable, publicly-funded health care system that future generations will be able to depend on. It outlines this government's plan to ensure that our economy is the most competitive in North America. In short, Mr. Speaker, this government is working hard to meet the priorities of Albertans.

Together we will face the changes of the 21st century with the same ingenuity and optimism that has characterized Albertans and my rural constituents for generations. I'm very proud to be a fourth-generation Albertan, and my children are the fifth generation of our family in this province.

I'd like to again thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for his years of public service to our province and the impact that he has left with all of us. Thank you.

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

Seeing none, the chair shall now recognize the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I rise today in response to the Speech from the Throne, delivered so eloquently by His Honour the Hon. Norman Kwong. I'd also like to thank His Honour for his dedication to Alberta and his commitment to preserving and enhancing the heritage, traditions, and character of our province as Lieutenant Governor over the past five years. I'm sure that His Honour would also like me to acknowledge that he is the first and only great Alberta football player to serve in this illustrious role.

The Speech from the Throne highlighted many of this government's priorities. In the conclusion of this inspirational speech I can honestly say on behalf of my constituents that we have reason to be very optimistic about our province's future.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has one of the most volatile revenue streams in North America, being heavily reliant on resource revenues. No one could foresee the depth of the global economic downturn that we're currently facing. Economic fluctuations of this magnitude are out of Alberta's control. This is, indeed, a world-wide phenomenon.

What we can control is how we prepare for these fluctuations. Our government had the foresight to recognize that booms do not last forever and that fiscal responsibility and savings are crucial to the future prosperity of our province. To that end, Mr. Speaker, this government socked away some \$17 billion in a one-of-its-kind sustainability fund, a fund that will allow Alberta, unlike any other jurisdiction in North America, to weather this economic storm without saddling our grandchildren with a debt burden. This foresight has allowed our government to uphold our ambitious capital plan, which is crucial to creating jobs in Alberta and providing the infrastructure that we need today and, indeed, for the future.

This is especially important because as the Lieutenant Governor stated in the throne speech, construction costs today are lower. In fact, Mr. Speaker, tenders for major projects are coming in significantly below cost estimates: more bang for our buck. Therefore, not only are we investing in vital infrastructure projects that Albertans need, but we are getting exceptional value for our investment in capital projects: schools, roads, hospitals, and much, much more. This government's capital plan supports an ever-changing Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, our population and our economy have experienced tremendous growth in past years. At the height of the boom this province grew by the equivalent of a city the size of Red Deer per year, and we continue to grow by some 50,000 per year today. It is vital that our capital plan reflect the changing needs of Alberta. As an example, our continued economic and population growth have led to increased pressure to further develop our provincial highway network. Many of my constituents travel Alberta's highways on a daily basis, and I know they appreciate the government's continued efforts to foster the safe, efficient movement of people and goods throughout Alberta. I also know that through our government's preparation for this economic downturn we'll be able to continue to invest in our provincial highway network. I know that many of my constituents are very anxious to see the twinning of highway 19 between Nisku and the town of Devon. Investing in roads and highways is one of many infrastructure projects that our government has committed to.

As I mentioned earlier, we are a resource-based province, but our greatest resource is our people. As such, Mr. Speaker, services that touch people's lives each and every day are vital. The direction laid out in the throne speech puts a strong focus on health and education. I was pleased to hear the throne speech highlight that we will evolve our education system so that it will continue to enable every student to reach their full potential as a lifelong learner and citizen.

Mr. Speaker, with advances in technology traditional classroom teaching has become only one method for our students to learn. Interactive media and the Internet have become tools in our learning environment, something that was not even a dream 20 years ago. Our government has acknowledged this change, among others, which is why Inspiring Education was launched, and the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater referenced that in his speech earlier. This consultation was designed to advise the government of how Albertans see the future of basic education in our province. The throne speech highlighted that in response to this initiative, our government will launch a new vision for the basic education system in the coming months.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad to hear that this government has employed such forward-thinking tactics and has and continues to anticipate change. By preparing for this change and beginning to adapt now, we will see our education system remain one of the best in the world and well suited to ensure the prosperity and success of each and every student.

To complete the support for Albertans becoming lifelong learners, this government has continued to demonstrate leadership in our postsecondary education system. Campus Alberta, which is our province's collective postsecondary system, has seen two of our province's exceptional college facilities become universities, of course, Mr. Speaker, those being Mount Royal in Calgary and Grant MacEwan right here in Edmonton. What that has done is grow our degree-granting capacity and overall profile.

