



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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	Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC), Minister of Health and Wellness, Deputy Government House Leader

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 11, 2010

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us pray. As we conclude for this week our work in this Assembly, we renew our energies with thanks so that we may continue our work with the people in the constituencies we represent. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly three grade 6 classes that came from Ashmont school. Sixty students, five teachers, and three teacher aides have come to visit this Assembly. Just very quickly, I want to say that Ashmont is very proud of their accomplishments, especially their accomplishments in athletics and their participation not only throughout Alberta but throughout western Canada. The teachers that are in the public gallery are Mr. Keith Gamblin, Mrs. Carol Kam, Ms Amber Faganello, Mrs. Doris Vallee, Mrs. Jackie Michaud, and teacher assistants Ms Lisa LeMaigre, Mrs. Debbie Tchir-Houle, and Ms Susan Novosiwsky. If I could please ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Marz:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure today to rise on behalf of my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-West and Minister of Energy to introduce to you and through you this wonderful group of students from Webber Academy that are seated in the members' gallery. There are 53 of them here today, and they are the grade 5 class. Webber Academy is one of the top-rated schools in the province and also the school that my granddaughter Mackenzie attends. Accompanying them today is Mr. Daniel Mondaca, who is also my granddaughter's basketball coach and who just won the league pennant a couple of weeks ago and the bronze at provincial league this past week; Mr. Jason Ash; and Ms Heather Gallagher. I'd like them all to stand now and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Barbara Sriver, Tracy Kennedy, and Megan Lalonde from the Alberta Association of Midwives, who are seated in the public gallery. The Alberta Association of Midwives evolved out of a recognized need for continuity of care in the maternity cycle as well as in response to increasing public support of midwifery in Alberta. Since it was formed, the association has worked very hard to promote legalization and public funding of midwifery, and now that these services are covered, we need to start training more of them here in Alberta. Midwives have a unique and essential role to play in the facilitation of normal birth through the art and science of midwifery, and simply put, we need more of them. I would ask that my guests now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly Dr. Keith Archer and his five senior students in political science 429 at the University of Calgary. These students have been studying the political process which results every few years in the election of this Legislature. They're here to examine the makeup of the Legislature, to develop an understanding of how this happened, and what the Official Opposition's role is. I had the pleasure of meeting with Dr. Archer and his students earlier today and was impressed with their knowledge and interest. I hope they'll find their trip to the Legislature illuminating and that they'll be inspired to continue participating in many different ways in Alberta politics. Alberta needs active, engaged citizens, and I'm so glad to have them with us today. Would you rise and get the enthusiastic welcome of the Legislature.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, it is, frankly, a real honour to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly a group of nine family members seated in the public gallery who are joining us today to witness the tabling of Dorothea Arneson's tragic story in the Alberta health care system. Dorothea's family are now strong advocates for proper patient care. I would like to ask each of them to rise as I say their names: Carol Logan, Elmer Arneson, Norma Ross, Don Ross, Laryssa Speck, Sarah Logan, Melissa Logan, Dorothea Matter, and Terra Matter. Please give them a warm and respectful welcome.

Mr. Speaker, my second introduction today is to introduce to all members of the Assembly a representative from the Kidney Foundation who is joining us today on what is World Kidney Day and working so hard to raise awareness of the importance of kidney health. Our guest is executive director Heidi Erisman, who's working very hard to help fight kidney disease and promote kidney health. I would ask her to please rise, and I'd ask all members to give her a warm welcome.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a gentleman who travels Alberta on a daily basis. He travels providing service and supplies to coffee shops, that all of us as MLAs are familiar with in knowing what's going on in a community. This gentleman travels highway 63 often. He has some comments he'll provide to the Transportation minister later. Indeed, it's a pleasure to introduce him today. His home is in Vegreville. I'd like to ask the gentleman, Rick Davey, to rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ms Luzviminda "Ching" Rodriguez of the Republic of the Philippines. Ms Rodriguez is the president of Arrowhead Manpower Resources Inc. and a staunch advocate for the ethical recruitment of Filipino workers for overseas employment. A few minutes ago she had a courtesy call with the Minister of Health and Wellness and has a scheduled meeting with Alberta Health

Services. She is seated in the members' gallery, and I would like to ask her to rise and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, by way of introduction, there's also an anniversary today for a number of members. On March 11, 1997, an election was held in the province of Alberta, and today is the 13th anniversary for the following members: the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, the hon. Member for Sherwood Park, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. Their 13th election anniversary.

**1:40**

On March 12, 2001, there was also an election in the province of Alberta, and today is the ninth anniversary of the election of the following members to the Assembly for the first time: the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace, the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, and the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. Their ninth anniversary.

And tomorrow will be happy birthday for the hon. Member for Stony Plain.

### Members' Statements

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

#### 2010 Paralympic Winter Games

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have heard a lot in the last month about the success of the Winter Olympics, and I think we're all still probably aglow from that experience. But I'd like to remind everybody that there's still lots more excitement to come. The 2010 Paralympic Winter Games begin tomorrow – 7 p.m. is the opening ceremonies – and for the next 10 days people from around the globe will be treated once again to world-class competition.

Games for people with disabilities have been occurring since 1948 in England, when after the Second World War there were games that were set up for veterans with spinal cord injuries. Then the Paralympics as we now know them today began following the 1960 Olympics.

The 2010 Paralympic Games will feature 600 athletes competing in five different sports, which are biathlon, alpine skiing, ice sledge hockey, wheelchair curling, and cross-country skiing. All of these sports are medal events, and the athletes are of the highest calibre. We have nine Alberta athletes who will be representing our province during these games. One athlete you may have heard of is Brian McKeever, a seven-time Paralympic medalist in cross-country skiing from Calgary. He has only 10 per cent vision, but this hasn't stopped him from competing in and winning numerous world events, including the world championships. His brother Robin, who is also a talented skier and competed in Nagano in 1998, races alongside Brian as his guide. Brian is going to be one of the many inspiring athletes for us to follow this year.

Again, if you haven't had a chance, I really encourage you to make a concerted effort to see these Paralympic Games and watch Alberta athletes in action. These Paralympians are phenomenal athletes, and as Brian himself says, "I don't think the public understands how high the level of competition is for the Paralympics." The athletes' courage, determination, and commitment reflect the world-class competitors they are.

So watch tomorrow night. Good luck to all participants.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

#### Highland Park Community Association

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to recognize the Highland Park Community Association. This is a community in my constituency of Calgary-North Hill that exemplifies the challenges of an urban inner-city community as well as the unwavering community spirit exhibited throughout communities in Alberta.

I've attended several community functions in this community over the last couple of years, including attending community association meetings, a lawn sale organized last June by several community members as well as a couple of Saturdays ago their winterfest. This community has faced several challenges over the last years, including the siting of the Fresh Start recovery housing and addiction treatment centre, with which they developed a good neighbour agreement that I tabled in the Legislature a couple of weeks ago. They've also had the siting and operation of a methadone clinic without proper consultation and zoning. They also need some much-needed funding for vital repairs and maintenance to their community hall as it's, you know, falling apart as it's a much older building. That includes repairs to the roof, ceiling, and kitchen and landscaping necessary for flood prevention.

The good news, Mr. Speaker, is that the Highland Park Community Association was recently approved for some community facility enhancement program funding that in combination with funding from the city will go a long way in repairing and revitalizing and reinvigorating the Highland Park community centre and its citizens. Countless hours of hard work have been put in by the volunteers of the association to deal with these issues and for planning for the future vitality of the community. These contributors deserve to be recognized for their hard work and commitment to the community. They are Kevin Bentley, Mike Speta, Wayne Carrol, Monica Curle, Kirsten Sztain, Anne Naumann, Bill Morrison, Kathy Saunders, and Syd Deck. The work of these volunteers has been crucial, as is the funding that they will be receiving for their community hall, in dealing with the challenges of inner-city urban communities such as this. It is an honour to stand today and recognize them and celebrate the tremendous spirit of this community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### World Kidney Day

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. In 2007 there were nearly 164,000 people with diabetes in Alberta, double the number of cases from just 10 years ago. That's a city's worth of citizens with a controllable but still serious, still life-threatening disease. The cost of the disease, the impact on health and happiness are immense, yet diabetes is just one of a score of medical conditions that affect the kidneys. Infections, inflammation, and inherited disorders such as polycystic kidney disease all have negative impacts on human health. Today, on World Kidney Day, I encourage Albertans to take a moment to think about their kidneys.

The good news is that most kidney diseases can be detected early. If you're obese, if you smoke, if you have hypertension, if you're over 50, or if you have a family history of kidney disease, make an appointment with your doctor or visit a clinic to get screened.

As we consider World Kidney Day, I'd like to acknowledge the many scientists, researchers, health care professionals, volunteers, and organizations such as the Alberta Kidney Disease Network and the Kidney Foundation of Canada. They are all working very hard to fight kidney disease and help people with kidney problems live more enjoyable lives.

I encourage Albertans to consider how they can help join the fight against kidney disease. Volunteer with the Kidney Foundation, donate your old, unwanted vehicle to the kidney car program, make sure you sign the organ donor consent line on the back of your Alberta health care card. Seventy per cent of Canadians waiting for an organ donation are waiting for a kidney. Kidney transplants enjoy a high success rate, between 90 and 95 per cent, and can bestow 10 to 20 additional years of life to the recipient. Your gift of life, our gift of life can make a huge difference.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Volunteer Recognition

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Volunteers are the building blocks of our communities and make an invaluable contribution to our society. One of the highlights of success of the recent Vancouver Olympic Games was the exceptional contribution of volunteers. Within Alberta approximately 2.5 million volunteers contribute approximately 449 million hours to community services. That's almost half a billion hours. Additionally, over 160,000 Albertans serve on boards of directors of organizations ranging from community associations and recreational sports groups to health regions and major cultural and social service organizations. Volunteers make Alberta a better place to live, and many are recognized for their contribution to the province.

On March 5 I had the honour of participating in the Grasslands Regional Family and Community Support Services citizen and junior citizen of the year presentations and celebration. More than twenty 2009 volunteers of the month for Brooks and area were recognized and honoured by the community for their volunteer activity, 20 people who represent a strong network of dedicated people who make Brooks and area a better place to live.

Mr. Albert Zagorsky was honoured as citizen of the year. Albert has been a dedicated volunteer for over 40 years in Brooks and the surrounding communities. As founder of the Brooks Overture Society, director and leader of the Brooks and District Community Band, and teacher to thousands of students Albert has created a musical legacy in our area. Albert is an accomplished ambassador for Brooks and the Newell region, gaining recognition across the prairie provinces, and if you've had the opportunity to hear the Brooks marching band, you'll know what I mean.

The junior citizen of the year is Talon Chandler, a grade 12 student at the Brooks composite high school who has immersed himself in student clubs and community organizations, particularly volleyball. Nominated for the award by his teachers, Talon has made an outstanding contribution to his community and represents many volunteers in the Brooks area. *Talon is positive and outgoing, actively looking for ways to help others. He is the elected president of his graduating class at the Brooks composite high school.*

*As is often the case, a host of volunteer activities were some of the highlights of both Albert's and Talon's nominations.*

*Mr. Speaker, today I join the Grasslands FCSS, the Rotary Club of Brooks as the award sponsors, and the communities of Brooks and area in honouring Albert Zagorsky and Talon Chandler as Brooks' citizen and junior citizen of the year and acknowledge the host of volunteers who make our communities, our province, and our country a better place to live.*

*Thank you, Mr. Speaker.\**

#### Oral Question Period

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

#### Alberta Health Services Decision-making

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Doctors, nurses, and other health professionals have a moral and professional responsibility to advocate on behalf of better patient care. Cancer doctors in both Calgary and Edmonton have from time to time spoken out about the need for expanded cancer care in these centres. Yesterday Alberta Health Services forbade cancer physicians at the Tom Baker in Calgary from speaking publicly about the need for new cancer facilities. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: does the minister agree with the health superboard forbidding cancer doctors from commenting on capacity problems at the Tom Baker cancer centre?

1:50

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very aware of what the needs are for cancer treatment and cancer patients in general in Calgary. I was just there and visited the Tom Baker centre, and I'm pretty on top of the issue. I don't know what the hon. member is driving at here. I'm not familiar with the directive that he's referring to. But what I would just say quickly, Mr. Speaker, is that if it's a policy matter, whoever is asking that question should direct it to the Health Services people. If it's medical, ask the doctors.

**Dr. Swann:** I'm disappointed, Mr. Minister. You know there's a culture of intimidation and fear in this province around health care workers speaking out.

Do you support that gag order, or do you not?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know of any gag order. I've been out talking to doctors. They're talking very openly, very freely with me. They're talking very openly with the Health Services people. I've talked with the nurses. I've talked with the optometrists. I've talked with pharmacists. I've talked with a whole bunch of people. There are 90,000 people out there, and I may get to talk to every one of them yet.

**Dr. Swann:** Denial, denial, denial, Mr. Minister.

This is the same week that the superboard blocked the full release of the report from the Health Quality Council. Does the minister agree that the superboard is spinning out of control and blocking information from Albertans, including that from health professionals?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, nobody is blocking any information whatsoever. I spoke with Alberta Health Services yesterday. I spoke with the Health Quality Council yesterday. They said they had some privacy concerns related to the parameters of the Alberta Evidence Act and the Health Information Act, issues of privacy that are being resolved. I said: well, speed it up, please, so that we can get the report out to the public. They're going to do that in nine days.

