



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Third Session

# Alberta Hansard

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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 27th Legislature**  
 Third Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 8, 2010

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, welcome back.

Let us pray. Renew us with Your strength. Focus us in our deliberations. Challenge us in our service to the people of this great province. Amen.

**Mr. Richard (Dick) Gruenwald**  
January 22, 1917, to February 24, 2010

**Ms Heather MacDonald-Webber**  
July 5, 1962, to March 3, 2010

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Mr. Richard (Dick) Gruenwald, former Member of the Legislative Assembly, 483rd member to be sworn in as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, passed away on February 24, 2010, at the age of 93 years. Mr. Gruenwald was first elected in the election held August 30, 1971, and served one term until March 25, 1975. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Lethbridge-West for the Social Credit Party. During his term of office Richard Gruenwald served on the standing committees on Private Bills; Private Bills, Standing Orders and Printing; Privileges and Elections; Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; Public Affairs, Agriculture and Education; and the Special Committee of the Legislature on Professions and Occupations.

On March 3, 2010, Heather MacDonald-Webber passed away at the age of 47 years after a courageous battle with breast cancer. Heather was the wife of Alberta's Minister of Aboriginal Relations, the MLA for Calgary-Foothills, and the mother of Lauren, Jaime, and Kelly. As the spouse of a member of this Assembly she very ably participated with her husband in his many ministerial duties and in service to their constituents. Heather leaves a legacy of strength, love, and inspiration.

With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of their families who shared the burdens of public office. Our prayers are with them. Family members of Mr. Gruenwald are here with us today in the Speaker's gallery. In a moment of silent prayer I would ask you to remember hon. member Richard (Dick) Gruenwald and Heather MacDonald-Webber as you may have known them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.

I would now like to invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. I would invite all here to participate in the language of their choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

## Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, it's an honour for me to rise today to introduce to you guests who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. These guests are family members of our former colleague Mr. Richard Gruenwald. Today with us are two of Mr. Gruenwald's children and their families. As I mention their names, I would ask them to rise: son Mr. Gerry Gruenwald and his spouse, Joyce; daughter Lois Weeks and her spouse, Al; granddaughter Tanna Toliver and her friend, Lynn Weinberger. If all would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

I would also like to advise all members that on their desk is a special message from Her Majesty the Queen, the head of the Commonwealth, on this day known as Commonwealth Day.

## Introduction of Guests

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce four students from my constituency from l'école Ste. Marguerite Bourgeoys. They are here today with Mrs. Lynn Fisher, their teacher. The four students' names are Luke Di Danieli, Geneviève Lévesque, Audrey Labrie, and Racha El-Dib. It's a pleasure for me to have students come from Calgary. They're only here for the day. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly a group from the Home Educators of St. Albert and Area, who are accompanying us this afternoon. We have three parent-teachers and eight students. The parent-teachers are Mrs. Katherine Seddon, Mrs. Fiona Lang-Sharpe, and Ms Tamara Westran. I believe they are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I'd like to introduce to you and through you 27 students from the Eleanor Hall school located in Clyde who are participating in the School at the Legislature program this week. They are accompanied this afternoon by teacher Amy McConnell, parent helpers Tori Ward, Susan Ringuette, and Karen Potts as well. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Stelmach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an outstanding Albertan who has made all Canadians very proud. Shannon Szabados is truly the best in the world, and she proved it at the Vancouver 2010 games. Together with her teammates on the Canadian women's hockey team she showed the world how good Canada's athletes really are. Along with teammates like Meaghan Mikkelson, Hayley Wickenheiser, and the rest of Team Canada they brought home the gold medal for the third time in a row. I'm sure all of Canada was watching when Team Canada faced off against

Team U.S.A. in the final game of the tournament. With Shannon in goal Canada's women skated to a 2-0 shutout of the U.S. and raised the Canadian flag at the gold medal ceremony. [Standing ovation] I guess there's no reason to ask all members to issue a warm welcome because we already did. Shannon, thank you, and all the very best.

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is more Olympic hardware yet to be displayed. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a gentleman who is well known to all of us in this House and throughout Alberta, Dr. Bob Steadward, founder of the Steadward Centre at the University of Alberta. Dr. Steadward was on February 28 awarded the Olympic Order, the highest distinction conferred by the International Olympic Committee, in recognition of exemplary service. Dr. Steadward's order comes in no small part due to his role as the international founder of the Paralympic Games. I would ask Dr. Steadward to please rise and receive the very warm welcome and congratulations of this House.

**1:40**

**The Speaker:** We're fortunate today to have had three school groups in the Assembly to recognize their new heroes. Wonderful. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly one of my constituents, Milan Sorenson, and her grandfather, Wayne Sorenson. This is Milan's first visit to the Alberta Legislature. Milan is the proud recipient of a laptop computer that was awarded to her from the ATCO celebrating excellence program, which was partnered with the government of Alberta. This is also not the first time that I've met this extraordinary young woman of nine years of age. I was privileged to meet with her and her parents, Kevin and Lisa, at their home on Saturday, February 27, for a short visit. I would also like to commend Milan's grandfather for taking the time to come to the Alberta Legislature and bring her for this extraordinary opportunity today. I would ask that they both rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you Mrs. Janet Ryan-Newell and her husband, Gordon Ryan-Newell, seated today in the members' gallery. Janet is an executive director of Crossroads Family Services, who recently hosted a foster parent recognition award evening, that I will be speaking about later on. I would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Ryan-Newell for their contribution to our city and our province, especially towards our children and youth. At this time I would like to ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a good friend of the province of Alberta. Mr. Don Johnson is the president of the Association of Municipal Districts

and Counties. Mr. Johnson spends many, many hours working for the betterment of all of our municipalities in the province of Alberta. Just recently, in meetings that I've had with them, he has indicated the times and the hours that he has spent even in Ottawa representing the better interests of our municipalities. With that, I'd like Mr. Johnson to rise and receive the warm appreciation of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my guest from the Alberta Federation of Labour Women's Committee, Carisa David. Today is International Women's Day, a global day for celebrating the economic, political, and social achievements of women. The AFL Women's Committee encourages the involvement of women in the Alberta labour movement and works to ensure that issues affecting women remain at the top of labour's agenda. Women make up almost half of Canada's workforce yet are still a long way from equality. The labour movement is working to close the gap. My guest is seated in the public gallery, and I would now ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly representatives of the Coalition des femmes de l'Alberta, Isabelle Déchène Guay, board president, and board member Jacqueline Bégin. The Coalition des femmes de l'Alberta is a nonprofit organization which provides a voice for francophone women in Alberta. Their aim is to motivate women from all regions of the province to work together on common interests and to support greater visibility for women of all ages. The coalition works in partnership with various francophone organizations such as Réseau santé albertain to support women as natural caregivers. I've asked my guests to join us here today in recognition of International Women's Day and also to pay tribute to the contributions of francophones in Alberta during Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie week. Je vous souhaite la bienvenue, en particulier aujourd'hui, pour célébrer la Journée internationale des femmes. My guests are seated in the public gallery, and I would now ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

#### 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics

**Mrs. Ady:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to speak on the success of Alberta's involvement in the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. These Olympics will long be remembered as the games that sparked Canadians' sense of national pride in perhaps a way that we had never experienced before.

Mr. Speaker, before I go any further, I'd also like to recognize Shannon and say: welcome, Shannon, and great job. Great job.

For 17 days in February thousands of visitors descended on Vancouver and 3 billion people around the world turned their focus to the Winter Olympics. Some called it the ultimate reality show. Alberta called it the ultimate opportunity. Unlike Nagano, Beijing, or Torino, Vancouver is next door, and this was a rare opportunity to promote our beautiful province and do business on a world stage.

Plus, Mr. Speaker, having hosted the Winter Olympics in 1988, many Albertans, including the some 70 volunteers who stepped up to assist the Olympic and Paralympic Secretariat, had first-hand Olympic experience, and they hit the ground running.

As the head of our Olympic Secretariat, Russ Tynan, once said: if you've never done the Olympic Games, you'll never understand the opportunity of the Olympic Games. So when Vancouver spent billions setting the Olympic table, we were there to serve up a taste of Alberta, literally, with a side of business savvy.

Two years ago we committed to an outstanding location for Alberta House and Plaza. Even before the games opened and before construction was finished, kudos started. In this beautiful prime space we served an innovative selection of Alberta foods such as prairie chowder, elk, boar, bison, cheeses, and Alberta beef. We rocked the house every night with free performances by talented Alberta musicians.

I'd like to commend my colleague the hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit and the staff in the arts branch for ensuring that so many talented Albertans could travel to Vancouver and Whistler to participate in the Cultural Olympiad and entertain thousands at our venues.

Alberta House was the place to be. Canadian Olympic medalists and celebrities like Wayne Gretzky dropped by to celebrate with us and the crowd, and for Alberta businesses it was the place to meet and host events, a place to develop new opportunities and relationships.

I'd also like to make mention of the 166 lucky young Albertans we hosted at Alberta House. Thanks to our Olympic Secretariat and ATCO's celebrating excellence program, two kids in grades 4 to 12 from each Alberta constituency and their parents won a flight to Vancouver, attended an Olympic event, and had dinner at Alberta House. Mr. Speaker, I'll never forget their smiles as they sat in Alberta House wearing red hockey jerseys and enjoying a meal prepared by executive chef Brad Smoliak. I know that every one of these young Albertans carried that Olympic spirit back into their schools and to their classmates. The further north we went, we had kids who'd never been out of their communities and never been on a plane. It was really wonderful to hear their stories.

We also sponsored 26 young Alberta athletes, future Olympians, and a parent to see their winter sports event first-hand courtesy of Alberta sports and rec and the secretariat in something called Pathways to Excellence. It was an inspirational experience for them but also for us. We got to see the next generation of Olympians.

These athletes also had the opportunity to ride the Alberta train. This was the Olympic venue that attracted more media attention around the world than we could have ever imagined and was dubbed one of the hottest tickets at the Olympics.

About 18 months ago we agreed to and signed a lease with the *Rocky Mountaineer*, voted the world's leading travel experience by train for the past four years, and wrapped it in Alberta's brand and colours. I'm delighted to say that the *Rocky Mountaineer* proudly announced that they'll keep that train wrapped for the entire 2010 vacation season. Wonderful news, and it goes to show the value of creating great business relationships.

Mr. Speaker, anyone could buy a ticket on the train during the Olympics, but we targeted decision-makers in the global tourism industry, the business world, and the media, the kind of people who don't always answer our e-mails or our phone calls, and they went on that six-hour round trip up to Whistler. They talked with Alberta tourism operators and business leaders, and it was the ultimate networking opportunity.

The Vancouver media joked that we had hijacked their train, but they were also the first to give us kudos. Alberta's Olympic vision is as clear as it is down to earth, they said; it's to drum up business

for Alberta. Even Premier Campbell publicly said that he was happy for the success of Alberta, B.C.'s good and supportive neighbour. We want to thank B.C. for graciously allowing all of us to participate in these games. They truly made them Canada's games and were great hosts.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, Travel Alberta estimates that just from the 17 days of the Olympics Alberta will gain more than \$70 million in media exposure in important markets around the world. Just last week I saw a German newspaper featuring the *Rocky Mountaineer* and skiing at Lake Louise. I couldn't read the language, but I could read the pictures.

Another special group that had an opportunity to travel on the Alberta train was the Children's Wish Foundation. I'd like to read for you an excerpt from their e-mail.

We were the family with three young girls sent to the Olympics from the Children's Wish Foundation. We were so lucky to get a ticket on the *Rocky Mountaineer* train trip. What a time we had.

We just want to thank you. It was the most fantastic adventure.

We'd like to say: "You're welcome. We're glad that you could travel with us, and we wish you continued strength through the challenges that you face every day."

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the greatest story and success story of the Olympics is the pride that Canadians felt in their country and in their athletes. I can't recall ever hearing so many spontaneous outbursts of *O Canada*. From Alex winning the first gold medal, to our men's hockey team winning the last, to our women's hockey team, to our curlers, skaters, skiers, snowboarders, and sliders, whether they won medals or represented our country to the best of their ability, we're fiercely proud of all of our athletes and the sacrifices they made to represent this country. These Olympics will be remembered as a turning point for Canada not only for our medal count but for recognition.

It's a great point of pride for Alberta that more than half of these Canadian athletes live, work, or train in Alberta. It's because government has made the investment necessary to maintain and upgrade legacy facilities. I don't know that we can ever thank our athletes, our volunteers, or our artists enough, but on behalf of this Assembly I'd like to extend our deep gratitude and congratulations to everyone who committed their time, energy, talent, and heart to proudly represent Alberta and Canada at one of the world's most recognizable events.

Just over a week ago the Olympic men's gold medal hockey game was shared by 22 million Canadians, and the second that goal crossed the line to win gold, we felt it echo across this nation. Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud and I know that we were all proud to represent the province of Alberta, but the one thing that I will take away from these games was how proud I felt to be a Canadian.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, the normal length for ministerial statements traditionally in this Assembly is four minutes or less. You went over seven.

We are now up against the daily Routine, Standing Order 7(1.1). We're now going to the question period.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Calgary Cancer Services

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. Since the nationally respected Alberta Cancer Board was dissolved by this government, a major

voice for cancer care in this province has been silenced. This government has been told there is not enough capacity for cancer care in Calgary since at least 2003, yet it fails to act. Even if work began now on a new facility, it would still be several more years before it would be up and running. My question is to the Premier. How many more years are the people of Calgary going to have to wait before they get a full-fledged cancer hospital?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, cancer care is a priority for my government. Alberta Health Services is looking at improving access to cancer treatment and not concentrating always on the bricks and mortar.

Any further questions the minister of health can give more information on.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll try the Premier on this. Is the Premier aware that the site in which cancer services are being delivered at the Holy Cross, which is rented on behalf of the Tom Baker centre, is the subject of a very serious class-action suit concerning deadly asbestos poisoning?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I think I've made it clear in this House on a number of occasions that the health infrastructure capital plan will be unveiled on or about March 31, and that will include looking at cancer facilities in Calgary.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, I'll repeat the question to the minister. The Tom Baker centre is so crowded, Mr. Speaker, it has to deliver services in rented spaces. One of these spaces is the former Holy Cross Centre. So again to the minister: is the minister aware that the site in which cancer services are being delivered at the Holy Cross is the subject of a very serious class-action suit concerning deadly asbestos poisoning?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, no, I am not aware of the asbestos issue that has just been raised, but I can assure this member that I'll look into it right away. In the meantime I would like to assure all Albertans who are listening and watching and those who are participating in this debate that we are going to be adding more capacity for cancer care in Calgary. I believe it's the McCaig centre that will be opening relatively soon, and that will take some stress off the system. But let's wait for the capital plan to come out in its formal sense in a couple of weeks.

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

#### Protection of Children in Care

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Children and Youth Services is a ministry in crisis, a broken system that puts children's lives at risk. It is a system where qualifications aren't valued, where monitoring is not a priority, and where screening of foster and kinship homes is insufficient. There is something systemic and fundamentally wrong with this ministry which will not be resolved by simply changing ministers. To the Premier. The current system is costing children their lives. What specific actions is the Premier taking now to fix the system to ensure that we don't see another life lost?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, it's always a tragedy when a child dies

no matter what the circumstances. Certainly, you know, as a father and a grandfather – and many of us are parents and grandparents – this is a serious situation, and our hearts go out to the families involved. The minister has ordered an investigation, and she may have further detail in this particular case.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: when will this government introduce legislation to ensure that all individuals who care for our most vulnerable population are properly qualified?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, foster parents do exceptional work in this province. There are many, many untold stories of children's lives that have been turned around through the exceptional care of foster parents. As I said before, the minister is undertaking an investigation in this particular matter. Once the results are provided to the minister, she will take action.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Front-line workers are facing enormous caseloads. They cannot provide the help because the government has not helped them. Will the Premier require that the children's advocate report directly to the Legislature as a first step to improving transparency and accountability within the ministry? This is the case in all other provinces.

**Mr. Stelmach:** As I said, Mr. Speaker, this matter is under investigation. The minister will review the results of that investigation and make the appropriate decisions.

**The Speaker:** Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

#### Domestic Violence

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One-third of homicides committed in Alberta are a result of domestic violence. Every year over 12,000 women are forced to live in shelters while more than 14,000 are turned away because of lack of space. Yes, Mr. Speaker, you heard that correctly: 14,000 women fleeing from abuse are turned away every year. To the Premier: when will this government take action to help the 14,000 women who are unable to be accommodated in shelters?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, not only has the budget increased for housing and accommodation; there are dollars put into a number of areas. One is to get the message across to many Albertans in terms of the physical and verbal abuse within families, especially towards women and their children. There are many not-for-profit agencies that have undertaken the education process in this province. But we will continue to keep ensuring that we work with agencies, that there is appropriate housing, and provide comfort for those that have been abused by their families.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the message is getting out there, but it is awful slowly. We need to do something for those 14,000 women who are fleeing violence right now. In that regard, why aren't we increasing our operational funding right now

to improve more shelter space to help these 14,000 women fleeing these horrible, horrible situations today?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, having attended many of the fundraising events that raise funds to supplement those that are provided by government to the various agencies providing housing, counselling, and protection and in speaking to the president, she was quite satisfied in terms of the direction the government is taking and the increase in funding. We'll continue to do that in spite of the fact that, you know, our resources are constrained. But this is a serious matter. We take it very seriously. Yes, education will help, but there are other ways of intervening to ensure that women are protected in their own homes.

2:00

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know money is tight right now, but if this government is looking for money, we can always look to the \$50 million that is ready and able to help people in the victims of crime fund. Why isn't this money being put to use right now to help these 14,000 women who are fleeing domestic violence situations?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not responsible for the fund, but the minister that is responsible can certainly answer the question.

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, the member will know that we have allocated millions of dollars to help victims of crime. The surplus in the fund is required to achieve stabilization. Nonetheless, my department is looking at it, and we'll report in due time.

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

### Protection of Children in Care

*(continued)*

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week's tragic death of a Morinville area foster child is the latest in an unfortunate list of incidents that have continued to cause grief for all Albertans. After each of these tragedies the NDP made recommendations that would better protect children in government care, but each time our suggestions have fallen on dead ears. To the Premier. It's not enough just to say that you care when you are the one in charge. Why has the Premier failed to take action to better protect the children in this government's care?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has undertaken an investigation in this matter. Once the results of that investigation are known, then she will make the appropriate decisions based on the evidence that's brought forward by the agency that is doing the review.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, children in care have suffered, their families have grieved, and this government's response has simply been to cut funding and staffing levels in this ministry. Child intervention services have been cut by \$26 million. Countless positions have been left vacant due to a hiring freeze. Again to the Premier: how can the Premier claim that he is working to protect vulnerable children while at the same time stripping the ministry of support and resources that are needed to do the job?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to reach conclusions in terms of what the issue was in this particular tragic case, but I would

ask the House to wait until the minister completes the investigation. Then we will have more information to reach a conclusion.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this House is still waiting for the results of an investigation that we were promised over a year ago, so waiting isn't going to do it. This government's own reports show that there are 79 confirmed instances of abuse against 150 children in care between January and June of '09 alone. This is a clear indication that the ministry was not in a position to sustain further funding cuts. Again to the Premier: how can you possibly think that this ministry, with its tragic record over the last two years, can protect the children in its care with fewer resources?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This member knows full well that the budget for child intervention is substantive. We have over \$525 million in this budget. We are going to be discussing this during estimates on March 17, and I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker: I am monitoring this budget very closely. I've discussed this with staff, the overall budget. They've assured me that the foster care review report that was conducted two years ago has made a significant difference in the area of foster care. It's about the screening, and it's also that we have good people that are applying for foster care and with the right intentions.