Further, Apply Alberta was recently launched, which integrates the application process to all 26 publicly funded postsecondary institutions in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, this initiative will enhance participation of Albertans as well as students from other jurisdictions in our province's exceptional advanced education system. This comes in addition to our system's current accomplishments, which include the University of Alberta being ranked the fourth best university in Canada and a respectable 59th world-wide.

Mr. Speaker, as the Lieutenant Governor stated during the throne speech, our global economy is undergoing profound changes. Here in Alberta the same technology and knowledge that has allowed our province to prosper in the past will need to be updated in order to remain competitive. Under the leadership of our Premier I'm proud to say that our government has recognized the changes in the global economy and is taking measures to ensure that Alberta remains prosperous and competitive not only in a Canadian context but also in a global context.

There is no single facet of our province that can foster competitiveness in our domestic and international economy. Rather, a comprehensive approach is needed, bringing together industry and government in order to develop an integrated strategy to ensure that Alberta's industries will be able to adequately respond to the changes that they face. Mr. Speaker, Bill 1, the Alberta Competitiveness Act, is an example of the government's foresight and dedication to ensuring a healthy, thriving provincial economy. Essentially, Bill 1 will ensure that Alberta is ahead of the curve in responding to the changes in our global economy as they occur.

The Speech from the Throne allowed me the opportunity to reflect on the values of Albertans, especially those in my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont-Devon. Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to hold the trust of my constituents as their representative. I serve at the pleasure of the people of Devon, Leduc county, the city of Leduc, the town of Beaumont, the villages of New Sarepta and Hay Lakes, and two divisions of Camrose county. I'm very proud that my constituency was recognized by *Alberta Venture* magazine as the best place to do business in Alberta in 2009, thanks to the work of the Leduc-Nisku EDA and the many great business leaders and volunteers.

I'm proud to live in a province and an area whose citizens have such a dedicated work ethic, who persevere through difficult times and flourish through good times, who have a sincere, devoted commitment to fostering continued growth in our economy and providing for their families, and who take pride in calling themselves Albertans. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be an Albertan, and with our hard-working citizens and the sound leadership of our Premier I'm very optimistic about our future.

Thank you very much.

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

Seeing none, the chair shall now recognize the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always an honour to have the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the important initiatives my ministry is working on in response to the Speech from the Throne, delivered on February 4 by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to sincerely thank His Honour the Honourable Norman Kwong for his very distinguished service to the province of Alberta. His Honour is an inspirational champion who has shown that it is possible to achieve your dreams twice. So to His Honour I express my deepest gratitude and appreciation for his wisdom, his wit, and his dedication to the people of Alberta.

The government's decision to stay its course through the recent downturn in the economy has ensured that vulnerable Albertans will continue to receive the supports and services they need. My ministry focuses on programs that are vital to supporting seniors and persons with disabilities. I am proud that support for these groups continues to be a priority of this government. This priority is reflected in our comprehensive seniors' benefits package and programs for people with disabilities, both of which are among the best in the country.

For seniors we provide the highest monthly cash supplement, with the most generous income thresholds, through our Alberta seniors' benefit. This benefit provides \$280 per single senior and \$420 per month per senior couple. In fact, my ministry will provide over \$400 million in the 2010-11 fiscal year to seniors through income supplements and assistance with expenses for prescription drugs, long-term care, housing, dental work, and eyeglasses.

For people with disabilities, including developmental disabilities, we provide one of the most generous monthly income support benefits through the assured income for the severely handicapped program, more commonly known as AISH. AISH clients receive a financial benefit of up to \$1,188 per month as well as comprehensive health benefits for items and services like prescription drugs and dental and eye care, and they may also receive assistance to help pay for child care or special diets.

Like the rest of the country our population in Alberta is aging. Today there are approximately 391,000 seniors in our province. By

2016 that number will increase to more than half a million. We know this demographic shift will present a number of challenges and opportunities for all sectors of society, including governments, nonprofit and volunteer organizations, families, and individuals. We also know that the needs and circumstances of baby boomers will be different than those of our current seniors. As Alberta's population ages, we will need a holistic, aligned, co-ordinated, and sustainable approach to meeting the needs of an aging population.

In preparation for an aging population my ministry created the Demographic Planning Commission. The commission's role was to consult with Albertans and advise on meeting the needs of both current and future seniors. The commission asked Albertans what they believe future seniors will need and what they believe are the shared roles of families, individuals, communities, the private sector, and government in meeting these needs. Over 10,000 Albertans of all ages completed an online survey, and the commission met with over 100 stakeholder organizations across the province.