\*The text in italics exceeded the time limit and was not read in the House.

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

#### Long-term Care in Grande Prairie

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2006 this government committed to fund a new long-term care facility in Grande Prairie. It promised \$4.6 million. A total of \$2.3 million was paid to Chantelle Management to get the building under way to replace the outdated and unsafe Grande Prairie care centre. In this facility it takes 45 minutes to get all 60 patients down to the main floor. Families must be praying that a fire doesn't break out in the future. To the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: why has no work been started on this facility in the four years since the \$2.3 million was transferred?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand there are a number of circumstances around this project, but I believe that they are in the process of getting started. We will follow up with our office to see where they are in this process.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, how is the minister accounting for the funds distributed through this affordable supportive living initiative when it seems that the residents of Grande Prairie are still waiting for action after four years of this company having 2.3 million public dollars?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, we have a program in my department called the affordable supportive living initiative. There are a number of criteria that organizations have to meet in order to be able to get the funding. One of the criteria is that they're able to go into the ground within nine months of receiving the funding, and the second one is that they're finished within two years of receiving that funding. That part of our program has been in process in the last two years.

**Dr. Swann:** I assume, then, that the minister is acknowledging that she doesn't know what's happened to that \$2.3 million.

To the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Premier stated earlier that the minister is travelling to Grande Prairie. Will the minister commit to visiting this centre and ensuring that he understands the need for urgent change in that facility?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, if the schedule allows, I'd certainly welcome the opportunity to do that. We're visiting Grande Prairie. I'll also be visiting High Prairie. We're on a tight schedule so that I can come back here for question period that same day, but we'll do the best we can.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar with the third Official Opposition main question.

#### Funding of Private Schooling

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Education: why does this government have so much money to pay the private school tuition for the children of elite Conservative appointees, yet it is forcing the closure of necessary public schools in central Edmonton neighbourhoods? [interjection] You may laugh, but it is true.

**Mr. Hancock:** Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. We have a number of different ways of delivering education to the children of Alberta to make sure that every child has an opportunity to learn in their best way, in their best place. As we study how we go forward to do it better, we will even provide more options, I hope, for children to be able to learn in the manner and in the place and at the pace that makes sense for them. We pay for students in public schools, and we pay significantly less for students who go to private schools, but they all get educated.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Again to the same minister. That's not true, Mr. Speaker. How can this government justify spending \$100,000 a year on private tuition for Gary Mar's children in Washington and on Vancouver Island at the same time we're closing public schools in central Edmonton neighbourhoods as a cost-saving measure?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, in many circumstances both in the private and public sectors contracts of employment are entered into. I'm not aware of the details of the contract of employment intergovernmental relations has entered into to ensure that we have the best ambassador possible in the U.S. to promote Alberta's interests and make sure that Alberta jobs are secure. But I can tell you this: Gary Mar is doing a fantastic job down there making sure that every single state in the United States knows how much they benefit from the work that happens in this province, and the contract of employment is worth it.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. Again, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education: why does this government value the elite, private education of the children of hand-picked Conservative appointees over the public education of children in central Edmonton neighbourhoods, right here in this city?

**Mr. Hancock:** The answer is: we do not. The government does a wide range of very important things. One of the most important things the government does is make sure that every child in Alberta has an opportunity to succeed, an opportunity to learn. We do that very well through very good school boards across the province, including the school boards right here in Edmonton, who are among the best in the world. People come from all over the world to see what we're doing right here.

We also do other things, Mr. Speaker. It will surprise the hon. member to know that one of the ways we pay for those schools is by doing business and selling our products around the world and having ambassadors to do it.

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

#### Oil Royalty Framework

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again this government puts politics ahead of Albertans. They have been declaring how pleased industry would be with the new, new, new royalty framework and, "Trust us." With yesterday's accepted offers for the petroleum and gas rights the industry told this government: we don't trust you. Analysts believed a billion dollars could be raised. We received \$167 million; 17 cents on the expected dollar. To the Premier. Well, the President of the Treasury Board may be able to answer this: why did you choose to fail the people of Alberta and industry by waiting to pay . . .

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

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously we all read the newspapers. We all read the discussion in the papers around what some analysts expected and what some other analysts expected. I recall reading one of the clips saying that one of the buyers in the auction yesterday said: I don't know where that number came from. Simply, that was a projection by one or two analysts who thought, given what was going on in shale gas and given what was going on in some of the other areas which we're very akin to, that the auction might be a little higher.

**Mr. Hinman:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the expected money was because, perhaps, they'd know what the royalty rate is going to be. Is the Premier and the cabinet not aware that industry needs to know the royalty rate before they can decide the bonus bid they are putting to purchase offers for petroleum and gas rights?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, of course we are. Which is why this afternoon we're going to be following up on a commitment this Premier made to ensure that we are the most competitive and innovative jurisdiction in this country.

**Mr. Hinman:** You're going to do it this afternoon? Mr. Speaker, given that we have had nine land sales totalling \$870 million since they promised last fall a new, new, new royalty framework, did the Premier really believe that industry is going to bid top dollar not knowing what the royalty rate is from one year to the next? Perhaps the President of the Treasury Board will give us a lame excuse for this delayed release.

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is the second-largest land sale year we've had in a number of years. That shows the commitment and the optimism that our industry has.

I would also point out that most people in the financial sector or even in the oil and gas sector would recognize that you don't make an announcement like the one that we're going to be making before the markets are closed. I think the hon. member should understand that.

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

## 2:00 Competitiveness Review of Oil and Gas Industry

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today the so-called competitiveness review is being released in downtown Calgary and is widely expected to recommend slashing royalties further. The government, afraid for its political life, has sold out the interests of Albertans, who own the resources, in favour of its friends in the oil and gas industry. My question is to the Deputy Premier. Why has this government folded like a cheap tent on oil and gas royalties when faced with industry pressure?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that all members of the House and all the listeners at home and the members in the gallery will recognize that I just had a question about why we aren't slashing them even more, and now we're getting the question of: well, maybe we should make them higher and not slash them at all. It's about the right balance. It's about creating the right competitive environment, and that's exactly what we're doing.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, this government does not have the right balance.

Given that industry activity has been affected by dropping prices more than the very modest royalty changes we saw two and a half years ago and that activity is now beginning to rebound along with prices, will the Deputy Premier admit that these changes reflect its fear of political defeat rather than economic necessity?

**Mr. Horner:** Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. In fact, what I will admit to is that this government will respond to the economic climate of the day. This government will respond to what has been probably the worst global recession since the '30s. We're creating an environment within this jurisdiction that is second to none in North America.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that no one is left defending the interests of the owners of this resource, namely the people of Alberta, except Alberta's NDP, will the Deputy Premier admit that his government has stopped, in Peter Lougheed's words, thinking like an owner and is putting the interests of its friends in the oil and gas industry ahead of the people of Alberta?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, every member of this government caucus represents the people of Alberta, that have elected them to this House. It is about striking the right balance. It's about striking the right balance about the value that the owners of the resource get, which are all Albertans in the province. It's about striking the right balance ensuring that the investors who put the money in to get the resource out of the ground or out of the oil sands make an adequate return so that we can make a return.

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

## Swan Hills Treatment Centre

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the Swan Hills treatment plant cost Albertans \$22 million to operate. A review of the plant was completed one year ago. The review gives recommendations on what to do with the plant, to close it down or to keep subsidizing it. To the Minister of Infrastructure. The government has been reviewing these recommendations for a year. What has the minister finally decided?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let me first tell you that the Swan Hills treatment plant has done an excellent job in helping rid the province of hazardous wastes and PCBs and dioxins. Also, let me make this very clear: the purpose of the plant is to ensure that we get rid of those PCBs. There is no doubt that the government is reviewing the recommendations, as it does every five years.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister publicly release the review done on the Swan Hills treatment plant? That's my second question, sir.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said, we're doing a comprehensive strategic assessment. But I need to express one thing: the Swan Hills treatment plant is a plant that is like a utility. It is for the insurance that the dioxins and the PCBs are taken care of in this country and in this province.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the minister is waiting for the next review, scheduled four years from now, to make a decision. While the minister hems and haws, how many more taxpayer dollars are going to have to go to this money pit?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that we have done a strategic review and a strategic assessment, and at this particular time we are assessing what that assessment is saying and what the recommendations are.

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

### Wetlands Policy

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's been some suggestion that industry is influencing the development of the provincial wetland policy more than other sectors. My question for the Minister of Environment: is it true?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, I would say that industry certainly has an influence on the policy development that government makes but no more so than any other of the sources that we seek to provide us with advice and input as we develop policy. As an example, on the wetlands policy the Alberta Water Council consulted with in excess of a thousand different stakeholders in developing a policy, but I remind the member and I remind all that it's up to the government to develop the final policy and make the decision.

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: will this government adopt a policy that treats all wetlands alike?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's very much the crux of the issue. There are on one side of this equation those that believe that all wetlands should be treated identically, and on the extreme opposite end there are some that believe that some wetlands shouldn't be considered at all. Really, therein lies the problem that we're wrestling with. How do we maintain that balance? Clearly, some wetlands are of differing value. Some support biodiversity. They benefit local ecology. Some are . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member, please. [interjection] The hon. member has the floor.

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second supplemental to the same minister. This process has been going on for some time and, as I understand it, has missed at least one deadline. My question: why is this taking so long?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a complex issue, as I've already explained. As an example, it took the Alberta Water Council three years to come up with a nonconsensus recommendation. We're committed to getting this right. At the end of the day we have to protect our wetlands if we're going to turn over an environment that we are proud to turn over to future generations. If we get it wrong now, subsequent generations are going to pay for it.

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

### Kainai Community Correctional Centre

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Solicitor General was kind enough to provide some responses regarding questions about the Kainai Community Corrections Society. I'd like to follow up today. To the Solicitor General. This government has worked to scale back conditional sentencing and keep offenders in correctional facilities. Won't tougher laws, the prospect of new minimum penalties, and relying on prisons as a deterrent lead to a larger custodial population?

**Mr. Oberle:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I suppose that's a possibility, but these are issues under federal jurisdiction. I can't really comment at this time what the impact will be, but certainly we will respond to whatever impact is imposed upon us. In the meantime I have to provide the facilities to house the inmates that we do have.

**Ms Pastoor:** The Solicitor General noted that the Kainai facility's utilization rate was too low and that economically viable solutions needed to be found elsewhere. Did the minister or the department consider other options to closing this facility such as reclassifying the institution to hold medium security prisoners? Has anyone from the ministry ever discussed other options?

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, this is a minimum security facility; it's not a medium security facility. The province doesn't own the facility. The province already owns facilities that are adequate to house these inmates. Unless this is a spending day, I think the member would agree with me that I need to utilize those facilities.

**Ms Pastoor:** The Solicitor General wants us to believe that this is a purely economic decision not to provide funding for a facility that is an essential part of its community aimed at ameliorating the overincarceration of aboriginal offenders. It may sound like good fiscal policy, but in the long run is it really a good social policy?

**Mr. Oberle:** I believe it is, Mr. Speaker. I don't see how a facility designed to house inmates in that community or any other is going to change the cultural issues around incarceration. We are providing facilities that are culturally sensitive, and I'm required to utilize those facilities to their maximum.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

### 2:10 Food Regulations for Sale of Home-baked Goods

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans who bake at home sell their products at licensed farmers' markets. However, they cannot sell their items at bake sales or flea markets without having their products baked or produced in a commercial kitchen. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: why is Alberta Health Services making it impossible for local people to provide home-baked or home-produced foods for themselves and their friends?

**Mr. Zwodzesky:** Mr. Speaker, farmers' markets have a very long-standing and honourable tradition in our province, and we want to see them continue. It's actually Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development that approves farmers' markets, but the Public Health Act, which comes under my purview, looks at and addresses the types of foods that are regulated in the food regulation. Now, there is an exemption for bake sales. In actual fact, if nonprofit organizations are baking things like cookies and cakes and so on and they're doing it for the purpose of fundraising, that is exempted and allowed.



**Ms Calahasen:** Well, given that the issue may be public safety, Mr. Speaker, isn't it odd that nonprofits can sell food that was prepared from an uninspected kitchen while those making a profit, like a bed and breakfast, need to use a licensed facility or install stainless steel kitchens so that they can serve the people that are there?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, the food regulation was updated in 2006, and it recognized the need for some flexibility, not quite along the same lines as what's just been referenced. Nonetheless, she's right. There is a need to strike a better balance between the provision of food in a safe and caring way and the need for community events to do their local fundraising. I'll be happy to review this and see where it goes.

**Ms Calahasen:** Oh, that's so nice. Those words are music to my ears, Mr. Speaker.

However, given that the minister is trying to protect Alberta consumers, is there any possible way, as you identified, to change those regulations to allow home bakers or home producers whose kitchens have been inspected the same rights or similar rights as a commercial kitchen and tell those pie police to please back off?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** It's a very interesting reference. I'm not sure the Solicitor General shouldn't be answering.

Mr. Speaker, on a more serious note, I don't know if we'll ever get to the point where something that is baked in a traditional home kitchen the way we all know it would perhaps be viewed in the same way that stuff that's prepared in a commercial kitchen would be in terms of the safety factors and the regulations and everything else that goes along with it. Nonetheless, I am prepared to have a look at that whole issue. I don't know if any further exceptions or exemptions can be made or not at this stage.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, there are 83 members in the Assembly. When the hon. member returns on Monday, 83 different pies, from cherry to apple, would be acceptable.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

#### Alberta Health Services Decision-making

*(continued)*

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Yesterday cancer doctors at the Tom Baker cancer centre were ordered by Alberta Health Services to stop raising concerns publicly about capacity problems at the Tom Baker cancer centre. This was widely reported. My first question to the minister: is the minister aware or not that this gag order was given?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of any gag order, but I am aware, just as of a few minutes ago, of a clipping that just got delivered to me on this subject, so I'd be happy to take a look and see what actually happened.