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

### Long-term Care in Fort McMurray

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was speaking with some schoolchildren as well as some voters in Fort McMurray, and they asked the question on question period on why we cannot get answers from government ministers or the Premier, so I'm going to provide an opportunity for the Premier on my questions that I asked just a week and a half ago. My question was pertaining to a commitment to long-term care in our community of Fort McMurray as well as 15 others and why new money is being spent, yet the old commitments that were made have still not been lived up to. Could the Premier please answer the question: why haven't you lived up to the old commitments while you are out spending new money?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, there is no new money being spent. We are working within our capital budget, and decisions with respect to continuing care facilities will be made very shortly. We just completed the sale of our capital bonds. We are looking at other areas to ensure that we provide the appropriate facilities for our seniors, and as I said before, we want to have seniors retire in the very same community that they helped build.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Speaker, our seniors, who have built this very province – again, pertaining to the question, new money has been listed in the budget. It has been announced in Fort McMurray, but the previous commitments that were made to communities across Alberta, in fact, appear to have been forgotten. My question is: will you honour the previous commitments that have been made to seniors across this province, not just in my constituency, as opposed to new money that is going out and being spent in new initiatives as opposed to, in fact, responding to the old commitments that have been made?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue on our plan to build the appropriate number of seniors' accommodations in the

province. I will say that the attitude towards seniors and the way we provide that housing has to change. We're not going to continue to build facilities where we keep dividing couples after 60 years of marriage and move one into perhaps a lodge here and move the other one into long-term care. That won't happen. We can keep seniors together, and we can get better quality of life and better service. That's the direction this government is taking.

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

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, to the seniors I've spoken to in my community and across Alberta, there have been over 15 commitments made to MLAs' constituencies in taking care of seniors, who have built this province. To the Premier. There are billions of dollars being spent today, new money, on carbon capture and storage, yet the previous commitments that were made have not been honoured. Will you honour these commitments, Mr. Premier, and assure this House that you will honour those commitments before any new money is being spent?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the hon. Member for Fort McMurray of a few certain facts. In the last decade over \$1 billion was spent on highway 63. On education there's \$40 million being spent on a new junior high school, \$53 million being spent on a new high school. Total government support: \$1.4 billion. He says that there's nothing new on the capital plan. Of course, there's nothing new on the capital plan. The point is that with revenues down, we're still building it. If he doesn't want it in Fort McMurray, I think there's a mayor down in Calgary that might like it.

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

#### Critical Electricity Transmission Infrastructure

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By ramming through Bill 50 last year, this government took away a landowner's right to be consulted in the construction of high-voltage power lines. Now that projects are being planned, landowners are frustrated that they're being left out of decisions that are severely affecting the value of their property. For example, a 40-acre strip by Crossfield is virtually unsellable because of uncertainty on where those transmission lines are going to go up. To the Minister of Energy: how are Albertans supposed to invest in this province when they're kept in the dark and they aren't given any power to protect their interests?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, there are a whole bunch of accusations made in that preamble that are completely false. What Bill 50 did was ensure that we not have hearings around the need. The need is evident, and Bill 50 passed the House last fall. What are taking place right now are negotiations with the various proponents of the transmission lines, with the landowners, and it'll be going before a hearing shortly.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, instead of consultations this government prefers information sessions so that people can find out what this government has already decided. With this Big Brother mentality what process is left for Albertans to make their concerns known to this government, Minister?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, any Albertan has the opportunity through any elected official to make their views known relative to any issue. I would suggest that if there's a particular

situation that this member has that he would like to draw to my attention as a minister of the Crown, I would also be open to those suggestions. Then on the official side of it, as I said, the hearings will begin. There's ample opportunity there as well, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, we've heard reports that the so-called experts sent to these sessions not only lack knowledge, but they also met Albertans' concerns with contempt. Given this government's track record for silencing Albertans or attempting to silence them, how can Albertans have any confidence that this government will finally hear and act on their concerns?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure where the member is getting his information. He prefaced his question by: we hear. I'm not sure where he hears. But, certainly, in the process of going forward with the negotiations with landowners, I'm informed by many of those who are involved that negotiations are proceeding satisfactorily.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

2:10

#### Beef Industry

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several constituents that are cow-calf beef producers, and as you know, due to a number of factors their viability is in question. Many are exiting the business, Alberta's herd is shrinking, and of course this would have dramatic impacts on rural Alberta. My question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. What can he do or what will he do to ensure these important primary producers remain viable and strong in rural Alberta?

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

**Mr. Hayden:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, that industry as part of the agriculture industry is hugely important to us as it's our second-largest and largest renewable industry in the province. In 2008 this government committed close to \$360 million to a long-range plan to spur innovation in technology, strengthen and stabilize the industry into the future. We face a great number of challenges right now with the new global economic situation, but that industry remains important, and we remain investing more than any other province in the country.

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

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. These same constituents are telling me that one of the big problems they see is that there isn't enough competition among purchasers in Alberta. They often point to the fact that we only have two major packing plants in our province, which they feel keeps prices depressed. What's the minister's response to that, and what can he do to ensure that there's more competition amongst purchasers?

**Mr. Hayden:** Mr. Speaker, it's true there are only two major packing plants in the province, but there are over 50 smaller processing facilities in Alberta. I understand the hon. member's concern. We need to open more markets, and we need to work closely with our neighbours throughout Canada and with the federal government to ensure that we can open more markets through those other processing facilities.



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

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister. My primary producers continue to be frustrated by the regulatory burdens that they feel they have in this province, particularly in light of the fact that beef being imported to Alberta does not have to comply with the same standards that Alberta beef does. Is this true, and can the minister tell us what he can do to eliminate this unfair disadvantage?

**Mr. Hayden:** Mr. Speaker, the quality and safety standards for meat that's brought into the province are the same whether those are processed here in the province or whether they're brought in from outside. Some of the competitive disadvantage that I hear about and some of the things we need to address are the extra funding that we spend on SRMs in our country compared to some of our competitors. We need to take a look through Bill 1 to make ourselves more competitive and create a better environment for the industry.

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

### Syphilis Caseload

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The way the government has handled the growing syphilis rates in Alberta is embarrassing. Firing three top public health officers and proceeding to do virtually nothing for three years has seen infection rates soar. Syphilis is entirely treatable, and for Alberta to have twice the national average for infection rates shows this government has ignored their own advice and allowed this situation to get out of hand. To the Minister of Health and Wellness. The former minister of health apparently ignored this issue. Will the minister finally act on the recommendations made in 2007 and have a province-wide campaign?

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The spreading of an infectious disease is a great concern to all of us. I thank the member, actually, for raising the issue because we do have a plan in place now, and there is a little bit more of an addition to that plan coming soon that will see, among other things, targeted interventions with certain population areas and certain population groups. That plan will also include establishing a 14-member group that will look further into the prevention aspects of this particular issue, and there are other enhanced clinical screenings being done as well.

**Ms Pastoor:** A proper health care system should have enough capacity to shift resources when needed and not completely drop everything else. This appears to have been the case under the H1N1. What is the minister doing to make sure that we have very balanced public health?

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the chief medical officer for health, who is one of many advisers to me as minister, has the additional parts to that plan. That'll be coming out very soon, hon. member, and I'll be sharing that with the public.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. I wonder if the minister could tell me just

on what basis the projection was made by the public health officer. You've talked about the plan coming forward. Is there a specific timeline?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we're already establishing the new 14-member team as we speak. But there will be more specific actions very soon that we'll be rolling out that will address exactly that issue. It's a cause for concern to be sure, and we're targeting to get back to zero within five years, which is a very realistic projection at this stage.

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

### Regulatory Reform

**Ms DeLong:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. The question is to the Minister of Finance and Enterprise. We all want Alberta to be greener. We all want Alberta to be safer. Thus, government creates regulations. Often the government overregulates when trying to achieve these goals. Unfortunately, each added regulation increases administrative costs to Alberta businesses, Alberta businesses that have to compete internationally with others not burdened with unnecessary regulation.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate the hon. member's concern with overregulation. In fact, this government has been reviewing regulation on a regular basis since the mid-90s. That's not surprising given the economic growth that has taken place in the province. Particularly with our resource-based economy, concern with environmental protection and worker safety is paramount. To ensure that the regulations are appropriate, my department works collaboratively with other ministries in the development of regulations. In particular, we've had since the mid-90s the Regulatory Review Secretariat, currently chaired by the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you. To the same minister: what is the regulatory load upon business, and is overregulation hurting our competitiveness?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, overregulation, of course, poses a threat of hurting our competitiveness, but again thanks to the good work done by the Regulatory Review Secretariat and the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House, we scrutinize all new regulation, and any change to existing regulation is scrutinized to make sure that the results that we want are achieved in the least burdensome way.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What are the government's plans to rein in and reduce our regulatory load on Alberta businesses and enhance our competitiveness?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, we think we have a system that's working well now, and we'll continue to use the Regulatory Review Secretariat. The hon. Minister of Energy is just completing a competitiveness review that looks at a broad sector of factors that affect the competitiveness of the energy industry. One of those is

regulation, and you'll be seeing action on that front shortly. Of course, Bill 1, the Competitiveness Act, will be looking at all the factors that affect Alberta's competitiveness, one of which is regulation.

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

### Impaired Driving

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is at a crisis point in the battle against impaired driving, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving have called repeatedly for the government to step up to the plate. My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Will you commit to lowering the acceptable blood-alcohol content for operating a vehicle to 0.5?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, impaired driving is a crime, and it's treated as such in this province. Our message has always been clear: don't drink and drive, or sooner or later we're going to get you. We're going to keep our policemen on the roads. We're going to keep doing everything we possibly can to catch the people that drink and drive and keep them off the roads.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, your message is not working. In 2007 there was a 19 per cent increase in the rate of impaired driving, and 2008 brought a 40 per cent increase. That's pitiful. Will the Minister of Transportation be forecasting double-digit increases to the rate of impaired driving again in 2009?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, we've been expanding our program. We brought in last year as part of our program a regulation that now we also convict people that are driving under any type of drugs, whether it's prescription drugs or anything else. Under our graduated driver's licence for all new drivers there's absolutely zero tolerance; they can't have any type of alcohol in their system. We plan on keeping the pressure on.

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

2:20

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are not talking about GDL drivers; we are talking about drivers who already have the licences.

Twenty two per cent of drivers who suffered a fatal crash in 2008 had consumed alcohol prior to the accident. The government's inaction is killing people. Why doesn't the minister amend the Traffic Safety Act to increase the current 24-hour suspension to a week-long penalty?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we look at the whole system. We're going to make sure that Justice does their part of it, that the Solicitor General does their part of it, and we're doing our utmost to keep drivers safe in Alberta.

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

### Private Registry Services

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many years ago the government made the decision to get out of running government registries and allow community-based entrepreneurs to step in.

While the oversight of the important registry function remains with the government, these entrepreneurs have built strong, credible, and important community-based businesses. My questions are to the Minister of Service Alberta. Why is your department threatening to ruin hundreds of businesses across Alberta by opening up the registry business to banks, financial institutions, and others?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I first want to say that registry agents do excellent work across Alberta, the over 200 offices that we have doing the front-line counter service that needs to be done on a daily basis. It's really important here: over these last couple of years just meeting with the registry agents, talking to them about the partnership they can continue to have with the government, and moving forward in a number of new areas like online services, areas like that.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Minister, that wasn't the question I asked you.

Mr. Speaker, many Albertans have invested huge amounts of time and money to build a livelihood and a private business for their family. Sadly, this government faction once again is undermining the ability of businesses to invest with confidence and certainty. The provincial government is now moving forward with a plan to allow banks, financial institutions, and others to get into the private registry business. My question is again to the same minister. If you're going to allow banks and financial institutions to get into the registry business, will you ensure that the playing field is truly level and require them to operate as stand-alone businesses?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to some of the comments that the hon. member has made, at any time we are discussing ongoing things. Nothing has been set in stone. We are discussing and having good feedback on a number of issues. Just last year we signed a phenomenal registry agent agreement. It took one year to sign that agreement. I was very proud of that work, very proud of the partnership we have with the agents on this. Moving forward, anything we do will be discussed openly, and that's what's really important.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Minister, it was your document that was leaked to the association, not mine.

My final question is to the same minister. Why are you allowing your department to undermine the confidence and security of the investment that thousands of Albertans have made in their own registry business by not stopping this ill-conceived plan in its tracks?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very good to clear this up. Any time internal documents are shared with the public, that's something we have to look at. It's really important to note that it's an internal discussion document. Nothing has been decided. We are moving forward and will be consulting with registry agents as well as with Albertans. I think what's really important here is being competitive, more online services, and giving registry agents a chance to succeed and do more good business.

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

### Women's Issues

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People around the world are proudly acknowledging and reaffirming their commitment to the equality, freedom, and advancement of women on this International Women's Day. Today's theme is Strong Women, Strong Canada, Strong World, and I truly hope we're making strides towards this. My first question is to the minister responsible for women's issues, the hon. Minister of Children and Youth Services. In the past I've had constituents question whether the public service has done enough with respect to women's issues. What is the minister's department doing with the other levels of government to ensure that women's issues are given the proper attention they deserve in this province?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important day for women in Alberta and across the country. As provincial ministers we do meet, hon. member, with our federal counterpart. We work as partners through the Status of Women, through the ministerial forum. The meeting, I understand, will be taking place this June. On the agenda we have issues such as economic security for women, issues of violence against women, aboriginal women's issues. As the member said, we very much remain committed in this province to the equality, freedom, and advancement of women.

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Canadians may well be celebrating certain progress towards equality for women, but barriers do remain. My first supplemental question is for the Minister of Justice. What is her department doing to address the serious challenges faced by Alberta women and girls, and are these efforts truly meeting the needs?

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

**Ms Redford:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a woman in Alberta and the mother of a seven-year-old it's very important to me that we take this time today to talk about what our successes have been but also where we as government and as society still need to do more work.

Under the safe communities initiative, Mr. Speaker, we have put tremendous resources into investing into community-based projects that will ensure that women can feel safe and comfortable discussing issues that have to do with how they need to realize their lives.

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I truly do appreciate the candid answer, but I do have one more question for the same minister, who has spoken about supplying women and families with the tools they do need to live better lives. Can the minister give us some tangible evidence as to whether these efforts are actually making a positive difference for these really important Albertans?

**Ms Redford:** Well, Mr. Speaker, with respect to justice matters we believe that while there are a number of issues that government programs may support that address concerns and needs that women in our communities have, there's no doubt that we need to deal with where some of the issues are. We need to spend some time, we believe, particularly on domestic violence issues. We're very

concerned about women who are vulnerable in their homes and about the children who are vulnerable in those homes with them. So under the safe communities innovation fund we've invested in over five projects that encourage dialogue, debate, and support to people and families to deal with domestic violence.

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

### Aboriginal Learning Outcomes

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month the government announced a memorandum of understanding on aboriginal education with treaty chiefs and the federal government. Motion, however, should not be confused with progress. On aboriginal education this government is standing still and in some areas is actually going backwards. To the Minister of Education. The partnership memorandum seems to be an agreement to come up with a strategy later, an IOU rather than an MOU. Will this MOU require the provincial government to actually come forward with any new resources to improve aboriginal learning outcomes?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the memorandum of agreement that was signed a week ago last Wednesday together with the partnership agreement which we signed last fall are two very, very important steps forward. First of all, the partnership agreement that we signed last fall with the grand chiefs of treaties 6, 7, and 8 and the president of the Métis Settlements General Council and the president of the Métis Nation of Alberta set up a partnership with Advanced Education, Education, and Aboriginal Relations, working with those groups to really focus on how we can move aboriginal education, First Nations and Métis education, forward in this province. This new partnership, that includes the federal ministry: I'll be able to elaborate further, Mr. Speaker, on the good work.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a tremendous difference between smoking a ceremonial pipe and blowing smoke. Provincial per-student funding for First Nations learners has been frozen at last year's level and only increased by \$12 the year before that. How are school districts supposed to improve aboriginal learning outcomes when their ministry is standing still?

**Mr. Hancock:** Far from standing still, we've made the most progress in this area that has been made in ages. First of all, the progress really is the leadership of the communities themselves, the leadership together with the province and now the federal government signing on, making it the highest priority.

Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't be in that member's position of making light of very important ceremonies that people undertake in terms of the pipe ceremonies at the start. We take very, very seriously our partnership with treaties 6, 7, and 8, our partnership with the Métis Settlements General Council, and the work of all of us to make sure that, first, the achievement gap is eliminated between First Nations and Métis students and other students of Alberta.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. I certainly don't take First Nations' ceremonies for granted. I'm a big fan of the Black Elk sacred pipe, as one example.

High school completion rates for First Nations students are at 52

per cent compared to 79 per cent for all other students. But Budget 2010 eliminates grants intended to boost high school completion rates. Why is this minister backtracking on raising completion rates for aboriginal learners?

**Mr. Hancock:** Absolutely not backtracking on that. In fact, it's still one of the most important things we can do; that is, to ensure that each and every one of the students in this province regardless of their background, regardless of whether they live on a First Nation or in a city or a town or in a rural area – every single student matters. Every student, every day. No exceptions.

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

### 2:30 Calgary Road and Infrastructure Projects

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents are hearing that the city of Calgary is not receiving adequate funding for its road and infrastructure projects. I've heard that some of the projects may be in jeopardy due to lack of funds. My question is to the hon. Minister of Transportation. Can the minister explain why his department is not providing enough funds to help Calgary complete these projects?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like this member and all members to know that my department supplied \$1.6 billion to the city of Calgary in the last five years. That's \$1.6 billion, with a "b." What the city spends these grants on is up to the city; it's their choice. The city sets its own priorities because the city is in the best position to know what its citizens need.

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

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I'm very glad to hear the city is getting transportation grants, many of my constituents in south Calgary are concerned with the progress made on the Stoney Trail ring road. My second question is to the same hon. minister. Can the minister tell us when we will see some activity on the southeastern section of the Stoney Trail?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, they're not going to be waiting very long. By the end of March we expect to announce the successful bidder on the project, and I'm sure that they will be out there moving dirt later on this spring. We're going to extend Stoney Trail from 17th Avenue SE to Macleod Trail, and it will open to traffic in the fall of 2013. That will complete roughly 70 per cent of the ring road in Calgary.

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

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. Calgaryans have different views on which projects should go first with municipal sustainability funding, MSI. Can the minister explain how it is determined which projects proceed?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's true that municipalities receive substantial support through MSI. In the last four years – and that's including this year – Calgary has received \$639.9 million in funding. We are still committed to Calgary for the full amount of \$3.3 billion. But the beauty of MSI is that it gives the

municipalities the autonomy to pursue projects that are right for their local residents. The local decisions are best made locally, and then it's up to the municipal leaders to do what they feel is right for their citizens.

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

### Support for the Film Industry

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The film industry in Alberta is in a very grave situation, but the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit is being divisive rather than constructive. The minister has recently described film unions as selfish and acting like children, which isn't very helpful. To the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit: why did the minister claim during budget debates that the head of IATSE, Damian Petti, was in a November meeting with the minister and the president of CFTPA, Norm Bolen, and somehow refused to co-operate, when Mr. Petti and Mr. Bolen have never met?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no smoking gun here. What I did say at estimates was that I had met with Mr. Bolen, who is the head of the CFTPA, and I had met with Mr. Petti on the same day. I didn't say that they were in the same room.

With respect to the fact that I said that they were acting like children, I said that in our film industry there are many reasons why we have to be competitive in Alberta. That's because we have a film development program that has a labour rate that's competitive with Ontario, with British Columbia, but we need co-operation from our film producers and our unions and guilds. British Columbia and Ontario have an agreement . . .

**The Speaker:** Sorry. The hon. member has the floor.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, back to the same minister. Given that IATSE has signed a binding agreement with 250 producers for a North American low-budget agreement, which helps Alberta producers, why does the minister ignore that in favour of advocating a nonbinding contract with Canadian producers? How does that help Alberta film workers?