The three overriding messages we heard were, one, the need to ensure sustainability; two, the need for more choices; and three, the need to start planning now. This work along with input from other ministries and research is guiding the development of an aging population policy framework. This strategy provides seniors with more options that will allow them to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible while addressing changing health and housing needs. That's our continuing care strategy.

When thinking about care and housing options, many seniors have told us that they want to stay in their communities, with the people and in the places that make them feel most comfortable. This government's aim is to accelerate the growth and modernization of health and personal care services and to increase housing options across the continuing care system. A key part of the continuing care strategy is to build infrastructure that meets the aging in the right place vision.

I'm very pleased that part of the 2010-11 budget announcements included another \$50 million for the development of more than 500 new affordable supportive living spaces in communities across Alberta. This government has now invested approximately \$465 million for the development of approximately 9,000 new or up-graded affordable supportive living spaces since 1999.

4:10

I'm also proud that the new Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act, which was taken through the House by the hon. Member for Red Deer-South, supports my ministry's goal to improve the quality, supply, and client choice in the continuing care system. The new act, which is expected to be proclaimed in April, also recognizes and reflects the changing needs of Albertans who want to live as independently as possible while having access to the accommodations and services they need.

The act will ensure quality accommodation and services that enhance the safety and security of residents whether or not the facility is funded by government. It will also improve my ministry's ability to keep the standards current and will introduce features to meet the needs of an evolving supportive living sector. Under the new act there will continue to be a process for addressing complaints and concerns about accommodations and services as well as enhanced options that will allow my ministry to take the necessary steps, which may include closure if a facility operator consistently fails to meet standards.

Another important piece of legislation is the Protection for Persons in Care Act. This improved act will help ensure that safeguards are provided for adults receiving care and support services from government-funded agencies by improving abuse

prevention, monitoring, and follow-up when abuse has been reported. This improved act will make a real difference in this province by enhancing the protection of vulnerable adults and ensuring abuse complaints continue to be addressed effectively. The act will also make people who provide care to clients more accountable for their actions in preventing abuse and protecting clients from harm. I thank, once again, the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill for taking this act through the House.

I'm also very proud of the Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act, or AGTA, which came into effect on October 30, 2009. The AGTA strives to maintain the dignity and autonomy of Albertans and allows adults to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible. I believe this legislation will improve the lives of many Albertans as it reflects a more current understanding of mental capacity and supported decision-making. The AGTA provides more decision support options through the capacity assessment continuum while providing protective safeguards for some of Alberta's most vulnerable citizens.

One more program area I would like to mention is our persons with developmental disabilities, or the PDD, program. Without question, the PDD program is a good program and very important to the over 9,200 adults with developmental disabilities who we support. These individuals are among the most vulnerable Albertans, and the PDD program is critical to their personal independence and inclusion in their community. Because it is such a vital program, we want to ensure it is sustainable into the future. That is why I was pleased that with the 2010-11 budget we were able to maintain funding for the PDD program.

However, at the same time, it's important to improve the PDD program and make it even better. Over the past year we have received a lot of input from stakeholders about ways to improve the PDD program. The PDD community boards consulted with over 200 people, and I met with individuals supported by the program, their families, and many community agencies who deliver PDD supports. From those consultations we developed six priority actions. The six priority actions lay out very clear directions and goals, and these are intended to achieve clarity, consistency, effectiveness and efficiency, and sustainability. These changes will ensure that each person receiving PDD supports will be assessed in a common way and that the funding and supports they receive will be consistent. To me this is a fair and balanced approach. These changes will also ensure the PDD program remains viable today and into the future.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, my ministry and I have been working very hard to bring forward initiatives and changes in legislation that better protect our most vulnerable adults while providing some of the best benefits and supports in the country. We remain committed to working with our community partners and agencies to fulfill my ministry's mandate to support vulnerable Albertans and enhance their quality of life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of questions and comments. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the hon. member for her speech, and I have a question to ask. She talked about, I think, 2,000 additional spaces – maybe that's not the right number, but she can correct me – in seniors' housing, and I'm assuming that these will be assisted living type of beds. I'd like to know, first of all, if any of those beds are being achieved by the conversion of beds that are currently medical beds, that are long-

term care beds specifically, and how seniors in assisted living in the new beds who have medical needs – require nursing care, for example, or require a lot of drugs, require assistance for bathing, perhaps, or toileting or going to meals – will be able to be accommodated in assisted living beds and how that will be made affordable for those seniors.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Jablonski: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To correct the hon. member from across the way, I did say that this year, in our 2010-11 budget, we have \$50 million for the development of more than 500 new affordable supportive living spaces in our communities across Alberta. Then to further let him know what I said in my speech, this government has now invested approximately \$465 million for the development of approximately 9,000 – 9,000 – new or upgraded affordable supportive living spaces since 1999.