As I said earlier, I think doctors should feel very free to comment on medical issues, and people at Alberta Health Services should feel free to comment on policy-driven issues.

**Dr. Taft:** Okay. Mr. Speaker, this is clearly a medical issue. This is about the capacity to provide cancer treatment in Calgary. Will the minister order Alberta Health Services to reverse this gag order and let the physicians speak about these concerns?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, as I just said, I'll take a look and see what it is that the member is referring to.

I want to just go back to what I said a little earlier this week, and that was that the whole issue of what kind of health-related facilities are needed and in which part of the province, for what purpose, will be reviewed very thoroughly and is being reviewed very thoroughly as we speak. It will be all announced at the end of this month.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, Mr. Speaker, secrecy is the enemy of accountability. Openness is what's needed here, and it's needed throughout the health care system. Does the minister understand that physicians and nurses need the right to openly advocate for patient care and that the public has a right to know?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I do understand that. I understand it very well. That's why we have the Health Quality Council working with Alberta Health Services as we speak on the release of a detailed report regarding the four unfortunate incidents that occurred last year at the hospital in Calgary. We'll continue that discussion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

#### School Infrastructure Maintenance

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of our older schools that are well utilized require a lot of modernization and upgrades to provide a safe and effective learning and working environment for many of our teachers and students. Balmoral school in my riding is one example. For example, they can't even have a microwave in their lunchroom because of the outdated electrical system. My question is to the Minister of Education. What are his plans to ensure that many of our older schools, particularly those in the inner city, are maintained so that they can serve us in the years to come?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have an incredible investment in facilities for education across the province, and it's very important to not only keep them in good shape but to improve them so that they can be available for new technologies and have the appropriate wiring that they need. We spend a lot of money every year in terms of grants to school boards for the planned operation and maintenance of those schools, and as well we have IMR funding, infrastructure maintenance funding, so that we can improve and renew schools. There are significant projects on that under way in the province. It's very important to keep our infrastructure up to date.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education. Your department has announced nearly a billion dollars over the next three years for completion of school projects. Does this amount include any allotment to retrofit and upgrade projects, and if so, how much?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, yes. There are a hundred and one projects on the go in this province as we speak, including, I think, about 42 new schools but perhaps more even. There are 47 modernization projects, involving approximately \$470 million. Those are major modernization projects, where there's a complete overhaul of most or all of a school facility, including upgrades to the building envelope, the environmental capacity of the building, the furnaces, and, of course, the technology upgrades.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. Has his ministry looked at any innovative ways to ensure that old schools can be maintained at an acceptable level, if not the best standards, without jeopardizing any future budgets?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of factors that go into that. We work, of course, very closely with the Department of Infrastructure. Infrastructure does audits of buildings on an ongoing basis. I can report that less than 2 per cent of our school infrastructure across the province is rated as in poor condition, but that doesn't mean there's not a lot of work to be done to make sure that it's current. We fund that through the school boards. The school boards determine what their priorities are. They also have to determine what schools we're going to utilize in the future and what schools will become surplus to their needs, and hopefully we can take some of the embedded capital and re-employ it in creating new and modern spaces for students.

#### Patient Safety Report

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, this government has a proud record of being the most secretive government in the country. Whether it's full disclosure about the safety of children in care, pictures of unprecedented environmental disaster, or, most recently, the report of the Health Quality Council, this government's first priority always is its own protection over the public interest. Instead of forcing Albertans to learn about their government through the courts or brown envelopes, why won't the minister of health take the first step in transparency and just release the complete Health Quality Council report today?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know if it's ready to be released today. There are just a couple of privacy concerns that I've alluded to earlier this week – and I alluded to them earlier this afternoon – that have to be addressed. They are being addressed. People who need to give what you might refer to as releases and that type of thing – “permission,” I guess, is the better word – are being contacted, again, and as soon as it's ready to go, it'll be released publicly. That will be just a matter of days, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that the council itself has already stated very clearly that the report has been vetted for privacy concerns and given that since government has had it for four months already and the only possible reason you could need another 10 days is to give your staff even more time to censor it, why won't the minister himself stop with the delays and release the report, that's already written, today?

2:20

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, same question, same answer. As soon as it's ready, it'll be released.

**Ms Notley:** Well, given that the Health Quality Council CEO said yesterday, “When you bring us in and publicly commit to the release of a report you've got to live up to the public commitment” and given that it doesn't take 10 days to release something that is already written with privacy concerns already addressed, why won't the minister just stop the delay and release the report today in full?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, there are two parties involved here, Alberta Health Services and the Health Quality Council. They are

working together to make sure that the privacy concerns of both bodies have been addressed. I have every reason to believe that they probably have been, but they are working through that right now. The report could be released as early as tomorrow or Monday, but it will be very quickly released.

#### Caribou Management

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, the woodland caribou is an endangered species, recognized both by the province and the federal government. Development has already shrunk caribou habitat to an unsustainable size. This government's answer is not to protect caribou habitat but to simply cull wolves year after year. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: does this minister have any plans, besides killing wolves year after year, to protect and preserve caribou habitat on an ongoing basis?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, what we're going to do with respect to habitat conservation affects more than just caribou habitat. If you take a look at the work that has been done up to this point in the lower Athabasca region and work that will be done in the Peace River region, in the boreal forest areas of the province of Alberta, there's a tremendous amount of effort being put into habitat conservation, particularly for caribou but for all species.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, that's good to hear.

Now to jump to my third question, which is on the lower Athabasca region. By your answer are you assuring Albertans that you will be preserving large areas in the lower Athabasca region for caribou protection?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think part of that answer is very obvious already. I don't think that many people would argue with the fact that Wood Buffalo park is a large piece of the boreal forest in the lower Athabasca drainage area that is already preserved for habitat for a number of different species. The issue relative to caribou is actually a specific one that we are paying a tremendous amount of attention to. As the member indicated, predation is part of the problem. We do need to manage these wildlife populations.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, I like to hear that answer, that you have to manage these problems, but there seems to be relatively little action on it. The Alberta Wilderness Association has requested, actually, federal intervention. Can your organization give a timeline as to when caribou habitat will be protected in the lower Athabasca or anywhere?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's there now. You know, the “when” is a number of years ago that we started into this program. We continue to work with it. There has been some suggestion that additional real estate should be added to what's already there in protected areas. When the plan comes forward, you will see that there will be a very strong element of conservation in that plan.

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

#### SuperNet

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government established an extensive broadband network for high-speed Internet access to 429 communities in Alberta. My understanding is that many communities are not making use of the SuperNet because of the local connection costs. My question to the hon. Minister of

Service Alberta: what are the additional costs of a municipality to connect to the SuperNet?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently there are approximately 220 municipalities throughout the province that have the SuperNet built directly to them. The cost of connection was paid by Municipal Affairs many years ago; however, there are ongoing fees to support the SuperNet that are required. Basic broadband service is about \$242 a month. If the municipality wants to use the SuperNet to access the Internet, it needs to use a private-sector Internet service provider.

**Mr. Allred:** Mr. Speaker, my second question to the same minister: what does the SuperNet provide that an ordinary Internet service provider does not provide?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are three areas. The first area is quality. Videoconferencing is very crisp, and it's better on the SuperNet. Capacity: there are never any slowdown or network traffic peak times. And consistent price: the fees associated with the SuperNet are capped and do not change without government approval.

**Mr. Allred:** My final question. Again to the same minister: what does it cost for a private-sector customer to get access to the SuperNet?

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 80 ISP providers working very hard across Alberta. The cost for service depends on the packages that the ISP providers provide. We know there's good work going on out there. But I fully recognize there are many rural areas that have challenges, and that's what I'm working very hard on with a number of ministers across government, to ensure that we work on the issue of rural connectivity.

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

#### Funding for Private Schools

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The noble mandate of the public school system is to provide the best education possible for all children regardless of their ability, their economic status, their creed or culture. Under this government's guise of choice the line of demarcation between public, private, and charter schools has been blurred to the detriment of the public school system. To the minister: what is your justification for publicly funding exclusive, tuition-charging private schools and religiously restrictive charter schools?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we do fund tuition in private schools.

With respect to charter schools there are a number of reasons why charter school exist. As long as they fit the purpose of their charter and meet the requirements to be renewed on I think it's a five-year term, they are public schools, and they're funded like public schools.

**Mr. Chase:** To the minister again. How is it that Springbank's athletic, elite private school is permitted to receive full public

per-pupil funding and charge restrictively high tuition rates while hiding out under the mantle of the geographically distant Grande Prairie public board?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, the short answer, Mr. Speaker, is that it's not. Grande Prairie has announced that they have an arrangement with the Edge school. If, in fact, they do bring the Edge school into the public system as an alternative program, it will be considered as such, and if it fits the requirement to be an alternate program in the public system, it will be funded as an alternate program in the public system. But it's not funded as a private school, and it's not funded now.

**Mr. Chase:** Again, we're turning around as opposed to coming across with the answers.

Tuition. Can they charge tuition and still be a public school?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister. [interjection] Whoa. You had the question and no more preamble. The hon. minister. [interjections] The hon. minister has the floor.

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not dodging the question at all. The short answer is that we are not paying tuition for students at Edge school. If they are a private school and if they charge tuition, they're not a public school, so they don't get funded like a public school. As a private school they're eligible for either 60 or 70 per cent of the operating funding of a public school, depending on whether they've agreed to adhere to the reporting and accountability requirements. As a private school they're not eligible for the public school funding, but if they become an alternate program in the public school, that's a different situation. Then they're not a private school.

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

#### 2010 Paralympic Winter Games

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Starting tomorrow night, Albertans and Canadians will once again be wearing their red mittens, toques, and Team Canada gear in support of the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games. Because of this, my first question is to the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Given the success of promoting Alberta at the Olympic Winter Games, what's Alberta's involvement in the Paralympic Winter Games?

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we're extremely excited, as was mentioned earlier by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, to see nine of the 55 Canadian Paralympians coming from the province of Alberta. We're excited to be able to support them as they go out to compete on this world stage. We will not be keeping Alberta House and the train open, of course, during the Paralympics, but myself and the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit are going. We're going to be supporting them. We're going to be meeting with the Paralympic Committee as well to ensure these games stay robust into the future. Again, we think that we're doing all that we can to support these athletes.

**Mr. Rodney:** My second question is to the same minister. Having met a number of Paralympians – and it was a great experience to do so – I'm concerned about them and how our government is supporting them. Can she explain how our government is supporting Paralympians in any specific ways?

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we do a lot to support them. We know they're just as high a quality of athlete. They work out, they have the same kind of training, so they're eligible for Podium Alberta, which is what we do with the federal government to support them while they train. They get to use the same facilities that we just put \$100 million into rehabbing so that they have great facilities. We think they do just as good of a job and that they are first-class athletes.

2:30

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit, who was extremely active during the Olympic Winter Games. My question is: will he be exacting similar duties on behalf of his ministry in our province at the Paralympic Winter Games?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there are three reasons I'm going out to Vancouver. First of all, we have the Cultural Olympiad, that still continues through the Paralympic Games to support our artists. Two, it's to go out and support our great athletes, as the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation mentioned. Third, Alberta is now a signatory on the declaration of the United Nations on protecting persons with disabilities. Alberta along with nine other provinces and three territories has just signed on to that, and as a representative of the Alberta Human Rights Commission I thought it was important to be there.

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

#### Support for Museums

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Royal Alberta Museum has been missing in action, on hiatus, mothballed, something. We've had a new plan, and that was put on hold. Then a second, downsized plan, and that was put on hold. And then the persistent rumours of two museums, neither of which has been built. My questions are to the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. Clearly, the budget does not contain infrastructure money for new museums, but Albertans would like to know what is wrong. Why has our museum been sidetracked for so long, well before the recession hit us?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, whether we're talking one site or two sites, it is a significant amount of money that we're looking at to be able to put forward. Given the current economic circumstances we don't have in our budget or in our capital plan the ability to finance a \$250 million facility.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Yeah, but you mothballed these before the recession. Back to the same minister. Given that in 1997 the Syncrude Gallery of Aboriginal Culture replaced the pioneer exhibit and, aside from travelling exhibits, we've had no permanent exhibit of nonaboriginal history, when will it be replaced or a new exhibit be established?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when the financial situation is such that we have the ability to move forward, then we'll be able to do so.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Can the minister tell us the timeline for restoring funding for the three provincial archivists that the Glenbow Museum in Calgary was forced to lay off in the fall? These are critical staff for a museum.

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Glenbow Museum is a private institution. It's not one that's funded by our government. What we do fund is our collection and the maintenance of our collection. Other than that, the Glenbow is a private institution, and they have to respond to their financial situations like anybody else.