**Mr. Blackett:** I said it again in estimates, Mr. Speaker. That's great that they have a binding agreement with low-budget films. The question was: why do we not have larger productions that employ more Albertans? I said that if we want to get more large productions into Alberta, then we need those agreements similar to the ones that we have with the small producers to attract those people from the States and from other countries and across Canada to our province.

**Ms Blakeman:** It needs to be a binding agreement, Minister.

Back to the same minister: why did the minister dismiss as grandstanding a gathering of almost 300 concerned film actors, stage workers, directors, set dressers, makeup artists, DOPs, and other film workers? Why did you dismiss them as grandstanding rather than taking their concerns seriously and working with them, not against them?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if they were really interested in talking to me, they wouldn't have given me less than 48 hours to respond to their invitation knowing full well that I was in Vancouver and I wouldn't be back in Calgary until late in the day last Monday. They can call whenever they want. If they want a chance to talk to

me – I've talked to hundreds of them in the past; I will continue to do so in the future – my door is always open, and we're available.

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

#### School Transportation Grants

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. School boards in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne are concerned about education funding, not just the dollars that go into the schoolrooms but dollars that are scarce and that are needed for their transportation departments to get the students to and from their homes and schools. My questions are to the Minister of Education. With the price of oil on its rise, last year you reduced the subsidy for fuel. You eliminated that program, and that program offered lots of stability. Why did you do that?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, last summer, when we were doing our value reviews and looking to see areas where we could actually save money, it became apparent that we were continuing with a grant to top up diesel prices over 60 cents per litre at a time when the price of diesel had actually fallen below the level that it was at in 2005, when the program was instituted, so we determined that that top-up grant was no longer necessary. I would point out that although that saved \$6 million, the transportation grants have actually increased by \$53 million, or 26 per cent, over that period of time.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, the transportation grants may have increased, Mr. Speaker, but not equally to all school divisions, and that's part of the problem. With the subsidy leaving, we leave our school bus drivers and those contractors very, very vulnerable. I think that you've made a big mistake, and I'd like you to relook at that issue. Will the minister reconsider?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a budget, and we have a finite amount of money to allocate to school boards. We have to put together formulas that can distribute those monies in the most effective way. What I can say is this. If the price of oil goes up and if there are more resources available to the province and that creates an increase in the price of gasoline and the price of diesel in particular, then of course we'll have to look at it and say: there's more revenue coming to the province, and there are more costs at the price, so we'll have to have a look at it. I would have to go back and get more resources from Treasury Board to be able to do that.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, again, has the minister made that commitment to the school boards and to our bus contractors across this province directly, or is this your first chance at this?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not in a position to make a commitment to school boards and to school bus drivers that we will reinstate that program, but I am in a position to say that if resources are there – this particular grant is tied precisely to the price of fuel, and our revenue stream is very much tied to the price of fuel. So it makes sense that if the revenue stream goes up because prices go up, perhaps we can revisit the question of whether a subsidy grant needs to be put back in place.

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

#### Northeast Edmonton Health Services

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Four years ago the then minister of health announced plans for a primary health centre

for northeast Edmonton. Four years later the building sits only half occupied by the public health clinic that was relocated from its previous location. In an area chronically short of doctors and health care services generally this health centre is badly needed. My question is to the minister of health. When will the acute-care facility promised four years ago be fully staffed and operational?

**Mr. Zwodzdesky:** Mr. Speaker, we'll be rolling out a plan in a couple of weeks that will include approximately \$2.5 billion worth of health and health-related facilities, and this project that he's referring to is on the radar screen for consideration as part of that discussion.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Six primary care physicians were promised to communities which are chronically short of doctors. When will the six primary care doctors so badly needed by northeast Edmonton communities be hired?

2:40

**Mr. Zwodzdesky:** Mr. Speaker, primary care networks are working extremely well in this province. They're a relatively new concept. We have about 17 of them up and running now. I've met with some of these folks; I'll be meeting with some of them again in the very near future. I'll be happy to have this question passed on to the folks who are putting those specific PCNs in place right now in Alberta.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a \$44 million facility, and it sits half empty. The lights are on, but nobody is home. Can the minister tell the Assembly whether or not an investment of \$44 million for a half-empty building is a good use of taxpayers' money?

**Mr. Zwodzdesky:** Mr. Speaker, any project that commits money to help improve services for Albertans, to help access those services, and to help put the right people in the right place to deliver those services is a good investment. In case the hon. member missed it, we have been suffering through a very, very dramatic global economic downturn. Now we're starting to see a coming out of that, as it were. As soon as we're a little further along the way, I hope we'll be able to look at a number of projects that have been deferred and get as many of them moving as possible.

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

#### PDD Funding

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I met with constituents and service providers this last week, a common concern was this government's lack of trust as families and service providers struggle to provide services for those in need. After hearing their stories, I have to agree. This government is implementing a program to reassess the 9,000 clients of PDD. What is really needed is a complete audit of the value and quality of services that are being provided for those clients. To the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: will you cancel the reassessment program and focus on providing adequate care and services for those people on PDD?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, it's very important to us that we get the services and supports for those who are eligible for PDD supports right, and one of the ways we can get that right is by assessing their individual needs. The new program that we have put in place, which is called the supports intensity program, will reassess

the 9,200 individuals to ensure that they are receiving the right supports, and if they're not, we will put the right supports in place.

**Mr. Hinman:** Mr. Speaker, audits have shown that those assessments are accurate. This minister needs to ask her department if it's more concerned about repeated assessments or helping PDD agencies deliver on their mandate. Agencies are telling me that they are spending so much time dealing with these new repeated assessments that new clients are not able to be assessed and get the services they need. My question to the minister of community supports again: is this waste of taxpayers' dollars and PDD agency resources simply a make-work project for department staff?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure you there is plenty of work in the PDD program to go around. This is a very important part of the priority action plan that we have in place to ensure that we are providing the right supports for all of our PDD clients. The thing that's most important is that we'll have consistent supports throughout the province for all the clients so that we have the same sort of services provided in Grande Prairie as in Lethbridge and east to west as well.

**Mr. Hinman:** Mr. Speaker, the audits have been done. The assessments are accurate. They're wasting taxpayers' money, their time. It just isn't good. This government has a predictable pattern. They make rash decisions and then refuse to recognize that they are responsible for the consequences. I'll ask the minister again: will you cancel this PDD reassessment and get the proper support for those families and agencies that need to provide the actual services, not reassessments?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that our PDD clients are receiving the best supports and services that can be provided in the country of Canada. We need to ensure, because we have a budget that we have to look after, that people are receiving the right amount of supports, the right amount from north to south, east to west. We have to make sure it's consistent throughout the province, and we have to make sure that the right supports are in place. That's what the supports intensity scale will do. It's a proven program. It's used in 25 other locations around North America, and this will bring better results for our PDD clients.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 108 questions and responses today, made up of the recognition of 13 opposition members and five government members.

When we went to the question period, we were in the Routine with respect to Ministerial Statements. We had recognized a ministerial statement from the hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, and as is our custom, we'll now recognize a spokesman from the Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

### Ministerial Statements

#### 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics

(continued)

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Olympic athletes, volume 2, the under-four-minutes version.

Mr. Speaker, like the hon. minister, I agree that the Vancouver Olympics were a spectacular success story for the nation. Our athletes truly shone, delivering the most gold medals ever won by a host country at a Winter Olympics and giving us a solid third place in the overall medal count. Medals aside, every competitor put her or his heart into these games, performing to the very best of their ability as well as helping play host to the world.

This was a signature moment for Canada alongside events such as Expo 67 and our own Winter Games in Calgary in 1988. No matter where in Canada we hail from, we should all be very proud of these Olympics and the men and women from coast to coast to coast who made the games such a rousing success story. That includes Alberta's tremendous contributions to the games. The majority of the Canadian athletes participating at the Olympics trained in my hometown, Calgary, thanks to the legacy left behind by the '88 Olympics.

I'll certainly join the minister in welcoming, or I would have, Shannon Szabados to this House. Our Olympic women were amazing at these Olympics, individually and collectively. Congratulations and thank you for making Canada proud.

The minister also mentioned that many volunteers from Alberta used their Olympic experiences in Calgary to help the Vancouver games go even more smoothly. These folks, too, made contributions of truly Olympic proportions.

I'm pleased to give this administration credit for the success of the Alberta pavilion and the Alberta-branded *Rocky Mountaineer*. These were logical investments that have without question helped promote Alberta as a destination for business, for tourism, and for living.

I think the many artists who participated in the Cultural Olympiad at the pavilion and across the lower mainland deserve the gratitude of all Albertans for putting on such a spectacular show. These talented men and women helped the world catch a glimpse of the true Alberta in all its spectacular diversity.

I hope this administration will recognize, however, that advertising requires the advertiser to live up to its promises. The budget for Tourism, Parks and Recreation is of course facing some pretty drastic cuts: over \$26 million in cuts from sports, recreation, and physical activity. Cuts this deep cannot help but have a dramatically negative impact on health, fitness, and future Olympic prospects for Alberta-based Canadian athletes. Community agencies across the province are saying that it's very difficult to do the work that they need to do in the face of these cuts. Certainly, we could cut down some of the costs to our health care system if we did more to encourage active lifestyles. In the wake of these highly successful Olympics many young Albertans are going to be looking for opportunities to participate in sport. This administration, showing characteristic lack of foresight, has cut many of those opportunities short.

The many people who were exposed to Alberta at the Olympics would expect to visit a province that puts a high priority on wildlife habitat preservation, but that budget has been cut by \$13.5 million. Such a decrease will certainly have a negative impact on aging park infrastructure as well as information, distribution, and enforcement activities. If Alberta's Olympic showcase brings as many visitors as the administration hopes, we need to be sure that the rising expectations of tourists and business travelers are matched by the reality of their Alberta experience.

These concerns aside, I am truly proud of Alberta's contributions to the Vancouver Olympics.

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to request unanimous consent from the House to respond to the ministerial statement.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere has requested unanimous consent to participate with respect to this ministerial statement. I'll ask only one question. Is any hon. member opposed? If so, simply say no.

[Unanimous consent denied]

## Members' Statements

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

### Crossroads Family Services

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Foster homes and foster families in this province care for some of the most vulnerable children during what can often be the most difficult time in their lives. This past Friday I was joined by the hon. members for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, Edmonton-Calder, and Edmonton-McClung in participating in the Crossroads Family Services foster parent recognition event, highlighted by awards recognizing five, 10, and 15 years of dedication to foster parenting. The awards night was organized by Ms Janet Ryan-Newell, whom I introduced earlier, along with her hard-working team at Crossroads.

Currently supporting 139 children in 74 foster homes within the Edmonton area, I am honoured to say that Crossroads Family Services has its head office in my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie. In fact, last summer I teamed up with Crossroads to host a foster parent barbecue in Mill Woods park, an experience that was tremendously rewarding.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that foster parenting is one of the most important jobs in the world, and they deserve our support for their dedication, generosity, patience, compassion, and strength. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of Alberta's foster parents and the agencies, like Crossroads, that support them. Without a doubt your kindness, skill, and commitment are making a difference in the lives of young people and helping to create a stronger, more vibrant Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

2:50

### Heather MacDonald-Webber

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, International Women's Day, I am honoured to pay tribute to an inspirational Albertan who was taken from this Earth far too young, at the age of 47, after her third battle with cancer, leaving three daughters and her husband, the MLA for Calgary-Foothills.

Heather Webber was a hero, not just for what she did in her life but how she did it. She was an incredible daughter, sister, wife, mother, mentor, and leader. After graduating from St. Mary's high school in Calgary in 1980, Heather took a volleyball scholarship at the University of Idaho, was captain of the Red Deer College Queens volleyball team, was awarded athlete of the year, and finished with the University of Lethbridge Pronghorns. In 1987 Heather married her best friend, the hon. member, who stated that she motivated others to be their best, to stay positive no matter what, and she stayed that way until the end.

After decades in the corporate health and wellness industry while running a busy household, Heather was diagnosed with breast cancer and fought it valiantly for a decade. During that time she coached, captained, competed, and served as president of the Sistership Dragon Boat Association, codirected the CIBC Run for the Cure twice, was named a Warrior for Cancer twice, received the Alberta centennial medal for community volunteerism, and was awarded outstanding CIBC Run for the Cure volunteer just last year. Believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, less than two months ago she led 20 Honolulu Hopefuls in successfully completing the Honolulu Marathon.

I'm so proud of and inspired by her husband, our dear friend and intrepid colleague, as well as by his brave, intelligent, and beautiful

daughters – Lauren, Jaime, and Kelly – for their amazing grace under the most difficult of circumstances. Countless hearts are broken at the loss of Heather, but we may be consoled that a treasured angel has truly earned her wings.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### International Women's Day

**Mr. Sandhu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and recognize March 8 as International Women's Day. Each year around the world hundreds of events are happening, not just on this day but throughout March, to mark the economic, political, and social achievements of women. Our province proudly acknowledges this day and our commitment to the equality, freedom, and advancement of women.

Women play leadership roles in the health and education of our families, in our fields, our classrooms, and our boardrooms. They are also great politicians, businesswomen, top athletes, celebrities, and are also serving in our military in great numbers as well. Women have taught us about hope, about courage, and about opportunity.

Alberta stands proud as a province where women have made advancements and taken advantage of the numerous opportunities available. Whether it is in the growing numbers of women in business or completing graduate school, women are making a strong imprint on the history of Alberta.

Alberta's Famous Five fought hard for equality and the rights that women in Canada enjoy today. My religion, Sikhism, also teaches that it is important to honour women. In the 15th century the first Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji raised the profile of women in society. He said [remarks in Punjabi]. This means: why condemn women, who give birth to kings and saints?

As we celebrate International Women's Day, we must stop and give thanks to the amazing women both past and present. It is a time to remember and honour the sacrifices, talents, and leadership of women around the world. Mr. Speaker, I believe we should offer a round of applause to all the women who have played an important part in our lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Lethbridge Family Services

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1905 this province was born. In 1910 many service organizations were born. In 2010 I want to recognize the hundredth anniversary that was celebrated on February 15 in Lethbridge, and I refer to Lethbridge Family Services. Their mission statement in part is: "We believe that the family, more than any other institution, shapes the personality and the character of every person. We also believe that the nature of life in society is, in a large part, determined by the quality of family life."

Lethbridge Family Services provides in-home support services to individuals and/or families in order that they can live independently for as long as possible. There are three specific programs – home support, tenant support, and homemaking – in addition to counselling, outreach, therapy groups, presentations, workshops, personal growth groups, and a resource library. The DaCapo program supports those affected with brain injury, fetal alcohol spectrum, and those with developmental disabilities. Immigrant services provide settlement support for newcomers to Canada.

LFS makes an average of 27,000 home visits per month in an area stretching from the Crowsnest Pass to Taber, north to Picture Butte, Granum, and Nobleford. Their dedicated staff number 350 and operate three different sites and have an annual operating budget of \$12.1 million. The agency will develop and manage a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder diagnostic and assessment clinic in the very near future. Imagine the ripple effect from the many people who've been helped and moved to other parts of our province and our country.

Thank you, Lethbridge Family Services. Please join me in congratulating them on their hundredth anniversary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Dr. Bob Steadward**

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier, Dr. Bob Steadward was recently awarded the Olympic Order, the highest distinction conferred by the International Olympic Committee, in recognition of exemplary service. Bob is perhaps best known to Albertans as the founder of the Steadward Centre, a multidisability fitness, research, and lifestyle facility located at the University of Alberta. The centre has made an immeasurable difference in the lives of Albertans living with disabilities.

Today, however, is an opportunity for this House to recognize Dr. Steadward's work on the international stage. As the founding president of the International Paralympic Committee and recognized around the world as the visionary behind the global Paralympic movement, Dr. Steadward successfully proposed and negotiated a formal structure in the Olympics to include athletes with disabilities, a movement we know today as the International Paralympic Games. The road to this incredible achievement, Mr. Speaker, began over 27 years ago, when Bob brought together 41 nations in the Netherlands to discuss his proposal to include Paralympic competition in the Olympics. By the year 2000 175 countries had committed to Dr. Steadward's Paralympics movement, and the Olympics and Paralympics were permanently joined, a remarkable feat by any measure.

Mr. Speaker, to what do we attribute the achievements of this exceptional Albertan? Calvin Coolidge once said:

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan Press On has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.

Mr. Speaker, as 1,350 athletes and officials from over 40 countries make their way to Vancouver for next week's games, I know all members of this House will want to join me in thanking Bob for his persistence and in congratulating him for this recognition so richly deserved.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

#### **Bighorn Sheep**

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February of this year the Wild Sheep Foundation Convention and International Sporting Expo, known as the Sheep Show, honoured a number of nationally and internationally acclaimed conservationists during the event. One of the award recipients is a constituent of mine, Ms Beth MacCallum of Bighorn technologies in Hinton, Alberta, who was recognized with the outstanding achievement award for research that led to the

population growth of some of Alberta's biggest bighorn sheep herds. These are no ordinary sheep herds as these herds are on the Gregg River and the Cardinal River Coals active mine sites, and these sheep are being transported to other projects throughout the western United States.

These awards and others were presented by the Wild Sheep Foundation during their annual convention and expo in Reno, Nevada. Mr. Speaker, the Wild Sheep Foundation, formerly the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, was founded in 1977 by sheep and mountain hunting enthusiasts and conservationists. With a membership of more than 10,000 world-wide and a chapter network in North America, the WSF is the premier advocate for wild sheep, wild goats, and other wildlife and their habitat. Since forming in 1977, the Wild Sheep Foundation has raised and expended more than \$74 million on conservation and education programs in North America, Europe, and Asia.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 7(7) reads, "At 3 p.m. the items in the ordinary daily routine will be deemed to be concluded and the Speaker shall notify the Assembly."

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are still items to be concluded under the Orders of the Day, I'd like to seek unanimous consent of the House to extend Orders of the Day to the end of the normal list for today.

[Unanimous consent granted]

3:00

#### **Introduction of Bills**

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

#### **Bill 8**

#### **Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2010**

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to rise and request leave to introduce Bill 8, the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2010.

The Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act is generally amended every single year to ensure that Alberta maintains a fair, equitable, and competitive tax regime. While most of the amendments in this year's bill are of a housekeeping nature, I'll address a few specific measures during second reading, which will include a clarification of the rules which allow corporations to file returns in currencies like the U.S. dollar or the British pound in response to changes that the federal legislation made as well as changes to the regulation-making authority in the act that ensure that new refund interest rates can be made applicable to prior periods.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 8 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

#### **Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, chair of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee.



**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to section 15(2) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act as chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund it is my pleasure to table five copies of the 2009-2010 third-quarter update on the fund. Copies were distributed to members on February 26.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have five tablings. My first tabling is from Calgarian Michael McAra. He's deeply disappointed that the government has not stepped up to fund a portion of the airport tunnel in Calgary. He believes that we can find a way to make it work.

My second tabling is correspondence from Calgary-Varsity constituent Donna Tetarenko, who grew up in Edmonton but lived in B.C. for 20 years. She doesn't understand what happened in Alberta while she was gone and expresses her concerns about several issues, including postsecondary costs, the health care premium being cut, and lack of forward thinking.

I'm also tabling correspondence from John McMechan, who is a student at the University of Calgary. He is greatly distressed at the idea of tuition increases that he feels are being used to pay for the costs of poor administration at the university.

I'm tabling correspondence received from my constituent Isabelle Emery, who urges me to convey her opposition to cuts in public services, particularly to education and health care, as she feels this is a short-sighted approach that will cost more down the road. She's concerned about future cuts and how that will affect taxpayers.