Mr. Speaker, to further address the question from the member, my department is responsible for supportive or assisted living care. The long-term care is still within the Alberta Health and Wellness department and within Alberta Health Services. I can speak to what I am responsible for, and I can tell you that the majority of the spaces that we provide through our supportive living are new. We have refurbished some of our lodge spaces.

I can tell you that we don't call them beds anymore because they're far more than just beds. If you've looked at any of our affordable supportive living facilities that we have in Alberta, they're beautiful accommodations with entire bachelor suite type of apartments with even small kitchenettes in some cases. So when we talk about affordable supportive living, we're talking about some beautiful accommodations for our seniors, not just beds anymore but complete units where our seniors will be very comfortable in a very beautiful, home-like setting with their friends and family and in their communities. That's what we're striving for, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I appreciate that. I have a wonderful vision now of these units. But the question really relates to people who require a level of care that would

normally be accommodated in a long-term care unit and whether or not any of these new assisted living beds are being achieved at the conversion of long-term care beds. I know that it crosses the boundary, but the minister should have an idea of how many units, lovely units, coming into her jurisdiction are coming at the expense of long-term care beds and how patients with needs like requiring assistance being toileted and taken for meals and bathing will be accommodated in an affordable way if there are not long-term care beds for them to go to. How will the assisted living beds, units, facilities be able to accommodate those people in a way that they and their families can afford?

4:20

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under my program in Seniors and Community Supports I am not aware of any long-term care beds or units that have been converted to assisted or supportive living. I believe that any long-term care bed that we have now in the province of Alberta has remained long-term care and has not been converted.

The health care needs of our seniors in assisted living – let's talk about level 4, designated assisted living – are managed by Health and Wellness.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the first legitimate opportunity to do so, having moved to adjourn debate, I now wish, as the Speaker afforded the opportunity legitimately to do so, to move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, February 22.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:22 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 27th Legislature - 3rd Session (2010)

Activity to February 18, 2010

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

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

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

1 Alberta Competitiveness Act (Stelmach)

First Reading -- 4 (Feb. 4 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 123-24 (Feb. 16 aft.), 135-37 (Feb. 16 aft.), 137-42 (Feb. 16 aft., adjourned)

2 Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 2010 (Woo-Paw)

First Reading -- 64 (Feb. 10 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 124-25 (Feb. 16 aft., adjourned)

3 Fatal Accidents Amendment Act, 2010 (Weadick)

First Reading -- 64 (Feb. 10 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 125 (Feb. 16 aft.), 137 (Feb. 16 aft., adjourned)

4 Dangerous Goods Transportation and Handling Amendment Act, 2010 (Olson)

First Reading -- 188-89 (Feb. 18 aft., passed)

201 Workers' Compensation (Firefighters) Amendment Act, 2010 (Rogers)

First Reading -- 154 (Feb. 17 aft., passed)

202 Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act (Forsyth)

First Reading -- 154 (Feb. 17 aft., passed)

Table of Contents

Introduction of Visitors	177
Introduction of Guests	177
Members' Statements	
Lethbridge Technology Commercialization Centre	178
Ron Boutin	178
Grandparents' Rights of Access to Grandchildren	178
Immigrant Employment Mentorship	179
Competitiveness Review of Royalties	179
Canadian Troops at Vancouver Olympics	188
Oral Question Period	
Postsecondary Education Funding	179, 184
Postsecondary Tuition Fees	180
Funding for Calgary Hip and Knee Surgeries	180
Provincial Fiscal Policy	181
East Calgary Health Centre	181
Electoral Reform	182
Podiatry Surgery	182
Water Use by Oil and Gas Industry	182
Public-private Partnerships	183
Family Farms	183
Municipal Election Campaign Financing	184
Cabinet Policy Committees	185
Bison Industry	185
Oil Sands Image	185
Value Review of Government Departments	186
PDD Funding for Community Agencies	186
Education Funding	187
Postsecondary Satellite Campuses	187
Health Care Funding	188
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 4 Dangerous Goods Transportation and Handling Amendment Act, 2010	188
Tabling Returns and Reports	189
Projected Government Business	189
Statement by the Speaker	
Adjournment of Debate and Assembly by Same Member	189
Government Motions	
Committee Membership Changes	190
Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech	190

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