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

#### Securities Regulation

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The federal government wants to institute a national securities regulator instead of the current passport system. My question is to the Minister of Finance and Enterprise. Why is Alberta opposed to moving to a national regulator?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, for the past 143 years regulation of securities has been a provincial jurisdiction under the title of property and civil rights. This approach recognizes the regional differences, the different regional economies of Canada, and that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. This has allowed the Alberta Securities Commission to serve Albertans well. We oppose a single federal regulator inevitably located in Toronto and reflecting the economic interests of southern Ontario that would hinder investment opportunities to Alberta businesses.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister. Why is the federal government pushing for this? Are there any problems with the current passport system?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, the current passport system is working very well. Since 2004 it has provided a single-window access to capital markets across Canada. Internationally it's consistently ranked as one of the best in the world. The World Bank for the last five years has put it in the top five, ahead of the United Kingdom, tied with the United States. In the prairies there's that old practical bit of wisdom: don't fix it if it isn't broken. It ain't broken; leave it alone.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you. Again to the same minister: why is it important for Alberta and Quebec to protect provincial jurisdiction on this matter?

**Dr. Morton:** Again, Mr. Speaker, this is not just about regulation of securities. It's about the balance of power between the federal government and the provinces. It goes right to the heart of the balance of power in our constitution.

The federal position represents a significant expansion of federal power. It would potentially open the door to federal regulation of financial services. As everybody in this House knows, financial

services is a growth industry in this province as it services the oil and gas sector and other juniors. We're not going to just sit by and let it slip away.

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

### Innovation in Education

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Education. As discussed in my Motion 508 of 2009, to better equip students with the skills and competencies they need to succeed in our world, high school students need the ability to pursue real-world learning opportunities while in high school. Minister, can you please explain what you're doing to achieve this objective?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, hopefully, all of our curriculum is designed to ensure that students get a real-world experience, but specifically to the member's question and motion, the work experience program at the high school level helps students get out into the workforce and get experience in the workforce in a safe and supervised manner. The RAP program, registered apprenticeship program, allows students in the trades to actually be prepared to almost a point where they can get their first-year apprenticeship when they graduate from high school. Of course, there are many other circumstances where we have colleges co-operating with high schools and sometimes even co-located.

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, to maximize their high school experience, I think students should be given the opportunity to pursue postsecondary credit while in high school. Can the minister explain what he is doing to achieve this objective?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, school boards across the province are working with postsecondaries. We have some very exciting places which I could point to where that is actually happening very well. In Cold Lake, for example, Portage College is co-located in the same building as the Cold Lake high school. In Rocky Mountain House Red Deer College is co-located with both the public and the separate high school. In Olds, for example, the learning campus of the new high school is built on the campus of Olds College, so there is that opportunity for integration between high school and postsecondary and to earn those postsecondary credits. One of the exciting programs: SAIT and the Calgary board of education have a pharmacy technician program. High school students can actually get their accreditation for the pharmacy technician before they graduate.

**Mr. Bhullar:** My last question, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. Financial literacy is a key component relating to the real world. Minister, are you willing to embed financial literacy in the high school curriculum?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's supposed to be embedded now, but obviously in the recent two years that this has become, in essence, the flavour of the month, we really do have to look at our math curriculum, our social studies curriculum, and particularly our career and life management curriculum to make sure that it is teaching and providing an opportunity for our students to learn the real-life skills that they need in terms of finances, balancing a

chequebook, planning a budget: those sorts of skills. The career and life management course should be doing it. We are in the process of reviewing that curriculum, and we'll make sure that it's there.

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

### Online Camping Reservation System

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. As the global economic situation continues to be uncertain and with the summer travel season soon approaching, what specific actions is your department taking to maintain tourism revenues, especially in northern Alberta?

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we were just out at the Olympics, promoting Alberta as a world-class destination. We're going to continue those efforts. But something that we found very successful for the last two years has been the Stay campaign. We would have had not such a great tourism season last year except that we ran the Stay campaign. Albertans loved it. They came out to our campgrounds and our RV centres in record numbers and really helped an industry at a time when it could have been troubled.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, given that you mentioned the Stay program, I'd like to talk about it. It's so successful that you can't get a place to camp in this province. When are you going to start building some more inventory?

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, this is a good problem to have, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Stay campaign was successful. But one of the things that we did last year was start the online booking system, 25 campgrounds. This year we've increased it to 50 because it was so popular. Now you can actually find that camp spot, maybe at another campground than the one you go to every time, so it gives you a better opportunity to look around the province and maybe go somewhere different.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, again, given that the minister talked about the reservation system, I heard that all kinds of people couldn't get on the phone line. You know, the May long weekend nobody could make a reservation. It's so busy that nobody could get on. What's going on with this system?

2:40

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, Mr. Speaker, he's correct. Last year there was such a rush when they knew it was near the May long weekend that they crashed our systems. I'm happy to say that this year it was more robust. It stood up to it. We've made some 4,400 reservations for the May long weekend already, but remember, we doubled the number of campgrounds that are now on it, and we're still building. I know the hon. member always asks me about Carson Lake. It's on the list, and we're looking at the areas where we need more product.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 120 questions and answers today made up of nine questions from the Official Opposition, one from the Wildrose Alliance, two from the NDs, and eight from the PC private members.

In just a few seconds from now we'll continue with the Routine, and I'll call on the hon. members for members' statements.

To the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, these are the orders: coconut, blueberry, lemon, apple, and cherry.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

### Miyo Machihowin Health Careers Conference

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I had the privilege of attending Miyo Machihowin, the National Aboriginal Health Careers Conference and Tradeshow, on behalf of the Minister of Aboriginal Relations. I was especially pleased to attend because the Native Women's Association of Canada hosted this event during International Women's Week. This conference certainly reflected this year's theme – Strong Women, Strong Canada, Strong World – as aboriginal women from Newfoundland to B.C. to Nunavut to Yukon are here to move the agenda of exploring business and career opportunities in the health sector.

To build on their strength, they brought together a hundred youth from across Canada so they can begin to see what is available to them in health. Youth always bring a vitality and energy to any conference, and it was no different this morning. They have, in fact, great role models like Dr. Lindsay Crowshoe describing his experiences in becoming a doctor and, of course, other health professionals to exchange ideas. This conference certainly reflected so many of the needs of the communities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you and congratulations to the Native Women's Association of Canada because with these strong women I'm positive that they will help prepare strong youth so they can become part of a strong Canada and a strong world.

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

### Women's Issues

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. March 8 was International Women's Day. We celebrated the achievements of both women who have achieved fame and also women who live unnoticed outside their own circles but who are vital to the quality of life for each of us. But we need to be wary of the easy use of International Women's Day to look only at our successes. Many challenges for women remain today in Alberta. Nearly 70 per cent of adults in Alberta trying to live on jobs that pay less than \$15 an hour are women, many of them supporting families. Funding for women's shelters is inadequate and leaves many women and children in danger. As well, on child care Alberta has a shameful record, with too few spaces available and costs that are far, far too high.

At the NDP's recent health care hearings we were told that women across the province are struggling to find acceptable birthing options. In rural areas in particular women have no choice in who delivers their baby, and they must often drive for hours for care. One way, of course, to deal with this shortage is to rely more on midwives. Indeed, that strategy would have the added advantage of respecting a growing preference amongst Alberta's expectant mothers. But right now there are simply too few midwives in Alberta. Alberta offers no training locally for midwives, and this is something that must change.

In other parts of the world discussion is under way about substantial measures to improve the lives of women. In Alberta we need to do the same. We can start by addressing the issues I've just outlined. We need a new energy to advance an agenda that is committed to the full participation of women in every aspect of life, not just cheery words of tribute once a year. I hope that we will find substantial changes coming forward from this government in the future.

Thank you.

## Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(3.1) to advise the House that on Monday, March 15, 2010, we will be accepting written questions 1 through 9 inclusive, 11 through 26 inclusive, 28 through 35 inclusive, 38, and 39. We will be dealing with written questions 10, 27, 36, and 37 that day.

I also wish to give notice that on Monday, March 15, 2010, we will be accepting motions for returns 10 and 11, and we will be dealing with motions for returns 1 through 8.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity. I am tabling today a letter that is signed by 10 people who have watched very patiently and attentively from the gallery for the past hour today. The letter is dated September 15, 2009, and it is, frankly, a tragic account of the last days of their mother and relative, Dorothea Arneson. I'd just read one very short quote. At the end of the letter it asks: "What about the protection for the patients . . . do they also not have a right to be treated with equal care and compassion? Do they . . . not have the right to be heard?"

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, do you have a tabling?

**Ms Notley:** Yes, I do. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of 32 postcards signed by Albertans calling on the provincial government to keep its promise to build 600 new long-term care beds. The postcards are part of a campaign sponsored by the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first is from a constituent, Roger Ellis, who is blind as a result of a work accident and was struck in the head by the mirror of a hit-and-run driver, pinning himself and his service dog against the truck. He is finding that the \$5,000 is very unfair to him. It does not deal with the damage to retrain himself and his dog and compensate for the long-term pain.

My second is a report to the Assembly with regard to the letters that I received concerning the government's plan to close acute-care psychiatric beds at Alberta Hospital, noting that community mental health care options are needed and that it is a lifesaving institution for those that are in crisis and whose needs cannot be met in the program. It includes the names of those who signed that form letter.

My third tabling is also a report in regard to issues facing postsecondary students. It contains the names of all of those students who wrote to me with form letters. In the letters they raise concerns around the increase and the worry about the effect of these fees on their ability to continue paying for school and ask that the government reject market modifiers and introduce regulation to prevent loophole mandatory user fee increases.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today. The first is a letter dated today. This letter is

from myself to the hon. the Premier, and it is requesting information, specifically ministerial order 01/07 as referenced in a letter I received from the Premier's office recently.

The second tabling I have today is, of course, with permission from Geri Spring, a constituent, who is urging that Alberta Hospital in Edmonton not only remain open but that we also fix it up.

The third letter I have is from a constituent as well, and I have permission to table this letter from Sandy McAlear. It is urging this House and this government to continue adequate funding for our schools.

My fourth and last tabling this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, is also regarding Alberta Hospital, and it is being tabled with permission from Mr. Paul Ferguson. He is urging the government to make sure that Alberta Hospital Edmonton remains an open and viable institution. He sums up his frustration this way: "This government couldn't organise a rock fight in a gravel pit."

Thank you.

## 2:50 Projected Government Business

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. According to Standing Order 7(6) I would ask the Government House Leader to please share with those assembled the projected government House business for the week commencing the 15th, government business commencing March 16.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would anticipate on Tuesday, March 16, for second reading Bill 7, the Election Statutes Amendment Act, and Bill 8, the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act; in Committee of the Whole, depending on progress this afternoon, Bill 1, the Alberta Competitiveness Act, Bill 2, the Professional Statutes Amendment Act, Bill 4, the Dangerous Goods Transportation and Handling Amendment Act, and Bill 6, Emergency Management Amendment Act; in third reading, also depending on progress this afternoon, Bill 3, the Fatal Accidents Amendment Act.

On Wednesday the 17th under Government Bills and Orders for second reading, actually, the same business as proposed for Tuesday, of course depending on progress. That's Bill 7 and Bill 8 in second reading and bills 1, 2, 4, and 6 in Committee of the Whole.

On Thursday, of course, we have the scheduled Committee of Supply votes and second reading and third reading as per Monday and Tuesday, depending on progress and as per the Order Paper.

For the interest of the House I would indicate that Bill 9 is on notice and that several other bills will go on notice, hopefully this afternoon, and will be available for introduction for first reading probably on Tuesday, I guess that means.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Motions

#### Amendments to Standing Orders

12. Mr. Hancock moved:

- A. Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be amended in Standing Order 7 by adding the following after suborder (4):
  - 7(4.1) When Members' Statements is called, Members other than members of the Executive Council may

make a statement, each statement to be no more than 2 minutes in duration, according to the following allocation:

- (a) on Monday and Thursday, up to 7 Members, and
  - (b) on Tuesday and Wednesday, up to 6 Members.
- B. Be it further resolved that
1. The amendment in this motion shall come into force on passage and shall have effect until the dissolution of the 27th Legislature;
  2. Standing Order 7(4) shall not have effect for the balance of the 27th Legislature.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move Government Motion 12, which arises as a result of the agreement relative to question period and the order of questions in question period and the agreement around preambles, et cetera, which included, of course, the provision of an additional two members' statements, one on Mondays and one on Thursdays. That needs, of course, to be put into place by virtue of an amendment to the standing orders.

For the information of the members, Mr. Speaker, 7(4), which is being suspended, is the current standing order, which provides for six statements per day. That's, of course, being only suspended and not removed or replaced because this amendment to the standing orders only has effect until the end of this Legislature.

**The Speaker:** It's a debatable motion. Anyone?

[Government Motion 12 carried]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, as this is a day dealing with the Kidney Foundation, recognizing the kidney thing, this is one of these little stress things that has been provided to each of the members in the Assembly, that you can keep on your desk and you may use at any time, including during the question period.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 8

#### Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2010

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move second reading of the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2010.

The Alberta Corporate Tax Act is generally amended every 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'd like to highlight three specific measures in the bill.

The first measure I'd like to highlight is changes for functional currencies. If a corporation keeps its accounting records in United States or Australian dollars or the British pound or the euro, this is known as the functional currency, and the corporation is able to file its tax returns in that currency. However, changes to federal legislation have required the province to make changes to our own provisions concerning functional currency. There is one policy difference between Alberta and federal legislation. That difference is that when the functional currency reporting was adopted last year, Alberta decided that taxes payable would be converted at the average exchange rate for the year rather than at the spot rate the day

when payment is due. This decision continues to be reflected in today's amendments.