My final tabling is from constituent Bill Wakefield, who, with his wife, was shocked to learn that a group of nurses were holding a potluck dinner at their own expense to raise money to purchase new baby scales for the hospital because there was no funding in the budget to buy them.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table, first, the appropriate number of copies of 18 postcards signed by Albertans calling on the provincial government to keep its promise to build 600 new long-term care beds.

In addition, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a petition with 605 signatures which calls on the Legislative Assembly to "urge the Government to keep the current 14,500 long-term care beds in Alberta fully operational and to follow through on their 2008 election commitment to open an additional 600 long-term care beds."

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, first, to offer my humble apology to you, and second, to table a report entitled Alberta Law Enforcement Review Board 2008 Annual Report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** I'm going to now recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre for an introduction.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very

pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Lorelei Kuchera. Lorelei has joined us in the public gallery. She is very active in the film community here in Alberta in two different roles. One is vice-president of film for IATSE local 210. Of course, IATSE is the international alliance of theatrical stage employees and moving picture technicians of the United States and Canada. She is also a member of the Alberta Association of Motion Picture and Television Unions. I would ask Lorelei to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we go to Orders of the Day, on March 5, 1982, 18 years ago, the hon. Member for Little Bow was elected to this Assembly for the first time. His election was very important to him. It was also very important to me and remains one of the highlights of my life. Congratulations to the hon. member.

### Orders of the Day

#### Motions for Returns

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

#### Calgary Airport Access Tunnel

M9. Mr. Kang moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of all reports, studies, financial forecasts, or materials prepared for Alberta Transportation regarding the construction of the proposed Calgary airport trail tunnel.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I submitted this motion for a return in order to determine why this government has failed to take a lead on the construction of a Calgary airport tunnel. I would like to see what studies, research, and other documents the government has collected in hopes that this information might help all parties better understand where they stand relative to the completion of this project.

I had hoped that after hearing the arguments from the city of Calgary, from the Airport Trail Access Committee, and from myself on why the Calgary airport tunnel is essential to Calgary, the Minister of Transportation would reconsider his position and support its construction. However, this has not yet happened. I have said many times that the Calgary airport tunnel is essential infrastructure to my constituency, to Calgary, and to all of Alberta.

Calgary is growing into an international hub not only for business leaders but also for visitors from around the globe. The Calgary International Airport is set to expand to reflect this fact. While the airport expansion is great for all Alberta, it will soon leave thousands of commuters in Calgary-McCall disconnected from the rest of Calgary. It will also increase traffic congestion on Deerfoot Trail, which is a major problem, since without the airport tunnel it will be the only route to the airport. Many businesses will be directly harmed if an airport tunnel is not built, and the quality of life of Calgarians will be seriously compromised.

The construction of this Calgary airport tunnel is essential to avoid these problems, and to achieve this, this government only needs to show leadership and commit \$98 million toward these problems, something that could have been easily done if they'd stopped spending money on frills such as horse racing.

I submitted this motion for a return to determine the government's level of support for the Calgary airport tunnel. I also wanted to check on their progress. With the requested information I will be able to report back to my constituents and to Calgarians on the likelihood of this tunnel being built. These are the reasons we have requested reports, studies, and financial forecasts that the Transpor-

tation department has prepared on the construction of this project.

Before taking my seat and awaiting their response, I want to thank the members of this Assembly and anyone who has been an ally in this battle for the airport tunnel.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation to respond.

3:10

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to this hon. member and to the House. The member has asked for "a copy of all reports, studies, financial forecasts, or materials prepared for Alberta Transportation regarding the construction of the proposed Calgary airport trail tunnel." This proposed project falls under the jurisdiction of the city of Calgary and not the province of Alberta. Alberta Transportation gives the city municipal grants to put towards their priority projects as they see fit. In 2009 the city of Calgary received through my department and through Alberta Municipal Affairs more than \$459 million in capital grants for infrastructure. If the tunnel was a priority for the city, they could have simply allocated this money to the tunnel.

Mr. Speaker, since this is a municipal, not provincial, jurisdiction, my department does not have any reports, any studies, financial forecasts, or other materials related to the construction of the proposed Calgary airport tunnel. Therefore, it isn't possible to provide these documents.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to reject this motion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall to conclude the debate.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really disappointed to hear the minister say that he doesn't have any documentation because consultations were going on. ATAC met with the minister, and Mr. Stevenson met with the minister so many times.

I feel it's kind of a sad day not only for northeast Calgary but for the whole of Calgary. I'm really disappointed in the Calgary government caucus, the MLAs, for not showing support for this very valuable project for the city of Calgary, especially the MLAs from the east side because, you know, it will be affecting northeast Calgary more than any other part of Calgary. It will not only affect northeast Calgary, but it will affect the whole of Calgary and the province as a whole. As I said before, the only access to the airport will be the Deerfoot Trail and Country Hills Boulevard.

We have been talking about reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This is going to increase greenhouse gas emissions because the cars will be stuck in traffic jams. They will be just sitting, idling. For those poor workers who are working for \$10 an hour at the airport, it's going to add \$150 a year to their gas bill. And the hotels in Calgary northeast: it's going to cost an extra \$2 million a year to the 20 hotels, never mind the lost revenues they're going to have if we don't build the airport tunnel. And 18,000-plus workers are working at the airport. If we don't have the airport tunnel, we may not have the LRT going to the airport for the next 25 years, maybe.

So it's going to impact not only northeast Calgary, but it's going to impact the whole of Calgary and the province because the Calgary International Airport – we are bragging about being the gateway to the world, to southeast Asia, to the middle east. If this tunnel doesn't happen, it's just going to affect the quality of life for people. It may affect the property values in the northeast because the northeast will be boxed in.

With those comments, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, the debate is concluded on this question. If you have something else, a point of order or something, we'll hear it.

**Mr. Bhullar:** I'm not quite sure if what I was looking at is quite significantly a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the member said he's disappointed in east Calgary MLAs. Well, I would say the member needs to do a little bit of reading on jurisdictional boundaries within the Canadian Confederation.

I'm not quite sure if he went far enough for something that warrants a point of order, but I would make the point that this government supports its cities and gives our cities the ability to make decisions within their borders themselves. They have \$254 million this year, Mr. Speaker, that they can allocate towards the airport tunnel, should they choose.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm going to call the question, and then I'm going to make a comment.

[Motion for a Return 9 lost]

### Speaker's Ruling Motions for Returns

**The Speaker:** I'm going to give this advice freely to my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall. This is a motion for a return. The request is for "a copy of all reports, studies, financial forecasts, or materials prepared for Alberta Transportation regarding the construction of the proposed Calgary airport trail tunnel." Quite legit. A good question. Well written. It may have been edited but well written. It's on the Order Paper.

The minister stands up and says that he doesn't have any. Then the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall gets up and gives a 10-minute debate on why the tunnel is important. It has nothing to do with the question. It's not this part of the Order Paper to have debates. This is having to do with a question: do you have the documentation? Yes or no. An individual's view with respect to the Calgary airport trail tunnel could find a different place on the Order Paper so it would become more efficient. Then to suggest that some hon. member, which prompts a point of order – I'm telling you that when we get away from dealing with policy issues and start getting into personal things, we get into nothing but terrible pavement and rough water, and a lot of people have drowned in this Assembly by doing that in the past.

## Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 202

#### Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act

**The Speaker:** Before I call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, join me in saying happy birthday to the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Actually, her anniversary was yesterday, so she's one day older today than she was yesterday.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to rise in this House to begin second reading of Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act.

That said, Mr. Speaker, I am sad that this is an issue that even requires a piece of legislation or that Albertans would have to worry about it, but wishing that the issue of child pornography was not a problem does not make it go away. As a former Solicitor General

and a former minister of children's services for the government of Alberta I had the opportunity to work very closely with law enforcement officials. As the Solicitor General I witnessed hardened police officers break down in tears as they described the images that were forever seared into their minds, I listened to them outline ways to help reduce the number of children who had been exploited to satisfy a sexually deviant pleasure, and I heard that we needed to give them more tools to go after criminals. That is the purpose behind the private member's bill and why I hope that every member of this House will support it.

The goal of Bill 202 is simple and straightforward: to mandate the reporting of child pornography. It does not intend to mandate seeking out child pornography. Rather, it would require that if an individual believed that a particular material is or may be child pornography, then it's mandatory to report the incident to the police or other reporting entities. This bill would also provide important protection for those who report this vile material and ensure that no repercussions for reporting are experienced. In addition, Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 will establish actions that a reporting entity must take following a report. This includes but is not limited to ensuring that the entity performs an inspection, and where it is believed that child pornography is occurring, a report is made to the child and family services agency or law enforcement agency so as to both protect the child and apprehend the offender or offenders.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

When I first began to serve in this House, the Internet was in its infancy. E-mail was relatively limited. Personal computers were starting to take off. Our world has changed, and our laws must keep up, Mr. Speaker. Each of us knows the unspeakable evil that child pornography represents. Because I was the Solicitor General, I saw some of the material that investigators came across in their efforts to put these sexual deviants behind bars.

As we try to focus on what Bill 202 is truly about, let me paint a picture for you and members of the Assembly and Albertans. Imagine a small house in a community. It could be anywhere. Imagine walking up to that house and walking up the stairs to the second floor. Imagine a door that is closed. You hear some noises coming from behind that door, and you open that door. Then imagine stumbling upon something no one should ever see: a small child – and we'll call her Jennifer – being sexually violated and this abuse being broadcast through a camera onto the Internet as orders are taken by sexual deviants about acts to be committed on that child.

Imagine stumbling across these images on the Internet and calling your Internet service provider and reporting what you've seen but the company cannot give the police some of the information that they need to stop the crime and track down those who are paying for these acts to be committed against Jennifer.

3:20

Jennifer is the face of one child. There are thousands more like her that face complete degradation at the hands of pedophiles and sexual deviants. It is these kinds of images that will never leave my mind. The impact of these crimes will forever scar children like Jennifer who are abused and who are violated.

Mr. Speaker, this Assembly has the opportunity to help prevent child pornography from winding its web in our communities. This Assembly has the opportunity to turn people and companies who become aware of child pornography into good Samaritans who can give law enforcement the information they need to stop the crime in progress. This Assembly has the chance to prevent other Janes or

Jennifers from being victimized and forever hurt by child pornography.

The intent of this bill is simple. It is clear; it is straightforward. Law enforcement supports it, many Albertans support it, and I hope all members of this Assembly will support it also.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Speaking to Bill 202, Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act, I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing this forward. I support what the hon. member is trying to accomplish. Having been a father for 38 years, a teacher for 34, and a grandfather for six, I understand the vulnerability of young people and the need to protect them.

Where problems occur is in the interpretation, to a degree, of what is child pornography. Some examples are obvious; others are not. Examples being the situation with the Calgary Transit authority when they refused to run the poster of the statue of a naked newborn boy on the sides of their bus because they felt that some individuals might view that sculpture, that piece of artwork, as an example of pornography. Other types of pornography, when a child is in an abusive situation, are more obvious, and I agree with the hon. member that the reporting of these acts is extremely important.

While I trust the intelligence of a number of people who use the Internet, I can imagine situations whereby a simple family photo of a newborn child or a situation that would appear in a family album of mine that was entitled three men in a tub, with appropriately placed face cloths, my father and myself and my brother when we were little: this is part of family heritage. The thoughts, you know, of my grandchildren sort of frolicking around doing what they would call the naked dance: I hope that would not get onto the Internet on a large scale. The point is that it's part of our family album, and it's part of our family experience. I would hate to think that my children would be potentially targeted by this family circumstance, that if somehow the computer wasn't wiped clean, somebody could suggest in a rather tainted fact that this might constitute pornography.

As an art major I'm wondering to what extent we would take whitewash to the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. There are images of nude children throughout art history, and they're not of a pornographic nature unless some perverted individual sees them in such a light.

I appreciate what the member is attempting to accomplish. I am also somewhat concerned about the mandatory reporting. If it's beyond a doubt an exploitation, if a child is being hurt or harmed or there is any kind of evidence of a child being targeted, then I certainly would want that type of pornography to be reported. I am not sure, though, how we would force individuals who have access to the Internet or the computer companies that are charged with erasing files, how we would know that they were the recipients of this type of pornography and then go after them should they fail to reveal the source or that they were, in fact, the recipients of this pornography.

The number of ads that pop up unsolicited on our computers in terms of various enhancements and so on to an extent fall into this situation. You could be a completely innocent recipient of vile images without having any ability to potentially prevent those. Yes, I myself, if I ever received such images, would report them immediately to the best of my knowledge.

Again, I'm not sure that this bill, while its intention is absolutely terrific in terms of protecting young children, can achieve its goals. I do, however, wish the member well. I support what she is attempting to do with Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child

Pornography Act. I'm hoping that in discussion with other members this afternoon they can put forward suggestions on how to have this bill, the mechanics of it, realized so that we can eliminate the abuse that, as the hon. member pointed out, so many children throughout this world are subject to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today in this Assembly to speak to Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act, brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. The purpose of Bill 202 is to mandate the reporting of child pornography. Under Bill 202 an individual who encounters child pornographic materials would be obligated to report the incident to the police or other reporting entity. Further, Bill 202 would establish the actions that a reporting entity must take following a report.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that child pornography is a very serious issue. It often affects some of our most vulnerable citizens, which negatively impacts their life and that of their loved ones as well. It may be found in books and photographs as well as a variety of audio and visual material, but perhaps its most pervasive and offensive form takes shape online. Individuals can now hide behind their computers and easily produce, consume, or distribute materials involving children. Access to such materials has been made easier by the Internet.

Mr. Speaker, as a mother of four great young ladies and a grandmother of one amazing boy, as a society who cares deeply about its most vulnerable citizens, we must consider any sensible response to this problem. Bill 202 is a reasonable reaction to this issue, and its scope and timing are appropriate for the task at hand. The premise behind Bill 202 is laudable, and its objectives are in line with our government's vision for safe communities. Bill 202 would provide the additional tools that agencies need to act against these child abusers. It will also complete the work of existing task forces such as the Alberta integrated child exploitation unit, the ICE unit, which has largely been successful in its work.

Further, Mr. Speaker, the federal government is looking at similar legislation, but debate has yet to be completed on the subject in the House of Commons. Although it is likely that this federal bill will be reintroduced, there is no way of knowing when. Nor can we know whether, or even if, it will pass. This is yet another reason why Bill 202 is a welcome piece of legislation. Provinces can act on their own when warranted, and this is a good opportunity to help lead the way on such a serious issue.

3:30

Three other provinces have already taken action. In fact, Manitoba, Ontario, and Nova Scotia have all moved forward in recent months and have enacted mandatory reporting of child pornography.

In April 2009 Manitoba became the first province to enact mandatory reporting of child pornography by amending the Child and Family Services Act. Under the new law if a person in Manitoba sees something they believe to be child pornography, they are required to report it to the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Cybertip, which is Canada's national tip line for the reporting of online sexual exploitation of our children.

In Ontario private member's Bill 37 amended the province's Child and Family Services Act. Under the new legislation, which is not yet proclaimed, persons are required to report if they suspect a child is being exploited by this means.

Nova Scotia passed similar legislation. However, unlike Ontario

and Manitoba, where the bill amended the existing child protection law, Nova Scotia created a stand-alone bill.

In watching the actions of these provinces, this suggests there is a need and a value in provincial initiatives such as Bill 202. It is also helpful to observe and learn from how they brought forward their own initiatives and how their regulations were drafted as this can guide us in our own work regarding this serious issue.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to predict when action may be taken on this issue at the federal level. A federal initiative would likely be more effective as it would ensure a national, streamlined approach to this serious issue. However, this should not deter us from taking action to protect our youth in the meantime. We should therefore continue to encourage the federal government to bring forward nation-wide legislation. I believe we must act now to ensure that our own provincial bill becomes law.

Mr. Speaker, I support Bill 202, and I believe it to be the most effective mechanism by which to accomplish our goal at this time. Bill 202 is both a timely and effective step in dealing with this issue and those it hurts. Ultimately, our children and their families will stand to benefit from it. I again thank the member for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise in this House today to begin review of Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act. I cannot praise enough the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for taking initiative and leadership on this important and vital issue. She, more than any other member in this House here today, has consistently fought for the safety of our children with multiple private member's bills and during her time as Solicitor General of this province, and I thank her for that on behalf of the children of Alberta and on behalf of all Albertans. Her experience as Solicitor General was pivotal in crafting this crucial piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this issue could not be more important to this province. Twenty-five years ago child pornography had been virtually eliminated as a threat to our children. The predators were on the run, and they were nearly extinct. With new technologies came new life to this disgusting problem. They are organized, and they are stronger than they have ever been in the history of the world. Child pornography is a sophisticated, international industry with revenues of over \$30 billion annually. Sophisticated fraudulent financial techniques involving credit cards and shell corporations are used to perpetuate this filth. The innocence of children is being bartered to satisfy the greed of criminals and the lust of sexual predators.

As evil as this content is, the industry has taken on an even more brutal and savage nature. The victims are increasingly younger, the content ever more graphic. Over 80 per cent of the content involves children younger than the age of 12. There are over a million pictures of child exploitation on the Internet every day. The victims are primarily very young girls, our future mothers and wives. This problem is only growing with time, Mr. Speaker. It must be stopped. Brutal images depicting abuse of children increase exponentially with each passing year.

Sadly, this is an issue that could not be closer to home. Canada is the second-largest commercial distributor of child pornography in the world. We must fight the tide of this filth at all costs. Law enforcement needs every available resource to combat this affliction,

and Alberta, sadly, is not immune. In December a man from Camrose was arrested for distributing child pornography. In February a Calgary man was convicted for luring minors into child pornography. Last week in Calgary a man was convicted for distribution. He had over 5,000 images of child pornography.

This bill is but another step in a long journey. It will require the reporting of child pornography to police and protection for those who step forward for the greater good of humanity. Any material believed to be child pornography must be reported to the proper authorities for analysis under this bill. Offensive material will be investigated, and those responsible will be brought to justice. Police and child and family services will step in to protect the child and pursue the predator.

Action will be mandatory, Mr. Speaker. No excuses. There's no excuse for it not to be mandatory. Investigations will be performed. Child and family services will be called in, securing children from danger. Police will pursue the predators, who will become the prey. There is no artistic grey area with this issue. There is no place where one can agree to disagree. This is a clear case of black and white, right and wrong morality. The vast majority of people arrested for child pornography have also molested a child.

Barriers have been created in the name of other principles, Mr. Speaker. For example, privacy and freedom of expression are vital, as we all know, to any democratic culture such as ours, but the souls and innocence of children cannot be sacrificed for anonymity and entertainment. They must be challenged in the name of our children. Those who wish to make the world a better, safer place must not be stifled and must not be frustrated. This bill will save lives. It will save childhood innocence. Step by step we can make the world a safer place for our children.

This bill has the support of law enforcement and all law-abiding Albertans. With the support of this Assembly we can make a difference in this war.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act, brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I'd first like to thank the hon. member for initiating debate on this important subject. Child pornography is a heinous and despicable issue that affects some of the most vulnerable citizens in our society, namely our children. It is incredibly important to this government, as it is to society as a whole, to protect our most vulnerable members. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek along with every other member in this Assembly has made this an absolute priority.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bill 202 will contribute to the accomplishment of this goal. While we all want to protect children of Alberta from falling victim to child pornography and sexual abuse, we must also ensure that we continue to take a comprehensive approach to accomplishing this task. In addition to provincial initiatives and legislation, we should continue to promote awareness and to encourage our federal counterparts to bring forward similar nation-wide initiatives.