A second change in this legislation brings Alberta legislation in line with the federal fairness provisions that allow the minister to waive interest and/or penalties in certain situations. For example, when a taxpayer requests a reassessment under the fairness provision, the minister will now be able to waive interest in penalties in appropriate circumstances at the same time the reassessment is issued. When the legislation was amended several years ago, the minister's ability to waive at his own volition was unintentionally removed. This legislation corrects that omission.

The third and last point I would put forward concerns corporate refund interest rates. In Budget 2010 refund interest rates were reduced by 50 per cent for all prior periods and going forward. While these rates are set by regulation, the regulation-making authority in the act has been amended to ensure it is clear that the new rates can be made applicable to prior periods. In comparing our interest rates to commercial bank rates, it was determined that Alberta's refund interest rates on overpayments of corporate tax were simply too high. Reducing the rates by 50 per cent is a middle ground between bank rates, which are considered by some to be too low and the full treasury bill rates, which are deemed to be too generous. This change strikes a balance.

Thank you. I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 2

### Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 2010

[Adjourned debate February 16: Ms Woo-Paw]

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, Bill 2, the Professional Statutes Amendment Act, as we see it presented before the House this afternoon is not a contentious piece of legislation. [interjection] No, it is not contentious, hon. member.

There has been correspondence between ourselves and the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay regarding this bill. We are told it is an amendment to ensure the professional organizations have the ability or the function to consult with the responsible ministers and update the language in various acts. As I understand it, Bill 2 as it's proposed would amend laws responsible for a series of professional occupations, including architects; agrologists; regulated accountants; the engineering, geological, and geophysical professions; land surveyors; regulated forestry professionals; veterinarian professionals; and any association registered under the Professional and Occupational Associations Registration Act.

Now, it doesn't look like a necessary bill. I don't know why we need this legislation, Bill 2. It is my view that Bill 2 is a redundant piece of legislation that has been poorly justified by the government. Professional associations, our research indicates, already consult with the government on a routine basis when they amend or alter their academic standards or licensing requirements. Therefore, I would think some of the professional acts amended by this bill are also unnecessary.

Veterinarians, for example, have their own requirements spelled out clearly in legislation. The association representing forestry professionals adjusts its criteria based on a benchmark program; I believe it's at NAIT. I am not certain if there is a similar program elsewhere. Neither association can alter its requirements without going to the minister or to cabinet to change the legislation or regulations.

3:00

There is a danger, albeit a slight one, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation is the latest in a series of attempts by the government – labour mobility clauses are another. The President of the Treasury Board is familiar with that, and I'm sure he's concerned about it as well. If there's a flag to be raised on this issue, it would be that this is another attempt by the government to interfere in the operations of what is supposed to be an independent regulatory association. Now, we all know that the government has a responsibility to work with professional associations to serve the public interest. This government seems to have a poor understanding of professional associations and the way they approach changes to academic standards or licensing requirements.

I really don't think that this bill is necessary, Bill 2 as we know it on the Order Paper. I understand the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay and her interest in having this passed, but I think everything is working well already. I don't understand the necessity for this. We have certainly contacted various professional associations, and they have indicated that there is a dialogue. They indicate that they have a very good dialogue with the government and the respective cabinet ministers. So my question, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion is: why is it necessary at this time that we have this bill before the Legislative Assembly? It seems to be unnecessary.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and join debate on Bill 2, the Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 2010, brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay. Bill 2 proposes revisions to six acts: the Architects Act; the Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Act; the Land Surveyors Act; the Professional and Occupational Associations Registration Act; the Regulated Accounting Profession Act; and the Veterinary Profession Act. In addition, this bill will also update the wording in both the Agrology Profession Act and the Regulated Forestry Profession Act.

These changes will require professional regulatory organizations in Alberta to consult with the appropriate minister responsible for the act itself and the minister responsible for parts 1 to 3 of the Post-secondary Learning Act before they make any changes to their educational requirements. The purpose for these changes is twofold: first, to allow for greater consistency amongst similar legislation; and, second, to encourage a strong relationship between government and Alberta's professional regulatory organizations.

This government has enjoyed a productive relationship with Alberta's self-regulating professions for many years. I personally have been involved with professional associations in one capacity or another for nearly 50 years. I have managed and have been involved in the governance of an association, and I've studied professional regulation in several countries and given papers on Canadian regulatory schemes at international conferences.

Alberta and Canada have a system of professional regulation that is unique in the world, a system that makes professional organizations responsible to the respective provincial governments, a responsibility to deliver a high quality of professional service to the public at large.

As the 1970 Quebec report of the Commission of Inquiry on Health and Social Welfare entitled *The Professions and Society* stated:

As a public service, it [being a professional association] assumes a public role in the functioning of the state:



- 1) a governmental role when it is empowered to control admission to the practice of a profession in lieu of a diploma awarded by the public education system;
- 2) a legislative role when it sets certain norms (regulations, codes of ethics and of deontology) relating to conditions of practice of the profession;
- 3) an administrative role when it is charged with the inspection and examination of professional acts;
- 4) a jurisdictional role when it is judging and, as required, sanctioning acts or failings against existing norms.

Our system of professional regulation saves the government from the responsibility and expense of regulating many professionals that are quite prepared and very competent to assume this responsibility themselves and, in turn, provide a public service that is much more efficient and less costly than if it was provided directly by the government. Mr. Speaker, this system of professional regulation very much falls in line with the principle of self-reliance that has been a hallmark in the development of the province of Alberta.

As the hon. Bert Hohol, minister of labour, stated in 1979 in a review of professional legislation in Alberta: "Self-government is a privilege delegated to a professional group by the Legislature only when it is clear the public can best be served by delegating this authority." This authority has been delegated to many professional bodies by this government over the years, and I would emphatically suggest that the authority has been exercised responsibly and has saved the taxpayers of Alberta considerable funds. It has also saved members of this Legislature much frustration that would have resulted had government not delegated authority to those who understand their respective professional undertakings best.

Through the power of democratic government legislative bodies use a number of means to share certain aspects of their authority while delegating other aspects to the professional body. For instance, the Legislature may grant an exclusive scope of practice or grant protection of the right of title or regulate specific activities under a controlled acts system while at the same time requiring accountability to the public through the legislative body. This accountability is accomplished by means of public members on the council of management of the professional organization who report back to the government, public members on disciplinary tribunals and practice review boards who represent the public viewpoint to these bodies, provisions for government ratification of regulations prior to them becoming operative, regular reporting mechanisms through annual reports, or periodic review of legislative mandates.

Mr. Speaker, in all of the acts that are listed in Bill 2 the government of Alberta has the authority to regulate the academic qualifications of these professional bodies as well as the foregoing attributes through the regulation process, which, as we all know, must be ratified by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Further, as the hon. Catherine Chichak stated in another Alberta report on the professions in 1970:

In establishing entrance requirements a professional body must be very careful not to set those standards so high that persons who would be adequately qualified to practice the profession are barred from that practice. A professional association should not appear to be a closed shop but should set standards at a sufficiently high level to ensure that the public receives an adequate service and that the membership is broadly enough qualified to meet the challenges of technological and societal changes. Educators, active field practitioners and public representatives should be involved jointly, through a formal structure, in the development of educational and experiential standards and programs that are a prerequisite for registration. These standards should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they continue to meet societies' needs.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that Alberta's regulatory framework accomplishes these goals with regard to professional regulation. Bill

2 clearly establishes the authority of the Legislature to regulate the academic qualifications of the professions listed.

### 3:10

It is significant, however, that in the last 10 years there has been a move in Canada, that has been supported by this government, to standardize professional entrance standards across the country. This has been accomplished through the agreement on internal trade and agreements such as TILMA. One consequence, however, of this move has been the moving of standards to the lowest common denominator. Alberta has traditionally sought to achieve excellence in the delivery of professional services and, hence, has had some of the highest standards across the country in many professional disciplines. Even today there is some resistance to accept the lower standards of qualification that exist in some provinces. I do not believe that that is the case in the professions enumerated in Bill 2. I believe that there has been a move to an agreed standard amongst all professional organizations across the country.

Mr. Speaker, there are several areas of potential conflict between the primary role of a professional association to protect the public interest and the secondary role of serving its members. Self-governing professions were not created for the welfare of their membership. They serve their members by serving the public, and the interests of the public are always paramount.

In closing, I would like to capsulize the responsibility of a self-governing profession with a quotation by Everett Hughes. He said: "In place of the cautionary admonition of the market place, caveat emptor (let the buyer beware!), professional practice should substitute the encouraging injunction credat emptor (let the buyer trust!)"

Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to maintain an atmosphere of co-operation between the government and the professional services that are regulated by our professional organizations. We have one of the best systems in the world. Let's work closely with our professional communities to maintain that trust for the benefit of all Albertans.

Thank you.

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

Then I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to speak in second reading to Bill 2, the Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 2010. I agree with much of what the previous speaker has outlined, but I think I disagree with his conclusion. I join my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar in wondering why we're seeing this bill in front of us. We can just guess because it isn't made clear from the sponsoring member's remarks why we're seeing this. I do not see the rationale for it.

Two things are going on right now. One, it's not easy to establish yourself as a professional association under our statutes in this province. There are a number of barriers that you have to get over and tests that you have to meet in order to do that. As the previous member has outlined, there is a process, a protocol, and a good reason that we have achieved the state that we have.

The government says: "Okay. You have to meet certain tests in order to be recognized as a professional occupation in this province. Part of meeting that test is that you will establish professional rules of conduct of your members and, further, that you will ensure through a disciplinary process and now in most professions a testing and monitoring process that you will hit those marks, you will achieve the various requirements. If you fail to do that, there is a

disciplinary body that is included in that, and you're responsible for disciplining your own members." And the government stays out of all of this.

Once they've set up the test and the professional organizations have met those tests – they've formed themselves, they've set out the guidelines for behaviour or for professional achievement, and they have their disciplinary body in place – that's it. The professional organization is left to basically carry on its business. Part of that business, by the way, in every statute that I've looked at for any of these professional organizations is a requirement to consult with government, at the very least to notify government if they're going to change anything that they do.

Now we see a bill in front of us that says that if these professional organizations are going to change anything, they have to consult with the government. I beg your pardon? Isn't that what they're supposed to be doing already according to their various pieces of legislation? What is the purpose in duplicating this? That's what I was ruminating on for some time, thinking: why is the government wanting to get involved in this? Why are they trying to kinda, you know, sort of hip-check their way into the scene here?

It's not breaking the protocol that's established, but I would argue that it's bending it. The only specific difference I can see is adding in the requirement of also consulting with the minister responsible for the Post-secondary Learning Act. But I think even then – I mean, that's where we start to talk about the professional requirements that the organizations have set out that a member must achieve before they become a member.

The scuttlebutt that I'm hearing is that the government has a concern that professional organizations might be bumping up their requirements to keep themselves special and to keep others out. And you think: well, who would they want to keep out? I mean, in this day and age there is strength in numbers. Certainly, since most of these associations are self-funding through the membership fees that are paid by their members, why would you want to be smaller and more exclusive? Wouldn't you want to have more members? That gives you more of a budget. So I was really curious as to what this might be about.

Now, one of the things that you hear about is that some associations were very resistant – and I'll say this was in the past – to dealing with people who had foreign training or foreign qualifications, and if they could make themselves sort of exclusive enough, they could cut out some of the people that were moving to Canada with degrees from other countries. I don't think that's the case very much anymore. It might still exist in various pockets, but for the most part I think everybody is looking around and saying: "You know, our membership is getting older; they're getting closer to retirement. We need to rejuvenate." They need those new members coming in. I don't think that argument is valid, if it ever was. So, again, why would the government be worried these organizations might be doing that? I can't see a reason for it, and I don't think there is a reason for it.

I think what's happening here is that the government is looking to get more control over those various agencies. Now, why would they be doing that? Well, one of the areas that we see changing professions and occupations is these various interprovincial agreements. We've always said labour mobility, right? But there have been differences between provinces in the way various professions were able to establish themselves. For example, law: you can qualify for the bar in Alberta, but that doesn't qualify you for the bar in Saskatchewan or in Nunavut. You would have to requalify in those various places.

If the government gets more control over how these organizations, these professional occupations are mandating themselves and

organizing themselves, I think it makes it a bit easier for them to have either legislative sway or a sort of argumentative persuasion in getting groups to accept some changes that make them fall in line, for example, with TILMA, which we've already heard talked about today. I think that pretty quickly what I'm hearing is that it's going to be far beyond TILMA as the government looks to agreements with other countries, not just other provinces.

What I'm seeing in this act is a sort of backdoor way of gaining back some legislative authority. They have ceded much of it, and it's worked very well. As the previous speaker said, that process worked very well for many, many years. I think what we're seeing here is government attempting to have more control. I am really interested in that because this is the very same government that howls over a number of things they consider the nanny state.

3:20

Yet here what we have, essentially, is the daddy state. They've got the boys inserting themselves back into controlling a number of delegated administrative organizations that were working very well. Frankly, I've heard no complaints, nor have I seen any legal reportings. There's nothing in the paper, nothing in the trade magazines that would be indicating to me that agronomists or architects or accountants, that the engineering, geological, or geophysical professions, land surveyors, regulated forest professionals, veterinary professionals, that any of them have done something so terribly wrong that the government would need to sweep in and have them reporting back to them again. So what's this really about?

I've seen too many pieces of legislation come through here with a great deal of government presentation about what a great idea it is and how it's going to do this, that, and the next thing, and then we find out years later: no, no. It may have done that, but it did a whole bunch of other things as well. Because I don't know what this act is ultimately going to do and I have not had the questions answered that my colleagues have requested be answered by the sponsoring member, I'm not willing to accept this. Every group that we have talked to has said: "Well, we already do this. Why do we need another law telling us to do it again?"

So I start to have questions about which one has supremacy. If you already consult under your own legislation, do you have to do it twice? Do you have to do it on the same day or different days? I don't mean to mock this, but what is the point of having duplicating rules that an organization is supposed to be able to follow? I do think that this is government's attempt to interfere in what is supposed to be an independent regulatory body over specified professions and occupations.

I have one question that I would like the sponsor to answer for us. It talks about any association registered under the Professional and Occupational Associations Registration Act. Could we please get a listing of who all that is? I'm thinking that's everybody else, like all the other professional organizations and occupations that exist in this province. If that's the case, that's definitely what's going on here. [interjection] Well, sure, it would be midwives. It would be everybody. It would be lawyers. It would be physicians. It would be nurses. It would be, well, all of the allied health professionals. It would be every professional occupation in the province, and I think that's who's on that list. So, please, I'm happy to be proven wrong, but I would like that answered, and I would like to see the list of what's captured under that catch-all heading.

This should have been a really simple bill, but it isn't. At this point I'm not willing to support it. I look forward to having some of my concerns and issues addressed, and we will proceed to Committee of the Whole to get that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 2, the Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 2010. Overall, I'm very much encouraged by this proposal. It only makes sense that ministers responsible for the professional legislation and the Post-secondary Learning Act be consulted when it comes to any changes to the academic requirements. I certainly don't envision this as any sort of meddling, Big Brother approach. Rather, it promotes and encourages healthy discussion about the deletion or addition of academic courses for programs that lead to a degree, diploma, or certificate. I know that between the ministries of Employment and Immigration and Advanced Education and Technology there is an incredible source of knowledge among staff that could and should be utilized when it comes to determining these requirements. Bill 2 is an important piece of legislation, and I understand that the two ministries will work closely with all of the associations with its implementation.

If I have one concern, Mr. Speaker, it would be the term "education requirements" referred to in the Regulated Accounting Profession Act. I note that most of the other acts under Bill 2 refer to "academic" requirements, which would be in reference to postsecondary education. The postsecondary component is what government is interested in: degrees, diplomas, and certificates. Government appreciates that there are many other educational activities which are internal to the profession, like in-house training or continuing competency requirements. These educational activities are their own internal business. Is this clear with the current wording of Bill 2?

I'm hopeful that the Professional Statutes Amendment Act, 2010, can proceed without delay to ensure that government is involved at the early stages of any revision to postsecondary curriculum. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** I guess I'd like to ask the hon. member: if he feels it's so critical, how did we get to this point in Alberta with the professional act? I very much see it as: you cannot do anything in your profession until the minister gives his okay. That very much seems like father state saying that we're going to look after you. How did we survive? Should we take it away from those professionals if, in fact, they need to get permission from the minister and just have the minister look after the entire area?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if you wish.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we were talking about this Bill 2, we were looking at making some of the changes such as I noted earlier in my remarks, the reference to academic requirements. One of the things this bill is talking about is looking towards the future, instead of using words such as "education" requirements, changing that to "academic" requirements, as it is used with many of the other professions which this bill deals with such as the Architects Act, the engineering, geological – other professional acts: Land Surveyors Act, for example, and other registered occupations such as the Regulated Accounting Profession Act. These are the things this bill is intended to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on Standing Order 29(2)(a).

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. So the member is saying that you need an entire piece of legislation that gives both of those ministers much more access and control over what appears to be every profession and occupation in the province in order to change the wording from "education" to "academic"? Isn't that sort of overkill?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if you wish. Others on 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Hinman:** Just, you know, in regard to Bill 1, that says that we need to be more competitive, now here in Bill 2 we're saying that the minister needs to overlook and give the final okay before any amendments are made in a professional act regarding education. I guess I just have to ask: if it's so critical and needs to be there, why do we not just move the entire professional act under the government and eliminate it for efficiency and competitiveness if that's what the government is saying we need?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier may participate under Standing Order 29(2)(a), but I do believe the question in the response was directed to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, who can or cannot respond if he so chooses. But I will recognize the hon. Deputy Premier if he wishes to make a comment under 29(2)(a).

3:30

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That, indeed, was my intention. It was to simply make a comment under 29(2)(a).

Certainly, we value the professional associations that we have in the province to be self-governing. We value what they do in terms of their individual professions, but in some cases the academic qualification is provided by the taxpayers of Alberta through our postsecondary system. In keeping with the Campus Alberta approach we need to ensure that when a change is made to the academic qualifications in a profession, as an example, we are able to transmit that through the entire Campus Alberta so that we ensure transferability for the students, we ensure that there's value there for the taxpayer, and we ensure that we are responding to the economic and societal benefits, which are, Mr. Speaker, as I've said in this House many times, the three clients that the postsecondary system in the province of Alberta serves.

**The Speaker:** Time is still available.

**Ms Blakeman:** Back to the original member, but I'm sure that the minister of advanced education will have a comment to make. That still does not strike me as justification for a piece of legislation or a statute to be amended. There are ways to work with those professional occupations and with your academic institutions to say, "These are the standards that we accept," or, you know, to have your communication plan. But it just strikes me that you're changing a piece of legislation to deal with a communications problem.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** Yes. Kind of following up on that same question, I feel, as the minister of postsecondary education, very much that: co-ordinate that to say that these classes from these institutions all qualify for a profession. I see the importance of unanimity from our education system, but to impose that and say, well, "The profes-

sional system now doesn't know which ones to accept and not accept; therefore, we'll institute that" is still strange.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry, but the time has now elapsed for that section.

I have no additional speakers on my list. Shall I call on the hon. Member for Calgary Mackay to close the debate?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** Proceed.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been listening intently. As I had alluded to during my comments at second reading, the intent of this bill is twofold. One is to ensure that these regulatory bodies must consult the ministers responsible and must take into consideration their comments, so it's an opportunity for us to formalize the process and also to recognize the currently existing very positive relationships.

Secondly, it is time to update the language and make it more consistent across the board, in addition, after we amended the Health Professions Act.

I look forward to more discussion at the Committee of the Whole next week, and I thank you for the opportunity to respond.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a second time]

### **Bill 1 Alberta Competitiveness Act**

[Adjourned debate March 10: Mr. Denis]

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

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon in Calgary the Premier and the Minister of Energy have released a document from the Alberta government called Energizing Investment that is certainly one of the critical pieces of our competitiveness strategy. As I'm going to be quoting from the document, I'm more than happy to table both that document and the technical report that comes with it as part of my speaking notes.

To summarize from the document, I think it's very important to make note of the principles that were involved in the determination of the go-forward with regard to the royalty framework that we were in. To do that, we used the three guiding principles which were relevant, are relevant, and remain relevant today and into tomorrow. One of them was to

- support sustainable economic development that contributes to a high quality of life for all Albertans now and into the future;
- support a fair, predictable and transparent royalty regime; and
- align Alberta's royalty regime with overall government objectives.

Mr. Speaker, it's important not only for Alberta to ensure that we have well into the future a stable, profitable, functioning oil industry, but it's critically important for all of Canada. I think the development of our energy sector would be considered by our neighbours to the south one of critical importance for the security of their nation. With those in mind, our go-forward will probably contribute not only to our economic benefit but across Canada as we all know how much the oil sands development, for example, contributes to the economies of Ontario and other Canadian provinces and, in fact, Mr. Speaker, all over the world.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, that because of some of the changes that we've made, over the next 25 years upstream oil and gas develop-

ment in Alberta has the potential to add \$2.5 trillion in new economic activity and millions of person-years with regard to jobs. That's really what it's all about. It's about maximizing the opportunities that come from this tremendous resource that we've got. The Albertans I represent and, I think, probably the Albertans that we all represent would rather work than wait. They would rather train, innovate, and be world leaders than just accept the challenges that were dropped on the industry with not only the economic financial collapse but the challenges around the energy sector itself, whether it be environmental or just the practical production challenges.

I've been involved in the development of the oil and gas sector, Mr. Speaker, for many years. As a contractor we built, leased, maintained, moved rigs, dug pipelines. The people that work in this industry are probably some of the toughest, most innovative people I've ever met. They can face the 40 below or 50 below with the wind chill, and you just get it done. You can face roads that are just about impassable with 80,000 pounds of steel behind you, and you just move it.

You know the old saying: well, it's the oil companies here; let's hurry up and wait. There are all the challenges of logistically organizing rig moves and permissions and permits. I think that also is part of our competitiveness, that while they can face all of the elements that Mother Nature and the geophysical challenges give them, they can't beat world prices. They don't have any say in it, they don't have any way to affect it, and they can't get ahead of the regulatory burden that we as well as just about every other government in certainly the modern world have made around their industry. They make it far more challenging than it used to be.

We're not prepared, Mr. Speaker, in any way to compromise our environmental responsibilities or our workplace safety and health of our workforce by being more competitive. We're just going to be better at what we do.

Aside from the effect that this will have on Calgary and the oil industry, for many of us the biggest contributors in our community to really important community initiatives are, in fact, the oil and gas sector. Husky Oil has been in Lloydminster for over 70 years. They are going to break ground for their new officer tower next Tuesday. Very few projects in that community that are built with the partnership of government and private money are done without Husky and other very, very generous oil companies and service companies.

It is an amazing community to attend functions where they'll routinely raise half a million dollars for their health foundation or other worthy causes from companies like Grithog and Universal Industries, people that are always at the plate in good times and bad. When it's really good, they are able to be more generous, and when it's bad, many times, Mr. Speaker, they go without to make sure that they maintain a good presence, a corporate identity that they work very hard to establish.

It really is about making the oil and gas industry part of the fabric that makes Alberta what it is. It's something that, rightly or wrongly, has separated us from many other provinces, and like the challenges our Albertans face in agriculture or forestry, we're not afraid of the challenges. But when we self-impose some of the challenges or we're part of an industry that faces new developments – no one could have anticipated two or three years ago the opportunities to produce shale gas. It became a deal changer, Mr. Speaker. In fact, what we thought to be stable, long-term markets at significantly higher prices than now evaporated virtually in front of our eyes.

**3:40**

We could do like some of the provinces in the east have done when the fisheries dried up; we could sit on the dock and wait for

our ship to come in for a generation. Or we could take the bull by the horns and say: "Okay. That was then; this is now. What do we need to do to make sure that the resources we've got and the people that we've got to produce them can be put together in such a way that this product can get to market?" The profit that was there probably won't be there in the near future, but what we can do, we need to do is spare no expense to make sure that we get the maximum economic rent, which in many ways, Mr. Speaker, means building a bigger economic pie so that the piece we get is there to support, to make the things that we feel very important about in our health care and our education and the other things that we do as a government possible.

Mr. Speaker, we have spent eight or nine months of extremely focused work with the financial sector. I don't think many people realize how connected the financial sector is to the success of the oil and gas industry. They play with big dollars, and they need to have certainty of return or as much stability as possible. We didn't just take what the gas companies or the oil companies said was their bottom line. We looked to the financial sector. We had a very thorough vetting of what we need to do to move forward.

In the documents that we're tabling, Mr. Speaker, that's all there. While it would have been easy to put together a document on short notice, it was critical for us to make sure that what we've got now is the foundation for the next generation of wealth creation, of opportunity in Alberta. We know we've been very successful in establishing the oil sands regime that's going to be producing wealth for generations of Albertans. We think that with this proper balance the gas and conventional oil sectors can also play a very real and important part in the economic opportunities in Alberta for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I want to sum up in saying that this document of the work that's been done by the former Minister of Energy, current Minister of Energy, and, in fact, many other people in government and the Department of Energy is a true testament to what happens when you put your good minds to work, when you work with industry and the other sectors involved with it, including the service industry. We are keenly aware of the great opportunities and how important it is to all the communities of Alberta, that will see their hotels full again. They'll see their tire shops or their truck stops and their grocery stores once again thriving, prospering, building the life that we're all so very fortunate to have.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Assembly for this opportunity, and I do want to thank all the people that have been involved in the production of these documents. They were truly worth waiting for.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we're going to proceed to 29(2)(a) with the minutes afforded to it, but I'm also going to permit the tabling of these documents today. We have in our Routine a section for tabling, but recognizing that these documents pertain to an announcement that, as I understand, was delayed till 3 o'clock today, when the markets in central Canada closed, this is the first opportunity, I guess, for them to be a part of the Assembly. So proceed with the tabling.

Now 29(2)(a). Calgary-Glenmore first and Edmonton-Centre second.

**Mr. Hinman:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was quite enlightening, to see the government change its direction, realize that it's wrong, yet still not apologize to the industry or the workers of Alberta for their mistake and the two and a half years of pain that could have been avoided. The minister talked to say that Albertans

would rather work than wait. He talked about listening to the investment world now, when people that worked with Tristone and other areas for three years have been telling this government that this is wrong. Investment dried up, starting when it was announced. Why will you not admit it? Just feel good to say: we messed up; we're sorry.

You revert back from 50 per cent to 36 instead of 33. I mean, we're almost going back. But how can you possibly say that we don't want to wait when we've waited a whole year? There's nothing new in this report, nothing new revealed, only that you're admitting that you were wrong.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, actually, it's quite nice to see that the Wildrose really do appreciate the document. Much of what they produced the other day pretty much comes out of the document we've done.