I would like to highlight a particular organization and their dedication to keeping children from falling into this type of exploitation. Mr. Speaker, Cybertip.ca is Canada's national tipline for reporting of online sexual exploitation of children. The tipline is owned and operated by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, which is a charitable organization dedicated to the safety of all children. Cybertip accepts and addresses online and telephone

reports from the public regarding a variety of issues that affect children, including child pornography, online luring, child exploitation through prostitution, travelling to sexually exploit children, and child trafficking. The triages who work at the tipline assess the reports from the public and forward those that are potentially illegal to law enforcement in the appropriate jurisdictions.

**3:40**

While Cybertip provides citizens with the ability to report instances of child exploitation and luring, it also has a role in collecting and reporting statistics. These statistics facilitate the public understanding and discussion, the severity of the issues, and reports to this organization. On average Cybertip receives about one million page views and over 8,000 reports of child abuse throughout the year. In fact, Cybertip has received over 35,000 reports from the public pertaining to child pornography since their inception. Of the over 35,000 reports received by Cybertip, 37 per cent have been confirmed as child pornography. These figures suggest that people are not only aware of this organization but that they are also committed to reducing child exploitation. This would suggest that the public is already engaged in reporting these instances.

Mr. Speaker, Internet safety is one of the largest issues pertaining to both the parent and the child. In fact, over 78 per cent of child pornography incidents are now based on websites. This is why Cybertip has launched numerous public awareness campaigns designed to educate and inform parents and citizens on a wide variety of topics, specifically child exploitation of youths and the relatedness of the Internet. Examples of these campaigns include encouraging the public to become familiar with identifying the signs of child sexual abuse, increasing awareness regarding the risks associated with communicating with strangers over instant messaging, and a public alert regarding adolescents using webcams to send inappropriate pictures over the Internet.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the public awareness campaigns are an integral part of reducing instances of child exploitation. Given the prevalence of the Internet, cell phones, and gaming consoles, children of all ages use one or more of these tools on a daily basis. Cybertip recognizes that simply educating the parents on the importance of Internet and mobile safety with a single set of tips may not be the most effective way to inform parents of the potentially dangerous situations that their children face. This is why they have taken a comprehensive approach and focused on age-specific education starting at age five up to about age 15. There is also the recommendation to be made to parents to be centred on the issues that are facing their children during that specific time in their life.

Regardless of age one recommendation remains constant throughout all age categories, supervision. Given the age gap between parents and children and the rapid rate at which technology has advanced, many parents are not fully aware of the potential risks associated with things like cell phones, webcams, and the Internet, tools that children use on a daily basis. Cybertip urges parents to take an active role in monitoring and supervising their children's Internet and mobile activities. Essentially, the public awareness campaigns and information provided to parents by Cybertip is shifting parents away from the this-would-never-happen-to-my-child type of mentality.

Mr. Speaker, these awareness campaigns are another mechanism that permits us to effectively decrease instances of child exploitation, and as I had stated previously, we must ensure that we continue to protect our vulnerable citizens in the most effective way possible. It is for this reason, Mr. Speaker, that I support Bill 202 as I believe it will effectively reduce the amount and accessibility of child pornography.

However, in addition to organizations like Cybertip, the federal government has been taking steps to drastically reduce the amount and accessibility of child pornography, oftentimes amending our criminal laws. So while I support this bill, I also believe that it would be prudent to continue to encourage the federal government to bring forward nation-wide legislation.

Child pornography, luring, and pornography are a plague upon our society, Mr. Speaker. These issues affect children and families on a daily basis. Every member of this Assembly wants to ensure that no child is subject to these abuses. I believe that Bill 202 is certainly well intentioned and can reduce the amount and accessibility of child pornography in the province of Alberta.

I'd once again like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing forward this piece of legislation and look forward to the remainder of the debate. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with a very heavy heart – and certainly, as eloquently and emotionally portrayed by the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, this is a huge problem. I can't believe that there is even any hesitation at the federal, provincial, or municipal levels that these kinds of laws aren't instantly put into place. Unfortunately, I think what has happened is that with television and computers and the busy lifestyles that we have, people have become desensitized. People think that this is something that happens on television, that it doesn't happen to their neighbours and certainly would never happen to their children.

I thank very much the member for Calgary-Fish Creek for the body of work that she has created towards this very important Bill 202. That would be in addition to all of the work that she's done campaigning against child prostitution. The protection of children involved in the protection act is an example of that. She continues to be a champion of children, launching the high-risk offender website and Canada's first Amber Alert program during her tenure when she was the minister. It is a very important piece of work, and I know that as history will be reckoned, it will be recognized for the importance that it really has.

In terms of the degradation that happens to innocent children, the perpetrators of these crimes are the ones that should be tracked down like the criminals that they are. I know that it's difficult to prove things from the Internet, but what happens now is that, yes, we find them, but these people are almost getting less time. The time that they get in jail certainly does not reflect the purpose that they have done and that they have totally ruined young children's lives.

Talk to sex trade workers, and you'll find out how many of them have been sexually abused as children. They have become so desensitized that almost nothing is wrong or right, certainly not within any sort of sexual contact or behaviours, and they actually have no idea of the psychological damage that has taken place as a result of this kind of behaviour. It's almost impossible to reverse the damage that has been done because one of the things that never happens again is that these people, these young children that are exploited, are never able to trust again because more often than not the people who perpetrate these crimes against them are actually the people that should be protecting them.

It's a sick society that we live in, Mr. Speaker, that we should even have to be discussing this in the Legislature, but I believe that if we could get more of the perpetrators – and I believe that I would like to see more funding. I know that we're always accused of asking for more money on this side of the House, but I believe that this is the kind of money that would be well spent. It is very

difficult to track down people on the Internet. It's hugely time consuming; therefore it becomes expensive.

But by having this law in place, where people must report what they suspect as being any kind of child abuse, particularly in the child pornography side of things – and they must report it. Section 8 says:

(1) Any person who contravenes section 2(1), 6 or 7 is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than \$10 000 or to imprisonment for not more than 2 years, or to both the fine and imprisonment.

(2) Any person who falsely and maliciously reports to a reporting entity that a representation or material is child pornography is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than \$10 000 or to imprisonment [again] for not more than 2 years, or to both the fine and the imprisonment.

This is for the people that would not report.

Sometimes there is a fear factor out there that you are not understanding, perhaps, what you're seeing. I think that that's a very bogus kind of argument. I would say that 90 per cent of our society, if not 95 per cent – let's go to 99 per cent of the people in our society – know what is right and what is wrong. My colleague from Calgary-Varsity had said that people's rights may be in jeopardy because of an interpretation of what some pictures may look like. But I think we're all pretty clear on what child pornography is and what child abuse is.

**3:50**

I find it interesting that even in this province but certainly in this country, because, I suppose, it's our right, we tolerate full flights, 737s, of men who are considered pillars of our community to fly to Thailand, to fly to the Philippines to engage in absolute child abuse and engage in sexual activities with, certainly, children that are underage. I watched a program on CPAC where the fellow that has been valiantly trying to fight against that kind of behaviour and trying to identify people, in fact, said that men from Canada have actually paid \$10,000 for what they consider to be a virgin at the age of 2. I mean, that should make all of us almost throw up. It is absolutely beyond disgusting.

I couldn't imagine what I would do if something had happened to certainly my children when they were younger but my grandchildren at this point, when they're young. I don't know what I would do. I'm sure that it wouldn't be pleasant, and I could probably end up in jail because I think that I would just be so beyond control that something like that would happen.

I think the other thing that happens is that sometimes people are aware and can't sort of prove things. Then when it is proven, that person lives with a tremendous amount of guilt, and many times they need psychological counselling to get them over the fact that perhaps they hadn't done enough to protect that child.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we support this bill. I don't think there's one that I've come across in my five years in this House that is as important as this one. We are trying to valiantly have a society that we can be proud of and that we go forward. We have just come out of the Olympics and are very proud of all of our athletes. How many of these children have been abused and used for strictly commercial interests? Often it isn't just the sexual appetite of people who are truly sick, but it is strictly a commodity. These young children are simply commodities in criminal organizations. This is how they make their money.

I believe that we should support this, and I would like to, clearly, see tougher laws. I want to see them go faster, and I want to see much, much stronger and longer sentencing for people who are actually convicted of this abhorrent behaviour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There have been some very good and impassioned speeches on Bill 202. I also rise to support this bill. I wanted to thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for her work on this.

Even though I have a background as a trial lawyer, I don't have a background in privacy legislation, so when I was looking through this, I actually consulted three individuals. I'd like to say thank you to them just on the record. Ivan Bernardo was one of them, Kristine Robidoux, both lawyers in Calgary, and Rachel Hayward-Shymko, who's a privacy consultant in Edmonton.

Going through this more from a legal angle, I found that the purpose of PIPA is to ensure the right of any individual to be protected when it comes to a collection, use, or disclosure of their information. In that angle I have to advance that we must always consider the privacy of an individual when drafting legislation that could potentially require them to disclose personal materials. It is, in fact, a balance.

Mr. Speaker, as it was mentioned, our government has taken strides to ensure that we, in fact, do have protections in place to prevent a breach of privacy rights of individuals, and this is something that we must continue. This legislation also has ramifications on that. Now, some of these strides that have been taken include the implementation of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, or FOIP, which has developed a privacy interest with Albertans in mind. Mr. Speaker, protecting the privacy interests of Albertans and Alberta businesses, again, is of the utmost importance, and we must always consider this.

While I am going to strongly support Bill 202 and encourage other people to do the same, it's important that these reporting measures proposed continue to respect the privacy rights of individuals. Our government will continue to be addressing the root causes of criminal issues, but we must ensure that our efforts respect the privacy rights of citizens and the judicial framework that has been developed over time to protect such rights. We need a balanced approach and not a knee-jerk reaction.

Mr. Speaker, our laws work to protect the victims of crime as well as the individual in society. While we do not want to implement mandatory reporting that would violate the privacy rights of individuals, at the same time this is a bill that is worth consideration, the most vulnerable people in our society, of course, being our children. I support the intent of this bill, but I also believe that it's important that we ensure that it does not infringe on an individual's privacy rights. If this legislation appropriately addresses the issue of privacy, then I believe it will provide a useful tool to reduce these crimes in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the sexual exploitation of children and youth is a disturbing issue that crosses all social and economic boundaries and, indeed, it is one that many individuals of many different parties of this House are passionate about. Our government is committed to protecting the most vulnerable and ensuring that our communities are safe and caring environments. I believe Bill 202 continues along this vision.

The creation, proliferation, and dissemination of child pornography is a global issue, as has been pointed out, in regard to the global communications village that has come up over the past couple of decades. But it's also important that we do what we can here at home in Alberta and make sure that this is a place that is known to protect our children as opposed to a haven, which, of course, it is not. At the same time, this is not a road that we want to go down, and that requires a proactive measure such as Bill 202 to protect our children from these predators.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank, again, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing this legislation forward. I'm pleased to support it, and I encourage all members to support it regardless of partisan stripe.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore followed by the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Hinman:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure in one sense to be able to be in the House to speak about this important bill, but it's a sad day that we have such a problem here in Canada that we need to be acting here in the province. But it's important, and I'm happy to be able to stand up and support Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act.

I can only applaud the hon. member representing Calgary-Fish Creek for taking on such a crucial issue. The legislation should have been acted on before now, Mr. Speaker. Her previous experience was essential in crafting this fundamental work of legislation, and I have a great deal of gratitude and respect for the work that she did as a Solicitor General and also that followed as the minister of children's services. She has dedicated many hours of her life in protecting our vulnerable children.

Mr. Speaker, this issue is close to the heart of Albertans. Children are our most precious and vulnerable among us. They must be sheltered from harm. They are our future, and their future must be protected.

Child pornography is a global menace lining the pockets of immoral and corrupt individuals. These monsters are as wicked as they are organized. It is a global industry worth billions of dollars. They are monsters without borders, and they must be stopped. As extreme and as bad as this continent is, it is getting worse: 20 per cent of the tender victims are under the age of 3, 40 per cent between the ages of 3 and 5. Thousands of pictures are added daily. This represents an attack on the children from the moment they enter the world.

This is an issue that strikes right at our heart. The second-biggest dealer of child pornography in the world is Canada. A call to arms is at hand, and we must stand up and speak out. We'll be judged on how we respond. Recently a Calgary resident was convicted of trading this material by e-mail. He was brought to justice through an amazing teamwork that spanned all of North America from Victoria to New York involving Calgary police and the Department of Homeland Security.

This bill is a first step in a long journey. It will require the reporting of child pornography to police and protect those who step forward for the welfare of children. This legislation will require the reporting of child pornography. The first step is rooting out the problem. Any material believed to be pornographic must be reported to the proper authorities and investigated. Offensive material will be investigated, and then those responsible will be brought to justice. If the material is in fact child pornography, the police and child and family services will step in to protect the child and pursue the predator.

**4:00**

Action must be taken. This will be a building block for teamwork. This is a global problem that will require global co-operation. The mandatory reporting of child pornography is a step in the right direction. The immorality is clear, Mr. Speaker. We are all in agreement. We must do all we can to protect our children. There is a clear link between those arrested for child pornography and those who have molested a child.

Obstacles in protection of the perpetrator are in place in the name of various freedoms, including artistic. This is a false freedom. They do not have the freedom, Mr. Speaker, to abuse our little ones and to torture them. We are not talking about art. We are talking about captured and tortured. We must all work together in concert for a single goal, protecting our children. This bill will serve and protect. It will rescue those in harm's way. A long journey begins with one small step. This bill has the support of those who work with and protect children. All decent-minded Albertans agree. With the support of this Assembly we can protect and nourish the future of our children.

Canada has a terrible reputation in the world. As the Member for Lethbridge-East pointed out, Canada is used as a conduit for people to travel to the Philippines and Thailand. I disagree with the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont in saying that this is a knee-jerk reaction. This is a long overdue reaction, Mr. Speaker. Canada is a haven. We need to acknowledge that, and then we need to act on that as Legislatures. To think that we're going to protect the information and the privacy of travelling people is a false protection. We need to protect those that are being abused, not the abusers.

If we are going to enjoy a safe and prosperous community, we must pass laws that protect the innocent and the victims of crime and abuse. Too often we pass legislation that does more to protect the perpetrator than the victim. I ask this Assembly: are we doing all that we can to protect our children and their future? I don't think so. We need to prevent the exploitation that is going on, and I'd ask all the members to vote in support of this bill that we might protect the future of our young children here in Alberta.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful for the opportunity to rise today and speak to this well-intentioned piece of legislation. Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act, is being brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, and I would like to thank her for doing so. Child pornography is a blight in our society. It's a heinous crime whose victims are some of the most vulnerable people not just in Alberta but in the world. As a government, as community members, and as citizens we need to be actively engaged in protecting our children and ending this intolerable behaviour.

To the credit of the member Bill 202 proposes a method to attack child pornography. Specifically, Bill 202 proposes to require that an individual who believes that they have come into contact with child pornography be mandated to report the finding to a designated authority such as the police. To be clear, Bill 202 would not require people to seek out child pornography. Instead, people would only be required to report if they stumble across it or accidentally find a case of child pornography.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the intention of Bill 202 is noble and works toward the best interest of our society. However, I have some reservation about the effectiveness of the proposed legislation. Specifically, I'm concerned that Bill 202 may not directly target the production of child pornography. This is not to say that this problem is a result of the legislation. Rather, it may be a jurisdictional problem. The reality is that the majority of child pornography is not produced in Alberta or even in Canada, for that matter.

Child pornography is a global problem that may be better addressed through co-operation with other jurisdictions in Canada and, perhaps, even with other nations. This is the role that effectively falls within the control of our federal counterparts, and I'm hopeful that this legislation will move us in that direction.

Because of the jurisdictional limitations we face, Bill 202 may be unable to effectively target the root cause of child pornography, that of the production of the same.

However, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the measures proposed by Bill 202 may have the potential to address the second issue associated with child pornography, that of distribution and proliferation. Currently it is possible that a person will inadvertently find a collection of child pornography and be unclear of their legal obligations. Bill 202 would clearly define these obligations. An individual stumbling across a collection of child pornography would be required to report their findings to the police or to a reporting entity. Mr. Speaker, it's also worth noting that Bill 202 would also enact legislation to ensure that the informant suffers no legal repercussions for reporting their findings.

The end result of these proposed legislative changes would be the creation of a system where there would be a clear process for individuals regarding the reporting of cases of child pornography. In turn, more reporting could lead to more prosecution and conviction of users.

Essentially, Bill 202 is proposing legislation that would target people who own and distribute child pornography, not the people who create it. Now, this is not to say that targeting the users of child pornography is a bad thing; quite the opposite. In fact, I would agree that targeting these people is a good preventative measure. After all, it would stand to reason that people using child pornography might also be the people inclined to create this material. Alternatively, by prosecuting these individuals, we may also be able to decrease the demand.

This is a laudable goal. However, I do not feel as though it is addressing the crux of the issue. Mr. Speaker, while I believe that new reporting legislation may not be the best way to remove child pornography from our communities, I do agree that it is a needed step. After all, child pornography is already illegal in Canada, and I feel that a greater impact could be felt by a renewed commitment to our national initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, we have the most to gain by focusing our efforts on enforcement, particularly international enforcement. As I previously mentioned, the vast majority of child pornography is created outside of our jurisdiction. This does not mean that we are powerless to combat this crime. It is possible that dedicating our resources to improving our international information sharing network would help investigators all over the world battle this shared threat, but at the same time there are things that we can do here at home, like mandating reporting.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the intentions of Bill 202 are both commendable and worthy of praise, and I believe that they are notable steps towards ridding our communities of child pornography. Moreover, I believe the intentions of the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek are honourable and clearly come from the heart.

My concerns with Bill 202 stem from my belief that we should do more. However, the fact that jurisdictional restraints hamper this legislation does not mean at all that we should reject it. Mr. Speaker, the act of combating child pornography is complex and in many cases disheartening. It is a dark subject, to be sure. However, I feel that the discussions that we are having today will go a long way towards shaping both legislation and policies that will eventually rid us of this heinous crime.

With that, I will be offering my support to Bill 202 in recognition that this bill, while it may not be perfect, is a step in the right direction. Again, I thank the member for bringing forward this piece of legislation and look forward to the remainder of the debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.



**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 202, brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. Bill 202 addresses a very complicated issue facing our society, an issue that in all of its manifestations represents serious criminal behaviour. Child pornography is a crime that jeopardizes the safety and security of our communities as it targets some of our most vulnerable citizens, our children.

**4:10**

As we have stated in this Chamber many times, a priority for our government under the leadership of the hon. Premier is to create safe and secure communities, communities that are free of the types of crimes this bill proposes to address. Albertans know that safe, strong, and caring communities are essential to our quality of life, and our government will continue to take actions that strengthen our streets and neighborhoods. Much of our attention recently has been on the economy, as it should. But in the face of the worst recession since the Great Depression our government has not forgotten to place emphasis and resources on creating safer places for Albertans to work, live, and raise families. Our efforts are part of a comprehensive, long-term approach to suppress crime in Alberta. These efforts include bolstering the front lines of Alberta police forces by adding a hundred new officers to fulfill our three-year, 300-officer commitment. We want to ensure that our police services have the resources and tools they need to be effective.

Bill 202 proposes implementing reporting measures that may help our police officers in their good work. I support implementing legislation that will address these heinous crimes, as I'm sure all of my colleagues do. However, I emphasize how important it is to have this legislation strengthen our enforcement efforts, not impede them. We must take steps that will improve the utilization and effectiveness of our communities' policing resources. We're in this together, and we'll build better communities working together. We need to use our resources wisely and support the programs that will keep our province safe. The decisions we make now must reflect the realities on the ground, and we should be considering how we can help address crime in communities by working with all levels of government.

Mr. Speaker, we in this House know that criminal problems are complex and that they'll require an approach that is comprehensive and effective. Federal legislation that's coming forward will also help address this issue as it would create a streamlined, nation-wide approach to reporting instances of child pornography.