What they don't seem to understand: every other reasonably intelligent person in Alberta and the world knows that the world went through a commodity collapse. Our Premier, this government didn't cause the price of natural gas to go from \$12 or \$14 down to \$3. He didn't cause the financial sector to lose its way. We're part of it. We've seen circumstances change. We didn't put and hide all that natural gas in the shale deposits in the States and in Alberta and Saskatchewan. It's been there forever. It's now just practically possible to produce.

Whether they want to admit it or not, the rest of the world knows, the energy sector knows, we know, and we've realized that, yeah, we do have to make changes. If nothing else had happened, just the establishment of the shale gas numbers would have resulted in us having to readjust our formula. That's a simple matter of common sense.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I listened carefully to the presentation from the President of the Treasury Board. Not having the benefit of having a BlackBerry in the House to catch the media that's going on, I take it, then, that the government has announced that it is going to be reducing the royalty rates and giving some sort of incentive around natural gas. Is that what we're talking about here?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is. I think the minister of finance may address some of them, but, yes, we are. We're going to reduce the front end on our natural gas to 5 per cent. We're going to reduce some of the top end benefit that was there from 50 per cent on natural gas down to 36 per cent and conventional oil down to 40 per cent.

This was done in very, very close consultation with the financial sector, who say: for us to get in the game with the oil and gas sector, we need to know that your risk/reward is very close to the competing states and provinces that we're with. We compared the costs to 10 American states that are the ones that are fighting for the same dollars we are and to Saskatchewan and British Columbia, who are obviously our most competitive market.

We are changing it. It will be available to all of Alberta as of this point now, and we do believe it will set the stage for a very viable and stable re-establishment of the natural gas sector.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, then Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Hinman:** Well, thank you. I find that just amazing, that the minister would get up and talk about the high prices of oil and the

collapse in August of '08. The new royalty framework didn't come in until the 1st of January '09. The collapse had bottomed out in November, December. The investment community had told and told this government as well as industry not to implement them on the 1st of January. The government went ahead.

The Barnett shale was hitting production in 2003; 2001 was when they first started developing that. In 2007, a year before the collapse, the shale gas was going up. We were at 5 billion bcf. They in the U.S. in their production and the punitive royalty rates here drove that business, which was developed . . .

3:50

**The Speaker:** Alas, the time for this segment has now left us.

Additional speakers on this bill? The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today and speak in support of Bill 1, the Alberta Competitiveness Act. The global economy is slowly showing signs of recovery. It's also showing us over the last year to two years that there is a lot of change and a requirement for change in order for Alberta to remain competitive in this new economic climate. We must adapt to these changes. Our government's prudent fiscal saving strategy has afforded Alberta the opportunity to lead the nation out of the recession and excel in this new global economy.

Mr. Speaker, many jurisdictions in North America have seen their debts soar as a result of the economic downturn. As debt increases, so do the challenges of achieving fiscal stability. Not only in North America – we look at Europe, and we only have to look at the turmoil in Greece in recent days to see vivid evidence of this.

In Alberta our fiscal situation is a result of years of strong fiscal stewardship and prudent fiscal planning. By drawing on cash reserves from the sustainability fund and with a plan to return to a surplus position in three years, Mr. Speaker, our government is emerging from this recession in an enviable fiscal position and poised to become not only a Canadian but a global leader. Our province is one of the most competitive jurisdictions in North America, and Bill 1 will ensure that we remain competitive.

Attracting investment is vital to our economic competitiveness, and competition for attracting investment capital is always increasing. Favourable business conditions, including our competitive tax rates, provide the foundation for attracting this investment. Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 builds on this foundation by enhancing collaboration between government, industry, and the hard-working citizens of our province. By communicating with Albertans and industry stakeholders, we're able to gain a comprehensive knowledge of how the changes in the global economy will affect our province.

The report on the competitiveness strategy and the government's response released today is testament to our government's commitment to this task. This ongoing communication will ensure that we can develop the right strategies to see that Alberta continues to flourish and attract investment, to grow our economic pie and create opportunities for Alberta entrepreneurs and families.

One area that stands out in my mind is, of course, technology and innovation. The advancements that have been made in these areas over the past few years have been astonishing. It is clear that enhancements in both technology and innovation are vital to ensuring that Alberta's economy remains competitive. Bill 1 will enhance our ability to both develop and adapt to new technologies. Again, Mr. Speaker, here in Alberta our government's fiscal prudence permits us the ability to adapt to these changes in a timely manner, ensuring that our industries are on the cutting edge. The development of new technology in Alberta is a source of great pride

and a catalyst to spur growth in our economy and improve the quality of life for Albertans.

Within the walls of our postsecondary institutions lie some of the brightest young minds in Canada. These students are indeed the future of Alberta. Our postsecondary institutions, under the umbrella of Campus Alberta, provide these students with a world-class education. An example of this was the announcement that the University of Alberta was ranked fourth in the country and 59th world-wide.

Mr. Speaker, a competitive provincial economy does not solely mean attracting investment. It also means attracting and retaining workers who have the skills and knowledge that are necessary to develop new technologies and drive Alberta's provincial economy. The strength of this province, the backbone of this province, is our people. When students graduate from our postsecondary institutions and are looking for employment, we want them to remain in Alberta. We believe in growing our own, not exporting our best.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 does not focus on a specific industry in which to promote competitiveness. Rather, it seeks to promote competitiveness in numerous industries right across our economic spectrum. Alberta is a province rich in diversity both in our cultural backgrounds and our resources. I believe that Bill 1 recognizes this diversity and promotes competitiveness that will benefit numerous sectors of our provincial economy. Alberta has always been known for being competitive, and Bill 1 intends to build on our great track record to make a great province that much more attractive.

Our province was an attractive place to do business before the global downturn, and I'm confident, Mr. Speaker, that it will continue to be one of the most competitive jurisdictions in North America or, frankly, anywhere in the free world.

Mr. Speaker, the foundation of Alberta lies in our entrepreneurial spirit and the competitive economic climate that our province is known for. Bill 1 will build on this foundation, ensuring that Alberta remains competitive and that Albertans can continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, I would sincerely like to thank our Premier for bringing forward this legislation and for his vision and dedication to a prosperous Alberta. I support Bill 1, and I would ask all my colleagues, including the Member for Edmonton-Centre, to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** Yes. The member, when he first started up, talked about the importance of Bill 1, that we're the most competitive in the world and also talked about the new competitiveness review of the oil and gas. If in fact we were the most competitive, Mr. Speaker, we would never be discussing any of these things. We wouldn't be having a new change in our royalty. We would have already been competitive. I don't understand how he can say that we're the most competitive when we're putting all these things in and implementing them. Why do you say that we're the most competitive? Yet we're changing; therefore, we're not.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, if you wish.

**Mr. Rogers:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to respond to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. Alberta has been very competitive . . .

**Mr. Hinman:** Has been.

**Mr. Rogers:** Has been, and we believe that it will continue to be. That is why, hon. member, we have gone through this process of this competitive strategy: to make sure that we continue to do the right things. This province, like the rest of the country and anywhere else, has not been immune to the global economic downturn. We must make sure that we do everything to make sure that that competitive advantage that has existed here will continue and be there for the future so that this province not only will continue to be of benefit to us but to our children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview on 29(2)(a).

**Dr. Taft:** Under 29(2)(a), yes, Mr. Speaker. This would be aimed at, frankly, the Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon and the Member for Calgary-Glenmore or even the Minister of Finance and Enterprise. It would seem to me that a key measure of competitiveness as it's being debated here is profitability. My question to any of the people I've named would be: have any of them looked at the scale of corporate profits in Alberta as a percentage of GDP compared to other jurisdictions? We often talk about spending as a percentage of the economy and taxes as a percentage of the economy. In doing the background work for their comments, have any of them looked at corporate profits as a percentage of Alberta's economy and how that might compare to other jurisdictions?

**The Speaker:** Well, the comments will go to the last speaker, which is our tradition. The other two, if they choose to participate, the member will have an opportunity then. The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

**Mr. Rogers:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, I certainly don't have those figures handy at my fingertips. The minister of finance might. I might remind the hon. member that in Alberta and particularly the part of Alberta that I represent and, I can assure you, right across this province, profit is not a dirty word. The reason that companies invest in Alberta, have invested in Alberta, and will return to invest in Alberta is because we have always treasured through that entrepreneurial spirit the opportunity to make a profit in this province.

I hope, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member, that opportunities will continue to abound, that our investors will see great returns on their investment in this province of Alberta. Thank you.

4:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore. Remember my advice a minute or two ago.

**Mr. Hinman:** Yes. I appreciate the question from the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. It's an excellent question, but it's not the right question. The question is: what percentage or how much tax are we actually receiving? As we've been lowering the corporate tax here in the province, we've raised it from \$1 billion to \$3 billion of corporate tax being paid. Had we raised it to say, "Oh, we want a higher percentage of the GDP," we would have actually shrunk the pie, as this government foolishly did by saying that if we raise the royalty rate, we're going to grow the pie. It actually shrinks it.

As you shrink and lower it to a competitive tax, more business comes in. There's more economic spinoff, and we actually grow the economic pie. Therefore, we increase the dollars into the revenue of the treasury here so that we can in fact make sure that we have the health care and the education and the roads that we do have and want

to have. We want to be competitive, and that is in looking at the overall tax rate, not the percentage of GDP.

**The Speaker:** Time is still available under Standing Order 29.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, again, I guess to the Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon or perhaps the Member for Calgary-Glenmore: if we accept the logic that lower taxes increase the economy, would it be sensible, then, just to eliminate taxes altogether? Would we all be a lot better off if there were no taxes?

**Mr. Rogers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there are probably places in the world where there are very little or no taxes. I'm very proud that our province has . . .

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Mr. Hinman:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point, as we all understand Gladwell and *The Tipping Point*: we raised our taxes to the tipping point, where we're destroying our economy. Yes, you can lower them to the point where there isn't enough possibly for what the people want.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 1, the Alberta Competitiveness Act, has lofty ambitions like advancing competitive initiatives and developing strategies to encourage innovation, productivity, and adoption of technology, but once again this government is going the wrong way because of its bad ideas. This government promotes one bad policy after another, lurches from one crisis to another crisis, and is constantly having to clean up its own mistakes.

As we have seen with the way the government has handled health care, the energy sector, they mean well, but they keep getting it wrong. I am sure that the irony behind Bill 1 is not lost on many members of this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, Alberta is supposed to be the land of opportunity, where we embrace the entrepreneur and unleash their potential. Now, because of this government's incompetence, they feel that they need to pass a bill and create an agency that will encourage competitiveness. It took them a whole year just to review the competitiveness of the oil and gas industry, where we used to lead.

I also remember, Mr. Speaker, that back in 2005 this government re-formed a new cabinet, and they increased the size of that cabinet. They found it necessary to have a minister of restructuring and government efficiency. I don't know where that minister has gone to. Well, actually, I do know. Now he's working on Transportation and doing a little bit of restructuring. But the point is that they try to be efficient, and they become more inefficient as they do that.

The problem is that this is already the government's role. The government's role is to put the proper rules and regulations in place to protect the health and safety of our workers, to create a level playing field, to protect the environment, and to protect the public and the consumers. But the key to creating a competitive economy is to make sure that the government does not get in the way unnecessarily by putting up too many needless rules and regulations, by making the system so complex that it is hard to figure out the rules, and by wasting people's time and money to try and comply or follow those changing rules, as we're seeing with Bill 2. Mr. Speaker, this just dampens the spirit of the entrepreneur and the real job creator.

But what is the government doing? The opposite. It is getting in the way. It's making doing business more difficult, wasting the time and money of the businesspeople. The result is loss of jobs. With the number of businesses that I have discussions with, they say that compliance and the number of rules, regulations – environmental and on all the other things – are repetitive, they overlap, and they're

just costly and hard to implement. Yet many of the bureaucrats that they report to don't even understand them themselves, especially in the ag industry. This government has cost Albertans thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of investment and economic activity loss because of their wavering ways.

When the government of British Columbia was first elected, Mr. Speaker, one of their first acts was to eliminate regulatory burdens and to be a partner with business so that it could create the jobs and value-added opportunities that its citizens could rely on regardless of who was in power. The business of government is to be friendly with business. This was a bold step. It's unfortunate that this government could have done this a long time ago. Instead, it is simply copying what another province has done and what every government should do as part of its operations. There is no time to waste. With each passing day businesspeople relocate to projects in B.C. and Saskatchewan. So it's great that that review has finally come out today. We'll see if we can turn the tide. The livelihoods of Albertans are in shambles because of the chronic meddling by this government.

I urge this government to demonstrate real leadership by being humble enough to admit its mistakes, which it seems is unlikely, and to realize its limitations by being strong enough to say no, that it does not need to do things just because some group protests, and by being wise enough to realize that it is business and the taxpayers, who create jobs and who make real and lasting investments in communities, to whom we owe our real prosperity. Mr. Speaker, while I applaud the principles of Bill 1, I struggle to find how it helps the people of Calgary-Glenmore or Albertans to create another government agency to ensure competitiveness.

Competitiveness is created by fewer regulatory hurdles that serve no purpose, competitiveness is created by a government that realizes it is a partner with business and Albertans, and competitiveness is created by having the lowest taxes, reducing unnecessary fees, and limiting the interference of government in our personal and business lives. I do not see how Bill 1 can accomplish this.

When the first settlers came to Alberta and began to trade one with another, I'm sure that they would have scratched their heads if someone told them that the future government was going to push a law to encourage competitiveness. That is why they came here. It was to compete and to make a living. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure they would have wondered what went so wrong that the government would have brought forward something like Bill 1.