Furthermore, we have existing initiatives here in Alberta that are working in this manner such as the Alberta safe communities initiative, which has been building a foundation for a stronger, more secure province for the past two years. This initiative is a partnership of nine government ministries and serves as a great example on how to address crime at the grassroots level by involving those in our communities who are closest to it.

We are pooling resources and expertise to address crime head-on and from the ground up. I wanted to emphasize that this approach is a very important mechanism in how we work to tackle crime effectively. No other province is approaching crime in such a comprehensive way, and with the leadership of the hon. Minister of Justice we will continue to push ahead with solutions that involve all levels of government and the communities themselves.

Albertans have a proud history of partnering together to address whatever challenges lie ahead. When it comes to crime and building safe communities, our approach will be no different. Our government understands that the people in our communities and their local police services know what they need to best address crime, and we've developed our crime reduction strategies with them in mind.

We know they need the tools to make gains in reducing crime, and our government is committed to providing those tools. The safe communities innovation fund is just one of those tools. The first year of the fund saw our government support pilot projects across the province to address targeted crime issues that directly affect communities. From youth at risk and mentoring programs to family and violence support to gang intervention strategies, these projects are making a real difference because they were developed by people who have the greatest stake in seeing them succeed. We know that a number one priority for Alberta's police service is reducing crime amongst youth. This includes crime in all forms.

We know where we need to focus our attention, and we as legislators must ensure that our authorities can address the root cause of crime efficiently and effectively. We stand a much better chance of preventing young people from falling into the hands of ill-intentioned criminals if we do so. Our approach must be a collaborative effort between all levels of government and the communities where these crimes take place. As we all know, Alberta's police are highly trained, and we want to make it easier for them to carry out their duties and their roles.

Let's be clear. We are committed to addressing this serious criminal and social issue, and we must calibrate our approach appropriately. We want all levels of government along with citizens and police to co-operate in a manner that contributes to stopping the creation, distribution, and proliferation of child pornography. Through this co-operation we will come to effective solutions. We know the harmful consequences that child pornography presents to the health and well-being of our communities. I'm confident that by working efficiently and providing the right resources within the right legislative framework, we can be effective at reducing and eliminating child pornography in Alberta. I laud the intent of Bill 202. I believe it may help our co-operative efforts to address these crimes. That being said, I stand in support of Bill 202.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to stand and support Bill 202, brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. Enough has been said. Child pornography or child prostitution is a billion-dollar industry world-wide. Children are being exploited day in and day out with all these materialistic things. They're lured into prostitution. They're drug ponies. You name it. There are all kinds of crimes going on world-wide involving children, and those children are not to blame. It's the predators that get them to do all that. This bill will go to protect the children to some extent. I think we should have tougher laws for the perpetrators and predators so there is a big deterrent for them not to commit any crimes with children. It's only these vulnerable children that get caught into a trap of delivering drugs or being drug ponies or being dragged into prostitution.

The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, I think, is very passionate about children. Bill 202 is entirely congruent with much of the other legislation the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has sponsored during her tenure as MLA, and prior to her appointment to cabinet she was also well known for campaigning against child prostitution. The Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act is an example of one. I commend the member for doing so much hard work on behalf of children. After she became the Solicitor General, she continued to champion children's causes, launching a high-risk offender website and Canada's first Amber Alert program during her tenure.

Nova Scotia became the first jurisdiction to attempt something

similar – that’s Bill 187, Child Pornography Reporting Act – to what this Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is proposing. It received royal assent on November 25, 2008. However, it’s not proclaimed yet. Ontario also came out with a similar kind of bill. Manitoba also placed a similar mandatory obligation to report child pornography on the books in April 2009. On November 24, 2009, the federal government also introduced a similar concept in Bill C-58. So this bill will go a long way to protect children.

There are some things to be clarified in this bill. The term “child pornography,” the definition of which is found in section 163 of the Criminal Code of Canada, throws out some of its own difficulties. In 163.1, if a depiction portrays someone as under 18 regardless of the fact the person in the depiction is 18, it will still be considered child pornography. A reporting entity could mean almost anything and is left to the regulations. This particular approach becomes very vague. So there are little issues with the bill, but overall, in considering this bill, I will gladly support this bill as long as it goes to protect children from all those evils that children are put through.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I’ll wholeheartedly support this bill from the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

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

**Mrs. Sarich:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful for the opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act, that is being brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. This bill contains numerous well-intended objectives for the reporting of child pornography.

4:20

Specifically, this bill, Mr. Speaker, would see that it would be mandatory to report instances where an individual believed that particular material is or may be child pornography. Additionally, the bill would establish the actions that a reporting entity must take following a report. This would include measures like ensuring that the entity performs an inspection, and where it is believed that child pornography is occurring, a report would be referred to the appropriate body.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, the measures in this bill are very honourable, and I’d like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing it forward. They address a matter that is of high priority to this government. One particularly is the protection of children. Increasingly we are hearing of detestable actions toward children across the world and even at home. That’s our reality. With trafficking in other countries and child predators sitting and using computer technology, this issue has taken a new face, one which this government takes very seriously. It is important to make sure that our laws can effectively deal with these issues so that it is clearly understood that these behaviours are not tolerated within our society.

There can also be a connection drawn where child pornography can be a gateway to even more horrendous crimes. That is why there are strong pieces of legislation at both the provincial and federal levels to protect children and to prosecute the predators. Alberta’s Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act is one such piece of legislation that addresses this particular issue. More importantly, section 4(1) of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, or CYFE, reads as follows: “Any person who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of intervention shall forthwith report the matter to a director.” In essence, Mr. Speaker, this mandates that a report be made to the ministry in cases where a child may be in need of intervention.

In addition, section 1(3)(c) of the CYFE Act reads as follows: “For the purposes of this Act . . . a child is sexually abused if the

child is inappropriately exposed or subjected to sexual contact, activity or behaviour including prostitution related activities.” Through this act it is already indirectly mandated that child pornography be reported. However, even with the act in place, the abuse and exploitation can still occur. It is our responsibility as a government, Mr. Speaker, to do whatever is necessary to prevent this. Although I believe that the measures proposed in Bill 202 may not completely rid our province of child pornography, I believe that it is a strong tool that can help us achieve this particular goal.

We can also look to the federal government to see how their legislation aims at cracking down on child predators. Specifically, it is the Criminal Code that addresses child pornography. Section 163.1 of the Criminal Code specifically defines child pornography, and the legislation also clearly outlines the punishment for that individual who makes, prints, publishes, or possesses child pornography. These crimes can lead to imprisonment of up to 10 years. It’s also interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that the Criminal Code also outlines the punishment for anyone who possesses or accesses child pornography. These crimes are taken very seriously in that they can lead up to five years of imprisonment. Overall, the Criminal Code clearly emphasizes the severity of child exploitation. This is important as with the Criminal Code the authorities have the ability to reprimand and prosecute those who exploit children.

Furthermore, the Criminal Code, coupled with Alberta’s Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, provides law enforcement agencies with the very tools that they need to crack down on child pornography; for example, Alberta’s integrated child exploitation unit, also known as ICE, of which there are two team units in the province, Mr. Speaker. There is one for northern Alberta, which includes areas north of Wetaskiwin, and one for southern Alberta, which covers all areas south, including Wetaskiwin. These tools, provided to the units, daily fight to outline child exploitation.

To this point current initiatives of both federal and provincial governments have led to the prosecution of hundreds of people in Canada and around the world who partake in these heinous crimes. However, it may be true that we can do more. Bill 202 contains a number of specific initiatives to further address child pornography. In terms of legislative steps it may be best if such legislation was brought forward by the federal government. However, I believe that it is important for us to do what we can to address this particular issue in the province.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, because this government takes protection of children very seriously, I support the current initiatives of this government as well as the intention of Bill 202. Once again, I thank the hon. member for bringing forward and to our attention this very important issue. I also appreciate that other members of the Alberta Legislature would also support this particular bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise this afternoon and join in the debate on Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act. I want to commend the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for her efforts to bring forward this legislation and do whatever we can to protect our children.

Mr. Speaker, child pornography is one of the scourges of our age. Its victims are amongst the most innocent, trusting, and vulnerable people in society. The issue itself has perhaps existed for years but recently has become compounded by the fact that most of these heinous crimes and images are disseminated on the Internet. This has resulted in its proliferation as it has become so easily accessible

with little or no consequence. Furthermore, it has become a difficult place to catch perpetrators and enforce laws.

Mr. Speaker, it must be recognized that child pornography does not exist without child abuse. They're not mutually exclusive. Stopping the illegal practice of sexually exploiting children requires collaborative efforts by lawmakers, law enforcement, web innovators, parents, guardians, and individuals world-wide. Investigating cases of child abuse and child exploitation may require specialized technical skills outside the scope of usual investigative methods.

Mr. Speaker, this is why Alberta instituted the Alberta integrated child exploitation unit, known provincially as ICE. The unit plays a pivotal role in protecting our children from Internet predators. This unit is provincially integrated, involving the RCMP, Edmonton Police Service, Lethbridge Regional Police Service, Calgary Police Service, and Medicine Hat Police Service. In addition, there are two teams covering the province, one for the areas north of Wetaskiwin and one for all areas south of Wetaskiwin. One of the team's main objectives is to find, investigate, and arrest people who prowl chat rooms looking to sexually exploit children. Another initiative is to investigate and arrest people who are trading child pornography. This initiative addresses child exploitation in regard to people accessing, possessing, distributing, and manufacturing child pornography. In addition, the unit monitors attempted child luring over the Internet.

Mr. Speaker, a survey conducted by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children in the year 2000 showed that 1 in 5 youth had received sexual solicitation over the Internet and that 1 in 4 had exposure to unwanted nude pictures. Ten years on, these numbers are likely to have increased with the availability of new technology such as the Internet, compatible smart phones, and wireless Internet connections on all kinds of mobile devices.

Mr. Speaker, in sting operations members of ICE will pose as individuals in Internet chat rooms looking to exploit children and then build a connection with perpetrators and purveyors of child pornography. Once the investigators have acquired enough evidence, often through the help of officers in other jurisdictions they will launch arrest warrants for those involved.

Another element of the battle against child exploitation was initiated by Alberta Justice in 2003 with the appointment of a special Crown prosecutor for technology and cybercrimes. This specialized Crown prosecutor provides support for such warrants and legal advice. This is to make sure that the Crown will have the strongest case possible to get these criminals off the streets.

Mr. Speaker, there is evidence that supports our belief that child pornography shared over the web is increasing. In the year 2000 Alberta had three Internet child pornography cases before the courts. Now there are over a hundred cases pending in the courts. Each conviction from an ICE-led investigation sends a clear message that child exploitation will not be tolerated in Alberta. The proposed Bill 202 advises that an individual who thinks they have come into contact with child pornography report the finding to the police or other reporting entity. With provincial ICE teams this is already being done to some extent, but increased measures need to be taken, and we need to further promote education and awareness regarding this issue.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, there is a collaborative effort needed in helping our children to stay safe, online and otherwise, in regard to sexual predation. ICE teams tour the province, visiting schools to promote awareness of online child exploitation, which contributes to their mandate of eradicating child pornography and abuse. While this provincial initiative is very effective in the province, there are challenges regarding apprehension of perpetrators.

Child pornography is not just a provincial issue; it's an issue which extends to the global level. A federal initiative working in collaboration with Alberta ICE units along with other similar organizations throughout the country may be more effective at curbing child exploitation. To a certain extent governments of the world acting together to end this blight on humanity may be something to consider in terms of implementing an effective initiative. However, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's important for us to do what we can here at home. This government takes the protection of children very seriously. This is evident in the creation of the ICE teams.

I'd like to commend the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for initiating this debate as it continues to raise the awareness of this important issue. Provincial initiatives like the ICE teams and the hard work of all our law enforcement officers are to be commended. We need to give them every tool possible and use all resources at our disposal to protect our children. I will support this bill.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act, brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I would like to join the chorus of those praising and thanking the hon. member for bringing this forward and for all that she's done in this respect in the past.

Mr. Speaker, the objective of this bill, as we know, is to mandate the reporting of child pornography. Under the bill if an individual believes that certain material is child pornography, that person would be required to report the same to the police or other reporting entities. I've heard that some members have a little trouble with this, but I fail to see the problem.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, child pornography is a very serious issue. Having become a father less than two years ago and expecting a second one here soon, I had no idea of the seriousness and how this touches every single one of us. I've spoken with a number of law enforcement officials, and they have told me directly from first-hand information that sexual exploitation of children on the Net is not just growing; it's dramatically growing. That's why I fully support Bill 202 as well as the current initiatives that this government has in place for protecting children from sexual exploitation already.

I'd like to just give a few examples if I may. For instance, the Alberta government implemented the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and initiated the Alberta integrated child exploitation unit, also known as ICE, as the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater has alluded to. I'll just go into a little bit more detail here. The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act came into force in 2004, and it requires anyone who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is in need of help to report the matter to a director. A report is then made to the Ministry of Children and Youth Service in cases where a child may be in need of intervention. From this perspective, Mr. Speaker, it's already mandatory at this point for people to report child pornography.

Now, furthermore, the ICE unit is a provincially integrated unit involving the RCMP, the Calgary Police Service, the Edmonton Police Service, the Lethbridge Regional Police Service, and the Medicine Hat Police Service. Currently the ICE unit is comprised of two teams, one in northern Alberta and one in southern Alberta, appropriately so. Each of these teams has very qualified investigators and forensic technicians. These teams are responsible for keeping children safe from predators. It's their job, but I dare say

it's the job of every single one of us as, you know, Albertans who really care about our neighbours.

ICE investigators track and investigate, and yes, they indeed arrest people who prowl chat rooms looking to exploit children as well as individuals who view and trade child pornography.

Mr. Speaker, the enhancement act and the ICE unit both help to protect our communities from child pornography, and I believe that Bill 202 will complement these initiatives of our Alberta government that are already instituted at this time.

In addition, I'd like to highlight some of the important support mechanisms that are in place for children who've suffered sexual abuse, which includes child pornography. It's vital for victims of sexual abuse to be aware of the support mechanisms that are available to them. It can change their lives. It can save their lives. One example is the Zebra Child Protection Centre. It's child focused. It's child friendly. The Zebra Child Protection Centre in Edmonton, I'm happy to say, is the first centre of its kind in the country. The centre integrates a community of professionals. Yes, it includes the Edmonton Police Service and Alberta Children Services, but it also includes Crown prosecutors, child-at-risk response teams, medical and trauma screening professionals, and, of course, volunteers. Where would we be without them?

This, Mr. Speaker, allows for a streamlined approach as the integration of law enforcement and social service agencies serves the children in a vital way because it allows for a more efficient system of gathering information. Essentially, for those who are not aware, the Zebra centre provides children with essential social, medical, and mental health services to assist them in their recovery. This community group, like so many others, deserves recognition. They serve over 1,000 children every year.

Another community support agency is the Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres, which does invaluable work every day. They are truly angels in our midst, Mr. Speaker. This organization acts as an umbrella for other groups, for members engaged in direct support services for victims of sexual abuse throughout Alberta. Therefore, rather than just delivering front-line services, it acts as an intermediary focused on improving the effectiveness of the sexual abuse victim support sector in facilitating its further development. The mission of this umbrella organization is to provide leadership and co-ordination and a unified voice on issues of sexual violence while at the same time increasing recognition and support for sexual assault centres in Alberta. This support agency focuses on those who are victims of sexual abuse, and, as mentioned earlier, it includes child pornography.

So I hope you can see, Mr. Speaker, that there are a lot of great things happening, bad news turned into good news in the province as it is. But I'll add that with the support of Alberta's Children and Youth Services, the core services of the Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres has expanded across the province. The centre is continually removing client barriers by ensuring that services are available and accessible to diverse populations, rural communities, and previously unserved or underserved areas.

Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you that I've seen it with my own eyes. It's essential. It's vital for effective delivery services for all Albertans. I would go so far as to say that it's imperative for all Albertans to know that healing and recovery from sexual abuse is possible and that the support groups in Alberta provide a safe place for healing to begin, but only if everyone knows about them and utilizes them.

Sexual violence, which includes child pornography, of course, is not an easy topic for many of us to discuss, but we must. Community support groups work to give victims a voice in order to help

them overcome their horrific experiences. It's the least that we can do.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, I'll just add other community support groups in the time remaining because they do deserve the acknowledgement for the great work that they do every day. That includes groups like the kids' helpline, the Métis Child and Family Services, the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton, the Distress Centre, the Edmonton Police Service child protection section, and, of course, closer to my home, the Calgary Communities against Sexual Abuse. These are just a few of the many more organizations that are out there, and it's the groups like these that continue to help make our community stronger as they provide invaluable support for victims and their families. They truly turn things around.

These groups are advocates for the survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse. I hope that you might agree that the more we talk about this issue, the better chance we have of achieving justice and helping to prevent it from happening in the first place. I do believe that that's the direction that we need to go. In this way, it's important to continually raise awareness on this matter, which these support groups do successfully, but they do need our help with a bill such as this. Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 helps with exactly that, to raise awareness about the seriousness of this issue.

I believe that this bill will contribute to this government's vision of ensuring safer communities. This government has already committed to protecting our most vulnerable and ensuring our communities are safe and caring environments. That's why I support this bill fully. I also support the community groups and current legislation that already protects our youth from sexual exploitation.

Finally, I'd like to again thank the hon. member for her past, present, and future work in this regard. I'll be voting for this, and I trust that all hon. members will be doing so as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Mr. Rogers:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am pleased to rise to speak to Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, and I, too, would like to thank the hon. member for her tenacity in sponsoring legislation of this type that continues to make our communities that much safer and certainly for her efforts in bringing this particular piece of legislation forward.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 would mandate individuals who believe material to be child pornography to report that material to law enforcement or other reporting agencies. While Canada's Criminal Code indicates that the possession of child pornography is illegal, it currently does not mandate individuals to report content that they may encounter. Thus, Bill 202 would appear to fill an important gap in our current child pornography legislation by empowering citizens to aid law enforcement in bringing the perpetrators of these heinous acts to justice.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, it is a matter that our own Justice department in Alberta has taken quite seriously for years. Alberta Justice has lobbied our federal counterparts in Ottawa to enact similar legislation to what is being proposed here today. I'm pleased to say that our federal government has acted over the last several years.

In 2002 the federal government enacted Bill C-15A, which strengthened the Criminal Code by extending the offence of possessing and distributing child pornography to accessing it. The

amendments also made it an offence to communicate with children via a computer system for the purpose of facilitating or committing certain sexual offences such as child luring or abduction. Even recently we've heard and read in the news of Albertans that have been prosecuted, and I just can't say enough, Mr. Speaker. I hope that this piece of legislation and others will give us a much bigger book to club these horrible individuals with.

Mr. Speaker, following the throne speech in 2004, which committed the government to cracking down on child pornography, Parliament enacted Bill C-2, which included a broader definition of child pornography and increased the penalties.

On November 24, 2009, the federal government introduced Bill C-58, the Child Protection Act (Online Sexual Exploitation). This bill would require Internet service providers to report cases where child pornography may be available to the public or if they have reasonable grounds to believe that their Internet service is being or has been used to commit a child pornography offence. On November 27, 2009, Mr. Speaker, Bill C-58 was referred to the House of Commons Justice and Human Rights Committee. While Bill C-58 was dropped from the Order Paper after the prorogation of Parliament, the federal government has promised to reintroduce this legislation. I would encourage all members and certainly all members of the public to speak to their Members of Parliament and remind them how important it is that this piece of legislation come back on the Order Paper before the federal House.

Mr. Speaker, a federal legislative solution to fight child pornography would have numerous advantages. First, it would have the benefit of uniformity in approach. Second, there would be no need for individuals to determine which level of government to report to and in what format. Some provinces such as Manitoba and Ontario have implemented mandatory reporting measures that echo what is proposed in Bill 202. However, a single piece of federal legislation would ensure consistent mandatory reporting measures across all provinces.

Finally, a streamlined, single piece of federal legislation could receive greater compliance from industry and the private sector. Internet service providers such as Telus, Bell, or Rogers operate nation-wide. A single piece of legislation throughout Canada would reduce confusion among Internet providers and allow for stronger enforcement. Should Bill C-58 pass upon reintroduction, Internet providers such as Telus and others will have only one piece of legislation to enforce rather than one for Manitoba, one for Ontario, and for others who choose to enact such legislation.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the scourge of child pornography may be a task better suited to our federal government. Similar to a pandemic that knows no boundaries or borders, the task of eradicating child pornography will require the co-operation of nations world-wide. Our federal government is constitutionally empowered to accomplish this. However, these efforts do not preclude the efforts of provincial jurisdictions across the country. As I mentioned, other provincial jurisdictions, including Manitoba, Ontario, and Nova Scotia, have enacted their own legislation mandating the reporting of child pornography.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Alberta should pass legislation to mandate the reporting of child pornography while the federal government continues its efforts. First and perhaps most importantly, the federal Conservative government is in a minority position. Therefore, it is possible that Bill C-58 will not gain the support of the majority of the House of Commons. It is possible that even if it did pass the House of Commons, it could be defeated, stalled, or amended in the Senate. While this government certainly commends the federal government for its ongoing efforts to pass nation-wide legislation like Bill C-58, we must do our part to help in the fight

against child pornography. For these reasons I will be voting in support of this legislation.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would again like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for her excellent work in bringing forward this piece of legislation and for her ongoing efforts to protect our children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to further debate.

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful for the opportunity to rise today and speak to this piece of legislation. Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act, is being brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, and I would like to express my thanks to the member for initiating this very important debate. Over the many years I've known this member, she has always been very committed to protecting our children and to a law and order agenda for this province.

Mr. Speaker, debating subjects that are uncomfortable and unfortunate is one of the duties and realities of being an elected official. Bill 202 deals with one of these subjects. Child pornography and exploitation are absolutely harrowing issues that affect some of our most innocent and vulnerable citizens, our children. As elected officials it is part of our job to find ways to protect our most vulnerable and ensure our communities are safe, healthy environments.

Child pornography and child exploitation is a disturbing subject, to say the very least. It is a permanent record of the abuse of a child, which can include pictures, videos, audio recordings, drawings, and stories. A particularly disturbing trend is the proliferation and distribution of child pornography as well as opportunities for child luring via the world-wide Internet.

**4:50**

Mr. Speaker, the materials I just mentioned are created deliberately and can be easily shared through numerous electronic means such as cellphones and the Internet. The government of Canada recently released a report entitled *Every Image, Every Child*. This report details the global scope of the very real problem of child pornography and exploitation and the use of the Internet to distribute this content. It is estimated that there are over 5 million images of sexual abuse towards children on the Internet at this moment. Each week there are tens of thousands of images and videos depicting sexual abuse towards children posted. This is heinous.

In addition to the sheer volume, there are more disturbing trends emerging with regard to child pornography and exploitation. The distribution of child pornography over the Internet has seemingly had a distressing effect on the content itself. The constant flow of information and the ability to interact with other criminals either creating or distributing child pornography has led to a wide variety of deviant materials and subjects which are being displayed. Adding to the issue surrounding the trends and the content of materials containing child exploitation are the issues of availability and supply. The access to and distribution of these images can be done from any computer, any cellphone any time.

Given the prevalence of the Internet and modem technology, the issue and problem of child exploitation extends far beyond our province's borders. Our national child abuse tip line, Cybertip, recently reviewed the geographical distribution of countries hosting websites that contained images of child sexual abuse. Cybertip found that nearly 60 countries were hosting this type of content. It is clear that the issue of child exploitation is not localized explicitly in Alberta or Canada, for that matter. Cybertip's report, published

in November 2009, found that the number one country in which websites were registered that hosted images of child sexual abuse was the United States, followed closely by Russia. Combined, Russia and the United States were home to approximately 70 per cent of the websites found that contained explicit material involving a child. Canada was home to 9 per cent of almost 13,000 website incidents displaying images of child sexual abuse.

Mr. Speaker, while these figures seem to suggest that interest in this material is localized, it says nothing of where the material was created. Furthermore, the difficulty with these statistics is that the measures taken by purveyors of child pornography are sophisticated and very difficult to track. For example, Cybertip observed a single website cycle through over 200 IP addresses in a single 48-hour period. Just as an aside, an IP address is a numerical label attached to devices that are connected to the Internet. One site used over 200 in a 48-hour period. These unique labels can be used to indicate the location of a particular computer. In essence, this means that the purveyors of child pornography have taken great measures to conceal the location from which these images are being posted.

Mr. Speaker, this data demonstrates that the creation of child pornography is a problem that requires our continued attention, and because of that, I support Bill 202. I believe that it will have an impact here in Alberta. However, I continue to believe that due to jurisdictional issues federal legislation may be the most effective approach to this very serious subject. Furthermore, Cybertip has recommended the implementation of international standards with regard to hosting a website as an effective measure in reducing child exploitation. Again, it is likely that jurisdictional issues will prevent our government from moving in this direction.

Ultimately, the issue of child pornography and exploitation is multifaceted. As a society we hope that no child will ever fall victim to abuse. Every member of this Assembly wants to ensure that we continue to protect our most vulnerable and valuable citizens. I support Bill 202. It is certainly well intentioned. However, due to the issues I mentioned previously, I would like to see our government continue to lobby the federal government. Again, I thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing forward this piece of legislation and look forward to further debate.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wish to speak?

If not, I'll call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek to close debate.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened very intently to all of the comments that were made, and I will definitely provide the definition of child pornography. I listened with rapt interest in regard to "We're waiting for the federal government initiative" and "We're waiting for the federal government." Well, we've been waiting since 2002 for the feds to move: 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007, '08, and again in 2009, but Parliament was prorogued. I think about that timing, and I think about how many people have been hit with this issue of child pornography. I'd be pleased to answer questions in Committee of the Whole on Cybertip and the ICE teams and from my colleague across the way from me on privacy.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I'll move second reading of Bill 202.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a second time]

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the close proximity to 5 o'clock, I would like to seek unanimous consent of the House

to proceed to private members' motions business rather than to the next private member's bill.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

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

#### Local Food Production

503. Mr. Griffiths moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to explore the feasibility and viability of developing substantially diversified local food production.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think my biggest regret with this hour of debate today is that we will only be having one hour of debate on this issue. I specifically framed this motion to encourage debate in this Assembly about a lot of issues. This discussion that we're about to have can talk about environmental issues. It can talk about support for local agriculture. It can talk about diversifying the economy. It can talk about land-use issues. There is no limit to what we can discuss when we talk about diversifying our local food production here in the province of Alberta.

[The Speaker in the chair]

You know, where this started, Mr. Speaker, was when I heard over and over again – and I've worked in agriculture a long time – so many people discuss how our farmers feed us. Looking around, we experience farmers' markets, but oftentimes I think we exaggerate just how much of our local food production could feed us. I had one person actually suggest openly that if we only ate stuff that's produced in Alberta, if that's all we were allowed to eat, then the majority of the population would actually suffer from scurvy because we don't produce enough vegetables and fruits or other production. If we eat wheat, barley, canola, beef, bison, and chicken, we'd suffer significantly healthwise.

Now, this discussion about local food production, Mr. Speaker, I believe is one of the most important issues that we'll discuss in the next 20 years, and I think we'll have to address it more and more often in this Assembly. In fact, this is a discussion that's going on globally. I went to a conference in the United States – and there is a lot of discussion going on around the globe – about utilizing food to produce fuel and whether or not our nations actually benefit in the long run when we're turning food into fuel. There are discussions globally around the economy's productions. A lot of great books have been written that discuss the status and situation with Third World countries and the way they produce food. They've actually reached some critical points and fallen backwards because of the way they produce food, importing food from other countries.

In fact, one of the challenges we have globally is that Third World nations are often forced to borrow money from First World nations so that they can turn around and use that money to buy food from First World nations. I don't quite know how you get out of a circumstance where you borrow money from somebody in order to buy their own products. And it's core products. We're not talking about big-screen TVs and couches. We're talking about food, the very essence of survival.

5:00

There are also discussions, Mr. Speaker, globally when it comes

to local food production about soil conservation questions and soil health issues. How much, and how extensive? Should we use fertilizers and pesticides to produce our food? What does it do to our water quality and our soil quality? We can't forget that environmental issues when it comes to local food production and consumption are huge in the forefront, the quality of our water issues, which can be polluted because of the fertilizers we use and the pesticides that we use and other chemicals that we use.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, carbon capture and storage, carbon sequestration, is often thought of as being a critical issue when it comes to energy production. I mean, that's why the province has a \$2 billion carbon capture and storage policy to help address some of those issues when it comes to energy production. But the more front and centre carbon becomes in our debate about the environment, the more we're going to realize that it's not just about energy production that's critical when we talk about carbon capture and storage, or carbon sequestration. What about food production? Food production properly done can help sequester carbon. But we have to ask the question.

I hope the issue actually comes up today, that producing a head of lettuce in Alberta ourselves may cost more money to produce than getting it cheaply from Mexico, but, you know, if you factor in the cost of carbon produced in hauling that head of lettuce all the way up here, it may be cheaper to produce it locally. If consumers actually have to pay the cost of producing carbon in order to get that head of lettuce up here, they may find it's cheaper to buy it here. If we're going to discuss carbon issues globally when it comes to energy production, why don't we start to discuss it when it comes to food production? I think we may very soon, in the near future.

Now, I think most Albertans have had the benefit and a positive experience when they go to their local farmers' market. I don't think there are very many Albertans out there that think that the farmers' market is just a neat tourist attraction and a cute place to go to find some novelties and knick-knacks. I think more and more farmers' markets are drawing in people who want to identify more with agriculture and where their food comes from, want to see more organic or locally produced food, so they support their farmers' market. But I think it's critical, Mr. Speaker, that when we talk about local food production, we actually explore the feasibility and viability of encouraging more of it, diversifying our local food production more.

I have not done an extensive study on the subject, but I do believe the economic benefits will extend beyond just farmers' markets, which Albertans can identify with. In fact, I'm sure somebody out there in the world has done some feasibility study, some economic study, but my notion from what I've read, my understanding from what I've read, Mr. Speaker, is that the majority of stable, strong, enduring economies around the globe always are so because they have a strong, stable agricultural sector and more diversified local food production. The reason why that works is because no matter what – well, look. My grandpa told me a long time ago – and I think I've used it in this Legislature before – that when you evaluate what is important in life, remember that you can go for three minutes without air, three days without water, and three weeks without food.

If we're trying to build a stable economy in Alberta, in Canada, just like other economies have where they've had a stable agricultural base, if we get into a trade dispute with the United States or England or Argentina or whoever, we may not get big-screen TVs. I think we can live without those. We might not get new running shoes. I think we can live without those. But if we're dependent on another country for our food, in a trade dispute that puts us in a vulnerable position. Most economies that are strong and stable and have endured for decades and decades and decades have discovered

that the strong, stable agricultural sector is critical to their own success.

Now, I also believe that researching this and finding out how we can diversify and stabilize our agricultural sector is critical because I understand the value and importance of extending our agricultural reach into other markets and selling them our product. We have fantastic products to sell, but we make ourselves vulnerable when we produce twice as much of a product as we can consume locally. I don't want to name any particular industries, but there are industries that produce twice as much of a product as what we could eat here in Alberta or even in Canada, so we ship it to other countries. Then we oftentimes have trade disputes that are shelved in health issues to close the border off so that we can't export our product, and suddenly we have an industry in crisis. Throughout agriculture we have many sectors of that industry in crisis right now because of trade disputes mostly that are shelved or housed in some sort of health issue. If we focused on a diversified agricultural base, our economy, I think, would be more stable, and I think it would ensure us long-term benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to occupy all the time because I do believe this will be an interesting discussion. I will attain my seat and listen to the discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great interest that I stand and speak to this. I've been working on this since I became the new agricultural critic. I think, as has already been mentioned, that this is absolutely imperative as we move forward in our society. I agree also that I would love to see a much longer debate on this where people could bring in and have a chance to do a lot of research on this particular issue because, as has already been mentioned, this isn't just an Alberta issue; this is a world-wide movement. I'd like to call this movement going forward to the past because this is how we used to eat in the past. We knew who our producers were. Our food was good. It wasn't full of chemicals to preserve it.

I would suspect that I am probably healthier than my children, and I think that people perhaps in my age range could say that they are healthier than their children. I walked to school, and when I picked up a loaf of bread, if we didn't eat it in two days, it was gone. I think that the fact that we had all of that good, safe food was . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Wonder bread?

**Ms Pastoor:** No. No Wonder bread. We didn't have Wonder bread. I'm trying to think. Good old Canada Bread I think is what it was called.

One of the things that has been mentioned is about the fact that we might get scurvy because we didn't have vegetables. There are greenhouses in this province as we speak that can actually produce two crops a year of vegetables because they use solar to keep up not only the energy that they need but also the heat that they need in their greenhouses. Any of these greenhouses could be run on geothermal or wind.

When I was fortunate enough to live in Spain in the early '80s, when we first went there, there were probably – I don't know – maybe 15 to 20 acres of greenhouses. They called them plásticos. What they did was actually make greenhouses out of plastic. They took the soil from the harbour and desalinated it, and that was used as the base for the greenhouses. Then they had a tank of water and fertilizer, and it was dripped at the bottom of the root of each plant.

They got three crops a year, anywhere from carnations to English cucumbers, tomatoes that we've never seen the size of, and were very successful. Now when I go on Google Earth, I look and see that what was desert at one point is now totally covered in what they call plásticos. There's no reason that we cannot do that here in this province. We are going to alternative energies, and it would be more than certainly economical.

There was also a mention and has been talked about the increased costs of organic or perhaps the increased costs of local food. We know that much of this food that we can get locally really is a better food. It is actually picked when it's ripe, which means that it's ripened on the vine or however it's being grown. It's being ripened in the ground if it's a root vegetable.

My argument to that would be that if we spend more money to buy really good food, perhaps we'd eat less. I think that in this day and age of obvious obesity, that wouldn't be a bad thing, so I think that's another argument that doesn't stand up.

#### 5:10

One of the things that I see happening as well is that we are exporting first-grade food to other countries. I'm not altogether sure after some of the things that we've heard that I totally trust the inspectors, who have been cut down in numbers, to inspect the food that we are actually bringing into our country. I think we've heard many horror tales about foods that actually had to be recalled because of various things that were in them. Melamine would be one.

Interestingly, the United Nations has predicted that over the next 25 years nearly all population growth will be in the cities of the developing world. At current rates 60 per cent of the world's total population will live in cities by 2030. As the cities grow, so does the number of urban poor. Unemployment, hunger, and malnutrition are commonplace. In the big city most of any cash income the poor might bring home goes to feeding themselves and staying alive. Any food that does not have to be bought is a bonus. As a result, more and more people are attempting to grow at least some of their own food to supplement poor diets and meagre incomes, but farming in the city, urban agriculture, is too often seen by municipalities as a problem to be eradicated rather than a part of the solution to make the city and its environment more sustainable.

I was at a lecture given by Mike Harcourt, the former Premier of B.C., who is now very involved in sustainable communities and spoke about this subject, that more and more and more the ability to actually make a change in terms of how we create our food and have it within our communities really will be at the municipal level. He didn't feel that either federal or provincial legislation would have as much impact as people actually working towards this movement on the ground.

It's interesting to point out that there are actually two cases before the courts in Calgary about people that want to keep chickens in their backyard. Now, one of the women who is challenging this in the court is a single mom and on a limited income and has three chickens in her backyard. She, coincidentally, also has three children, and each one of those children gets a fresh egg every morning. That, I think, is a part of her argument. However, it is interesting to note that Vancouver, New York City, Seattle, Portland, Chicago, Victoria, Burnaby, and Richmond, just to name a few, actually have legislation that says: yes, you can have chickens in your backyard. So the movement is moving; the movement is catching on. We even know that here in Alberta the sales at farmers' markets have increased by 30 per cent over the last two years. Just think of the millions of dollars that are going back into our local economy, but think of the good food that our citizens are actually eating.

The new face of farming is going to be smaller farms. I visited a farm that was only 10 acres. One of their things is that they have specialty vegetables, but one of the examples that I use that came off that farm is that they raise Cornish game hens. This is a place here just near Edmonton. It's sold by contract to specialty restaurants that have very, very picky chefs. These people are actually going to make a living off this 10 acres. The problem with some of these smaller farmers is that the land doesn't really say that they're a farm, but they're sort of not a small business that a bank would look at in terms of giving them those extra monies just to get them over that threshold of allowing them to be a little bit bigger and to actually hire staff.

I think that this is very timely, but I also think that we really have to look at what has already been mentioned, called the 100-mile diet. I in Lethbridge am very lucky that I can actually get any kind of a meat product that is hormone free and some, certainly, vaccination free. With our vegetables, I know which ones are grown organically. I think that these are the kinds of things that we should have in downtown Calgary, Edmonton, and everywhere else. As has been mentioned, these farmers' markets are certainly growing as we speak.

I think that it's important that we work with our agriculture minister. It should be legislated in some way so that there is help, so that there is even education toward thinking about how important this movement can be. One of the economic benefits – this is actually a dollar figure where I put the 30 per cent – is that farmers' markets in Alberta currently have sales in the range of \$380 million a year. They are increasing in numbers, as I have already mentioned.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Alas, hon. member, the time has escaped us.

The hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security.

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm listening with a keen ear here to the debate on the motion, which urges the government to investigate the feasibility, the viability of developing substantially diversified local food production, which, I think, on the surface of it could be agreed with except that to me that kind of reeks of calling for government intervention in the agricultural business, in the local food production business. It may be a laudable goal, but I'll guarantee you that we've heard the Member for Battle River-Wainwright arguing exactly the opposite in this House a number of times.

Then the debate on this thing revolves around some confusion over local food production versus organic food production. The motion doesn't speak anything to organic food production; it talks about local diversified food production. But the Member for Lethbridge-East repeatedly talked about local food as if she meant organic food. Let's examine that issue for a while because, actually, there's organic food in all of our markets and has been for quite some time. Recently there's been quite a take-up on organic food.

I don't know what the number is today, but not too long ago 70 per cent of our organic food was produced in China and shipped to Canada. If anybody knows anything about the Chinese market, they'll know that it's the wild, wild west. It's rather unregulated. Anybody that wants to put "organic" on their package can do so. There's no regulation to say what that word means, so we buy organic food in the market. It's crazy. My concern here is that we have this ridiculous propensity to rush lemming-like into new fads. This could be confused with another one.

Now, the member talks about the future of farming being smaller farms. By what reasoning? I should point out that there's a



difference between a farm and a garden, first of all. The Member for Battle River-Wainwright has argued on numerous occasions about what an efficient farming community we have. Now, by what economic reasoning is a farmer in Alberta going to abandon his methods of production – tractors, herbicides, fertilizers, all of those things – unless there's an economic benefit for him? A farmer is a businessman like any other, and if he can make a dollar at doing something, he's going to do it. It has been proven time and time again that the consumer will not pay more for produce in the supermarket.

I urge the hon. member to plant a garden and eat local food. I wholeheartedly agree that it's better for you. But let's not urge our agricultural community to switch to uneconomical practices unless somebody is willing to subsidize. And there's the word. Somebody has to pay for all of this, and if it's not the consumer in the grocery store, who is it? I urge the hon. member to think about that. We're not talking about organic food. We're talking about local production here. All of that is a very good argument for another day.

The reason that we get our fruit from other places is because they can produce it more economically, and there's a limit to what our consumers are willing to pay. In exchange for that we trade goods with them, and we ship our beef there. Who is going to tell the beef producers, "Oh, boy; well, now, we probably should cut down – oh, I don't know – to 10 per cent of our current production"?

**Ms Pastoor:** COOL will tell the beef producers what they're going to do.

**Mr. Oberle:** While the member seems willing to tell them that they should cut down to 10 per cent of their current production, I'm not, Mr. Speaker. I think we should let markets evolve. The agricultural community is doing a heck of a good job of that, and I think that we should leave the system be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:20

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

**Ms Notley:** Oh, that was a bit sooner than I expected.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak on this motion and, unlike the previous speaker, to speak in favour of it for a number of reasons, some of which may be good ones.

I want to start by simply noting the government's own sustainable land-use framework and some of the information that they talked about last year when they brought in the land-use framework and heralded much of what it meant for us in the future and what a great thing it would be. One of the strategies in that land-use framework was strategy 5, which suggested that we ought to promote the efficient use of land to reduce the footprint of human activities on Alberta's landscape. Well, obviously, we have local production, but promoting local consumption of locally produced foods is, in fact, a clear mechanism for reducing our footprint and for enhancing the effectiveness of our land use. That's one good reason why this government presumably would already be in favour of this motion, because it completely aligns with their stated goals under the land-use framework that we all talked about last year.

What we need to do in Alberta is not look at this as a fad because, you know, I'm pretty sure that eating is one of those things that's been around for some time. As a result, I think that coming up with efficient and economical ways to feed ourselves is not a fad but is, in fact, kind of survival-like, so we ought to maybe consider it that way. Even if we risk potentially challenging some very vested interests of some very, very large but singular agricorp interests that some folks in this government are quite fond of, at the end of the day, in the long term, what we really need to do is look at how to

develop this province in a way that sustains our environment, sustains our food supply, and sustains our health. All of that is something that can be achieved through more focus on enhancing local food production and distribution and consumption.

Generally speaking, I mean, the government itself, I believe, last year reported that their own surveys were suggesting that 90 per cent of Alberta households had purchased local food in the previous year and that a significant portion of them would like to buy more local food if the opportunity was provided to them in the following year.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

Now, the government has put quite a lot of money, of course, into the Alberta livestock and meat strategy, a strategy that has gotten it into not a small amount of hot water with their historical supporters. Of course, that's done in order, we're told, to enhance the ability of Albertans to export their meat products and to compete internationally. Now, that may well be, at least in part, a good objective. Whether this particular strategy is the most effective strategy to achieve that objective, I don't know, but the objective is certainly a good one. But why only look at creating an international market if we have the opportunity to enhance and build a local market? In fact, studies show that dollars spent on local food will circulate eight to 15 times in a local economy. If the food is grown here, transported here, bought here, then in fact more of the economic benefit from that stays here.

The other issue that some people have talked about is cost. Of course, there was the whole discussion about organic food versus nonorganic food, but as has been pointed out, we're not necessarily talking about organic food. What we're talking about is the government looking at ways in which they can efficiently support a good distribution system that removes the middleman and connects the consumer much more closely with the producer, and the more you're able to remove that distribution, eliminate or minimize the number of people between the consumer and the producer, the cheaper and more marketable that product becomes.

What we need is government support and exploration into how to connect the consumer with the producer locally because that's one of the problems that we have here in Alberta, that it's very, very difficult to do that. When you seek out organic food, if you're in a major grocery store, you end up buying organic food that's travelled half-way across the continent as opposed to, you know, 10 miles down the road, which, of course, you do with the farmers' market. As many people here know, of course, the only year-round farmers' market in the city resides in the centre of my constituency. I can tell you that that place is overwhelmed every Saturday morning with shoppers, and it drives the economy of the whole area around it. So to suggest that there isn't actually a market for this is really quite short-sighted.

The point is that it's not necessarily going to happen everywhere right away. Is there something the government can do to enhance it? Heaven knows they enhanced the market share of the very small group of agricorporations out there. They do everything they can to support them, so why not look at trying to find ways to do that with respect to enhancing local food production and diversification?

A few interesting statistics that were provided to me by people who are very much in support of this vision of creating a vibrant and sustainable local food economy are as follows. Basically, there is a long-term concern about food security across the world, and ultimately this is going to become a problem. As a result of that, we see a lot of foreign purchases of huge amounts of farmland around the world, up to 15 million to 20 million hectares of farmland in certain countries, equivalent to anywhere between 50 and 75 per cent of the province of Alberta.

As the food shortage develops, or as the market becomes increasingly monopolized by one or two or three or four distributors, primarily at this point, the prices shoot up, which we have seen quite a bit recently. Meanwhile, what the producers receive goes down because, of course, they have far fewer places to sell their produce. The monopoly destroys the so-called free market on both ends. The producer has fewer places to sell, and the consumers have fewer places from which to buy, and the market is distorted.

Anybody who's a student of economics will tell you that even the most right-wing believers in the joys of the free market will acknowledge that monopolies are not always a good thing. Therefore, what we need to do is find ways to get around them. [interjection] I've even got the attention here of the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore. How often does that happen, that I get nods of agreement from him? Having said that, though, I think we can agree on this piece.

Food prices soar due to demand surges and supply constraints, and as a result of that we see these huge peaks in food prices. Another thing that people ought to know is that the distribution systems that we currently have in place across the world account for about 10 per cent of the annual greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. For those of us in the building who actually believe that this is a problem, this is something that maybe we ought to be concerned about. One way to do that is to stop transporting a freeze-dried vegetable thousands and thousands of kilometres and, rather, find ways to move it from farm A to adjacent urban community B. Anyway, that's another thing.

We also have issues with respect to the way things work right now. I heard one speaker talk about: "Why should we fix it if it's not broke? Why should the government tamper with it? The market is working just great." Blah, blah, blah. The problem is that Canadian farmers at this point are posting record losses, surpassing those that we saw during the Depression in the earlier part of the previous century. Tens of thousands of farmers sell their produce to only one or two large corporations at this point. Food travels on average 2,400 kilometres from field to plate.

5:30

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

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and offer my support to Motion 503, urging the government to explore the opportunity and viability of developing diversified local food production. Right now the Alberta government is working closely with industry, business leaders, and Albertans towards a shared goal of making the province one of the most competitive jurisdictions in the world. A more competitive province will provide the right environment for the creation of new business opportunities for Albertans and our future generations. This focus cuts across all sectors of government, including agriculture. Motion 503 will help us accomplish this by promoting our local producers.

Agriculture has been and continues to be integral to the success of our province. It is an essential component of Alberta's economy, culture, and heritage. Producers provide our communities with nutritious and healthy food as well as employment and economic opportunities for local businesses that offer services and supports to our producers. Over the years this industry has faced and continues to encounter many hurdles that require innovative solutions, so it is especially important that we continue to look at different ways that the Alberta government can continue to help this industry.

I believe that many Albertans feel the same way and would like to know when they can purchase and consume locally produced food. I know that I do. Not only do we want to support our local

agricultural producers, but we also trust the quality of their food. Mothers may not want to buy the cheapest food for their children. They may want to buy the best quality food for their children. In fact, consumer trends report that local food production and sales efforts have seen unprecedented growth over the past few years and have increased by 30 per cent.

With the high Canadian dollar it is especially important that we support our local producers as U.S. producers are now more competitive in our markets and better able to sell their products in our stores. Oftentimes when we go to the grocery store, it's not always obvious where the food that we are buying comes from. Research has shown that Alberta households indicate a lack of product availability as the number one barrier to buying local products. If stores do not indicate where the food is coming from, we do not necessarily know when we have the choice to purchase Albertan. Exploring the possibilities of diversified local food production might alleviate this by increasing our awareness and the profile of local producers as well as providing us with more locally grown products.

I prefer to buy Albertan, and I'm willing to pay more money to do so. I believe that a lot of Albertans and constituents from Grande Prairie-Wapiti would do the same. The desire of Albertans to buy locally can be seen in the over one hundred independently operated farmers' markets in Alberta.

I commend the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright for this motion to support our local agricultural producers. This motion is one of the ways we can ensure that our province's agricultural industry is competitive and provides jobs and prosperity to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the time to speak on this very important issue, and I look forward to hearing other members' thoughts on diversified local food production.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were having a deep conversation on the free market with the hon. member from the ND Party. A deep subject.

I appreciate the hon. member bringing forward Motion 503, but until I heard him speak on it, I thought that it was a typo error: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to explore the feasibility and viability of developing substantially diversified local food production." What I thought he wanted in his motion was to ensure that there is a competitiveness review to see why we're not more diversified here in the province of Alberta. I believe that if you actually look at the problems, as the Member for Lethbridge-East pointed out, you're actually punished for having a small farm: "Well, you're under 10 acres," or "You didn't have this much income," that in fact you don't meet the regulations to get those benefits of being a small farmer.

There is an individual down in Taber that has raised, I believe, eight children on 20 acres, and everyone says that it can't be done. What I think is important is that we recognize we shouldn't say who can and who can't but to allow the free market and that entrepreneur to say: I think I can do this. Perhaps they just want to put in five acres of blueberries or saskatoons or black currants and realize that they can and will be able to make a living on that. The question is: what are the regulations that we've put in place that allow or prohibit those people from being competitive and being allowed to do that?

There are some interesting points that have been brought up that I want to go back to. I think that most Albertans, if in fact they were given the choice to buy local or foreign, would buy local. As the Member for Peace River mentioned, it is about the cost. Human

nature is that we don't want to pay a prohibitive price for something that is competitive and that we can bring in from another area at a lower cost. I don't believe that that's the root of the problem. I really feel that it's important that we allow the Alberta producers to bring forward their produce and to be able to market it in a way that is economically viable for them.

Too often we set up new rules and regulations. There's always a constant battle at the farmers' market on whether we're going to bring in new rules and regulations and limit them from bringing their produce to town. We've passed a lot of legislation that prohibits people, for example, on how many chickens or turkeys they're allowed to raise without getting a quota, thereby creating a problem for those new entrepreneurs who might want to get into those areas.

I think the important thing for Albertans and perhaps the role that the government might take is on the education side, of promoting a little bit of education on how good our product in Alberta is and to allow the local people to realize that. We're very fortunate in southern Alberta to have Rogers Sugar.

Europe went through a period where they had a food shortage. They realized the problem, and the local people there are more than willing to subsidize farmers because they want assured produce in their country. We don't have that problem here in Alberta. We have a surplus. What we need to do is create the demand because we want better, and I believe Albertans do want better. They want the best.

We have a great drive to be competitive, whether it's in the Olympics or whether it's in food production, but we need a positive campaign to allow people to understand the benefits of buying local. We often hear of the 100-Mile Diet. I'd love to hear the discussion and talk about the Alberta diet or the Canadian diet or the western diet. There are many areas where we could and should be looking at those things.

One of the areas where we suffer, I guess, is when we look at the oil sands. There we had a resource, and we wondered: how do we allow or encourage the development of that? The provincial and federal governments got together, they looked at the problem, and they said: "Well, it's a tax problem. There isn't enough capital to develop this under the current system, so what we need to do is put a tax incentive in there to allow the entrepreneur, the risk takers to put their capital in." It's very much the same in agriculture.

There are a lot of opportunities that we could and should explore. The one that I would like to address today is greenhouses. If someone was to do a little bit of research, they would find that the majority of the greenhouses in Alberta are down in Medicine Hat. The reason – I'm sure the Speaker is very much aware of this – is that there they have their own gas. In the city of Medicine Hat they have their royalties. They own the gas, and they were allowed to use that gas without having prohibitive royalties or taxes on it, so the development of greenhouses inside that jurisdiction was abundant. They were able to have greenhouses there where in other places in the province it wasn't economically viable.

It's interesting, though, the number of wells across Alberta that have been drilled, have been developed. In the old days they'd flare them or they'd test them, and they'd say: "These wells aren't economically viable. We can't put in a pipeline. It would cost too much. There's not enough there." Yet we don't have the opportunity to allow a local farmer to use that gas to heat a greenhouse or to produce a crop, to lower their cost on fuel. I think those are areas where we can be innovative in ensuring that Alberta producers have an opportunity.

5:40

We very much get focused, it seems, here in Alberta and throughout the world right now on carbon. I think what we should be

focused on, though, is carbohydrates, the \$2 billion that we're putting in to look at carbon sequestration when the science is definitely not settled on that. We don't know the results on trying to do that. Yet are we going to put some incentives in for agricultural production? We have to question that.

I think there are a few other areas that we could look at, and that is truth in labelling. Down in the States they have COOL, country of origin labelling. I don't believe that as Alberta producers we have anything to fear in that because of the quality of our product. It's the foreign countries where they don't have high standards and questionable ethics on what's being brought in. We get thrown into that same group because of that, and I think that we can overcome that through education. It's interesting that we produce an awful lot of vegetables in southern Alberta for industrial markets: corn, potatoes, peas, beans, sunflowers, lentils, just to name a few. I think that we should realize that that production is there.

The hon. member talked about, you know, doubling the product, that we're maybe producing too much. I'm not sure. I hope you'll clarify that for me because we are an export nation. We export oil, gas, electricity, forest products, just to name a few. I think that we want to encourage export because a great deal of our economy is brought in through that export.

The real concern here and what we want to do is allow the Alberta producer to be able to be competitive and to be able to compete in a world market. I think what's critical and what the government needs to do in a motion like this is to have that competitiveness review and see what regulations we have put in place that are prohibitive versus what regulations are really needed. What are we allowing the producer to produce? What are our standards if someone wants to say whether they're natural foods, whether they're organic foods, or whether they're just foods that are produced here in the province? I think that by initiating some of these other forms of education and truth in labelling, we can and will continue to grow our agricultural market, we can be competitive, and we can create that demand through our great quality of products.

It's interesting, you know, when you see the different brands that are promoted, whether it's McDonald's, Tim Hortons, Coca-Cola. Brand name has shown in the past that it is very significant when you show the integrity of that product, whether it's sportswear, whether it's food, whether it's a vehicle. We see that. What I would encourage the government to do is to broaden their competitiveness review and to realize and ask: what are we doing here to hurt the Alberta farmer? When we try to protect and pass legislation that protects, we usually end up hurting ourselves. We weaken our productivity, our efficiencies in the world. It isn't a long-term benefit, though it might be a short-term benefit. If we really want to protect our farmers, let's give them the freedom and the opportunity to produce in the most efficient and effective way possible. Let's not place prohibitive rules and regulations that are damaging.

I received a phone call from a butcher in rural Alberta. He's struggling with the new regulations that he's saying are going to be brought in and enforced when all he does is process the local producers' beef as well as the wildlife that's taken in his area . . . [Mr. Hinman's speaking time expired]

I'm looking forward to the rest of the debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and speak to Motion 503, brought forward by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright. This motion urges the government to explore both the opportunity and the viability of developing substantially diversified local food production. I've always been a proponent of Alberta's agriculture industry and the

preservation of Alberta's agricultural land even though I've never had the privilege of living on a farm.

Prior to my tenure as MLA for St. Albert I was an alderman in St. Albert, and in that capacity I also served as chair of the Edmonton metropolitan regional planning commission. During that time the commission put together a strategy on agriculture, part of which included the concept of preserving the ecoclimatic zone in northeast Edmonton. The microclimate in this area is well known for its agricultural production. I'm very pleased to say that the most recent city of Edmonton municipal development plan, which I understand is still being debated for third reading, designates at least part of this area as an urban agricultural zone.

The preservation of agricultural land is very important to the future viability of Alberta's agricultural industry. Land with class 1 or 2 soil, meaning those soils with good or excellent capabilities, needs to be preserved. Given the importance of the agriculture industry to Alberta's economy, I believe that prime agricultural lands should be used solely for agricultural purposes.

The demand is very high for fresh produce and other agricultural products, and it is growing every day. In my constituency of St. Albert thousands of people visit the farmers' market every weekend. This farmers' market, I understand, is one of the largest in western Canada.

The World Health Organization estimates that the distance a basic meal travels is 2,400 kilometres from the producer to the consumer. Over this distance products have to be picked weeks in advance and have a substantially higher possibility of being damaged or spoiled. Compare this to our local producers' agricultural products, that are picked fresh in the morning and brought to the market that very day. I am sure that anyone who has indulged in vine-ripened, fresh produce would agree that the taste and flavours of these products are second to none.

Mr. Speaker, I support Motion 503 and urge all members to consider the merits of supporting this motion as well. I look forward to the remainder of the debate.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wish to speak?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright to close debate.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I wasn't disappointed. Again, my only disappointment is that there's only an hour to debate this, and there is so much to discuss. In the five minutes I have to close, I know I can't address all the questions or concerns or issues that were raised but a couple, though.

I do want to point out in the discussion that there is one sector of the meat industry that produces 200 per cent more product than can be consumed in this province. I'm not suggesting there's anything wrong with that either because we are an exporting nation, but we have to be constantly mindful of what it opens us up to and how vulnerable it makes us when we have trade issues that are sometimes legitimate, sometimes shrouded in health issues. It leaves us vulnerable.

I know I heard some comments that this motion, that discusses the feasibility and viability of diversified local food production, does not necessarily tie to organic. I agree; it's not necessarily organic. There is a notion, there is a tendency that the more localized the food production and the smaller the production, the more organic it typically becomes. Whether it's certified or not is not an issue. It typically becomes more organic. Many people are keenly interested in localized food production because of the notion that it's more organic, that it's more local, that it's more wholesome, whatever. There are more people being tied to that notion.

I don't ever suggest that this should be done or undertaken with government subsidies, but I was glad that the member pointed out that there are other ways to incent more capital investment and more production. We've done it with many other industries in this province.

You know what? In the entire discussion about diversifying our local food production, Mr. Speaker, I didn't use the words "competitiveness review" because, quite frankly, when I wrote this motion, that wasn't a really hip and cool phrase yet, and I hadn't analyzed that. But when you discuss it in that context, competitiveness review can talk about reducing rules and regulations that hinder more localized food production. It could talk about the tax structure, which could hinder local production.

But it's more than just doing a competitiveness review. There really needs to be a larger study, a larger analysis to see what sort of global changes are coming that we may have to address here in this province, issues that arise. There may be more environmental or health issues that arise globally that can impact what we do locally and affect whether or not we can diversify our local food production.

5:50

We definitely need more education – that is critical – to educate consumers about what's possible when it comes to local food production, to educate farmers on what's possible when it comes to local food production. There's oftentimes a mindset that you have to be big, that you have to do something grand, that you have to be an exporter, that otherwise it's just a local garden. Quite frankly, there is a middle ground in between. There is a gentleman that I've talked to who has written four books, Bruno Wiskel, who makes more money on 40 acres than most people do on 1,200 acres, and it's all localized food production. He's a model for what's possible out there.

Anyway, there are a lot of different things to be considered, Mr. Speaker. I just want to point out one last thing before I wrap up. I've read this all over the place. You can find research on the Internet that supports it. In most of the largest European cities the number one economic activity is agricultural production. People grow stuff on their doorsteps, on their balconies. They grow stuff in the windows. They produce as much as they can locally. So there are opportunities for growing more local production, and it doesn't mean we have to export tomatoes to Ontario or that they even have to travel a hundred miles from Forestburg to Edmonton.

It just means that maybe there are a lot of opportunities, and we have a lot of unanswered questions. They really, quite frankly, need to be answered before we can determine whether or not diversifying our local food production is viable and feasible. This motion simply encourages and incents the government, in whatever capacity they feel fit, to explore whether or not it's feasible and viable and answers some of those questions that have been raised by members here and raised by myself. That's why I ask all members to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 503 carried]

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the hour, I would move that we call it 6 p.m. and adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:52 p.m. to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]



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