While times have changed, basic principles do not. Sometimes the best thing that legislators can do is reflect on the wisdom of those who came before us because limiting government, focusing spending, and empowering communities and individuals to help one another in time of need have stood the test of time. Giving government even more power to encourage competitiveness does not. That is the reason why I am not all that thrilled with Bill 1.

A few other items I wanted to cover. It's interesting, you know, as we just finished the Olympics, that it was a very great time for Canadians. We've come together. We're proud. We had that desire to own the podium. That's world competition at its best, down to the seconds. Probably the most heartbreaking for me to watch was Devon Kershaw, after 50 kilometres of racing being 1.6 seconds behind and placing fifth. Competition is sharp. But I don't think any less of him; I think all the more that he carried on right to the end and was there.

It's exciting to see competition in sports, in industry, amongst the different towns in Alberta, whether it's curling, whether it's hockey, basketball, football, all those things. It brings out the best in us, and we like to compete. Competing is fun, but it's not fun if it's not on a level playing field. It's not fun to have an Alberta business, based

here in Calgary or Edmonton or Leduc, and to have to move your equipment and your workers to Saskatchewan or B.C. in order to keep that business going. It just isn't right.

We've made a huge mistake by becoming greedy and thinking: oh, if we actually take a bigger piece of the pie, we're going to get \$1.4 billion more. It has cost us billions of dollars. Yesterday's land sales are another classic example. If we want to be competitive, we need to have the rules and regulations put in place. We've had nine land sales since they announced last June that we are going to do a competitiveness review. It's very simple for businesspeople to realize that A plus B equals the cost. A was bidding on the lands. B was the royalty that we're going to have to pay if we get that. Why would we say for a year, "We don't know what we're going to do with the royalty rates, but please bid A, and bid the maximum amount"? We will never know the answer on what the dollars would have been yesterday or two weeks ago or for the last six months had those rates been implemented.

4:10

You don't understand the investments. Even your own minister talked . . . [interjections] You're listening to him now? More of you should listen. You don't know what return on investment is. I don't believe it. Otherwise, you wouldn't be mumbling now and grumbling about this.

Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing that we have come to this, where we need to pass a bill to say that we need to review and be competitive. This is as disappointing as having a government minister on restructuring and government efficiency. One has to scratch one's head and ask: what are we really doing here? To think that this government feels that Bill 1 must be legislated is wrong. Albertans are by nature a very industrious and competitive group. Through our struggles of the last 100 years we are stronger. What legislation is this government going to try to pass next? That we need to wash our hands when we leave the restroom? We already know and understand those things. Are we going to have to cover our mouths when we cough? These are common-sense things.

It's human nature to be competitive, and this government is wasting time and money in trying to look at how to be competitive when they should just clear the deck and allow people to compete on a level playing field, one where the rules aren't being changed. I mean, how many times have they changed the new, new, new royalty framework? Well, now they have the new competitiveness. It's a sad day that we had to wait this long and lose this much money so that we can get back in the game.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. I'll recognize the hon. Member for Little Bow, then the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having listened to the comments from the former speaker, the Member for Calgary-Glenmore, I'd just like to know who was involved in giving them advice on the energy policy which they came out with. I know he believes in transparency and all the other good things. I'm just really curious to know what sources and resources their party used in developing their energy policy.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if you wish.

**Mr. Hinman:** Well, I'm surprised. I would have thought that perhaps the government has been following us around to see who we've been speaking with. One thing, Mr. Speaker, that I've learned since I've been elected to this House is that the economic tyranny of this government is appalling. They want to know who they've



talked to because they want to punish them. [interjections] That's the problem. You laugh.

Do you realize that tomorrow our leader is speaking to COADC and that they've received a letter from your Minister of Energy saying: "She shouldn't be there speaking to you. Come and talk to me"? It's comical, but it's wrong. The reports are out there. There are tons of reports. If you want, I'll maybe put a few of them together so that you can read them if you want. But you've got it corrected. You understand. And, no, I will not talk about who we've talked to to share with the government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member opposite very much talks about: we are changing the focus and direction. Does he not believe and understand that economics in this country, economics in the world have changed? Also, at least as it sounds from his presentation, does he believe that no matter what takes place, they should stay stagnant and in the same direction year after year, generation after generation? I don't understand where this individual is coming from, and I would like him to express it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if you wish.

**Mr. Hinman:** I understand that he doesn't understand. We had a collapse in the equity markets. There was too much money being borrowed. We were fortunate here in Alberta to have some money, but the fact of the matter is that there's a shortage. The spending of this government isn't sustainable. We're going to get in a wreck like we were back in 1992, and to say, "Oh, we're going to have to dig ourselves out of a debt" is wrong. Yes, we maybe have one more year of sustainability, but the spending is not sustainable. That's what you have to look at.

We understand because when you put out your budget, we said that you'd need to balance it. That's the difference, Mr. Speaker. Are we going to realize what causes economic disasters? It's governments that spend more than they have. It's governments that don't know how to prioritize and realize what's important, building things that aren't necessarily needed now or even able to be used, yet they're funding those. Again, they think they're being penny-wise when they're pound-foolish. We need to look at the infrastructure that needs to be done long term, and when we fail to do that and we want to do something that's politically popular to get a few votes, it fails the Alberta taxpayers, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McFarland:** Mr. Speaker, I was trying to absorb the answer that he didn't give me, so I'm assuming that because I wasn't given the answer as to who they actually used as resource people, he doesn't want to answer that question.

**Mr. Hinman:** Mr. Speaker, the people who talk to us prefer not to be given out. They say: you don't understand how much we're risking. It's just like the doctors, the nurses. They're not allowed to talk to the press. These people are the same. They put in bids on these lands. They want to get wildcat wells. They want to be able to continue to do business here. This government likes to flex its economic tyranny on people that speak out against them. They won't even listen to their own. We're talking about getting information.

Why are you now listening to the investment world? They said that in January 2007, when the Premier spoke and said that we're going to have the review, the investment into this province started to shrink at that point long before it came out. Whenever govern-

ment says that it's changing its rules and regulations, it creates instability. There's been instability for three years in the oil and gas industry. It's wrong. It wasn't beneficial for anybody other than outside jurisdictions. I think Saskatchewan, the U.S., and B.C. want to nominate our Premier for man of the year because they've benefited so much because of his decisions.

**The Speaker:** I have one last speaker that I have on my list, I think, the hon. Minister of Finance and Enterprise.

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand today and join second reading debate on Bill 1, the Alberta Competitiveness Act. A healthy, growing economy requires that Alberta remain competitive. A growing economy creates jobs and opportunities for Alberta families. A growing economy is also the key to government's ability to fund world-class health care, education, and programs that help those who need help. Competitiveness enables us to build the hospitals, the schools, and the roads we need to meet the demands of a growing population. Bill 1 will support our ability to compete on the world stage and increase Albertans' prosperity and quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, the oil and gas industry is the primary fuel of this province's economy. One in 15 jobs is directly related to energy, and that proportion gets even higher when you look at indirect employment related to the energy sector, some estimates being as high as 1 in 5 jobs. The importance this sector has on the provincial economy is critical to our future.

To keep this sector one of the most competitive in the world, this government initiated the natural gas and conventional oil investment competitiveness study. Today the government released the much-anticipated competitiveness review. The review proposes changes to our royalty system that will ensure we remain an attractive destination for investment dollars. This review is about more than just royalties paid by oil and gas companies. It's about Alberta's economy. It's about growing that economy, growing a larger economic pie.

Oil and gas revenues, Mr. Speaker, come not just from royalties but from a variety of other streams, including taxes and land sales. The review will grow this economic pie by adjusting royalties to be competitive. This will lead to more investment, more drilling activity, and more jobs in our communities. This means the government will be creating a larger economic pie by creating a smaller slice of the royalty piece, but that will be more than made up by growth in land sales and taxes. Over the next 25 years we expect this will create tens of thousands of direct, indirect, and induced jobs not just in Alberta but across Canada.

Bill 1, though, our topic today, is more than just about oil and gas, more than about any one sector. Mr. Speaker, enhancing competitiveness in Alberta involves and is important to all sectors: agriculture, manufacturing, financial services, forestry, infrastructure, tourism. Sustainable prosperity won't be achieved unless they're competitive.

4:20

Government taxation plays an important role in all sectors in making them competitive. This government has been widely praised for understanding the key role of taxes. That's why we monitor and adjust our taxes over time. Since 1993 we have reduced personal income taxes, corporate taxes, and education property taxes. We introduced a science and research development tax credit to foster innovation in the province. We also established and enhanced the family employment tax credit. Our most recent budget, the current budget, Budget 2010, complemented these efforts. There were no new taxes or increased taxes. As a result, Alberta does continue to have the most competitive tax regime in Canada.

With respect to the corporate world the province's low corporate tax already helps attract investment from around the globe. Alberta is low, in fact the lowest in Canada. Its low general corporate tax rate supports growth and development in both small and large business. In addition, there is no capital tax, no payroll tax, no general sales tax, and we have the lowest fuel tax of any province. These are factors that are looked at by organizations and investors when they think about opening up business in Alberta.

Let me turn to personal taxes. This province also has the most generous personal basic exemption amongst all provinces, at \$16,825. If Alberta had any other provincial tax system, Albertans and Alberta businesses would pay between \$2,800 and \$4,900 per capita more in taxes each year. In 2001 Alberta replaced its multirate personal income tax with a flat tax. Alberta's single tax rate of 10 per cent helps attract and retain skilled workers, a major asset in the global economy. This taxation system has been one of the keys to our competitiveness. It's simple, it's transparent, and it's a fair way to levy taxes.

Recently there have been some critics who've argued that it is not a progressive taxation system. In fact, figures show that the flat tax is very progressive. Most provincial revenues are collected from higher income earners in the province. For example, the top 10 per cent of income earners in Alberta pay 57 per cent of the total income taxes collected in the province.

**Mr. Hinman:** Say that once more.

**Dr. Morton:** The top 10 per cent of income earners pay 57 per cent of total personal income tax. Meanwhile, the bottom 50 per cent of earners pay only 3 per cent. Talk about progressive.

Increasing competitiveness, though, is more than just about taxes. The government is already taking action on a number of fronts to improve Alberta's ability to compete. As well as taxes we've looked at issues like bureaucracy, productivity, innovation. We've addressed specific sectors: forestry, agriculture, and now oil and gas. We've also focused on human capital, the training and education of our workforce to ensure that it is one of the most capable and productive in the world.

With respect to bureaucracy the Alberta government created in the '90s the Regulatory Review Secretariat to focus on reducing red tape. Streamlining regulations results in an environment where businesses can focus on productivity rather than complying with redundant or ineffective regulations. Most recently an example of this type of success was simplifying of the business registry process during the implementation of the trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement, the TILMA agreement, between Alberta and British Columbia.

Alberta's competitiveness is also dependent on our ability to improve productivity. Alberta's productivity has led the nation for a number of years now, but our productivity growth rate has actually trailed that of other provinces. In response to this, the provincial government has created Productivity Alberta. The staff there help organizations examine and improve their ability to run more efficiently, work smarter, and increase overall productivity. While Productivity Alberta typically helps manufacturers and industrial clients, the help they provide crosses sectors. Interestingly, one of their noteworthy successes has been helping several of our hospitals implement methods that cut down on emergency room wait times.

In terms of innovation Alberta Innovates, the successor to the Alberta Research Council, strengthens the province's role as a world leader in using science to help increase our competitiveness. Specifically, Alberta Innovates focuses on bioeconomy, health, energy, and environment solutions. Through Alberta Innovates the province has positioned itself to foster a culture of innovation that

will support entrepreneurs in technology-based industries.

An example of government addressing a particular sector has been the Alberta livestock and meat strategy, or ALMA. This strategy is a road map for a competitive, profitable livestock and meat industry. The Livestock and Meat Agency, ALMA, the lead organization of this strategy, played a pivotal role recently in opening Hong Kong borders to Canadian beef during a federal Asian mission.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, in this province and this government much has been done on competitiveness, but we cannot rest on our laurels. Government work on competitiveness needs to continue, especially in light of the current global situation. Bill 1 is about partnership, partnership between industry and government, between the private and public sectors. This partnership will improve the province's ability to compete on all fronts. Bill 1, the Competitiveness Act, highlights this government's commitment to being competitive in the past and continuing to improve our competitiveness in the future.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, then the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore under 29(2)(a).

**Dr. Taft:** Under 29(2)(a), yes. Mr. Speaker, I want to make one comment, and then I have a question. The member who just spoke said that a flat tax is actually progressive because the top 10 per cent of taxpayers pay 57 per cent of the taxes, but that's mathematical hocus-pocus. If the top 10 per cent of income earners earn 57 per cent of total income, then that would explain why they're paying 57 per cent of taxes. It would be useful if perhaps next week the minister could table how much of Alberta's total income is earned by that top 10 per cent, and then we'll see how progressive the flat tax really is.

My question to the minister is: how does this government balance taxes and profitability? When does it decide that corporate income is at a point where taxes need to be cut or increased?

**Dr. Morton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think this would be a lesson in economics longer than we have time for today. Suffice it to say that it's as much an art as a science, and finding the right spot, the tipping point, as the hon. member said there, is the work of an economist. The metaphor is pretty simple. If you try and take too much too fast, you scare away investment. We see a number of provinces, the so-called have-not provinces that receive the equalization payments that I was talking about, I believe, in this Chamber yesterday, that have the larger governments, higher spending, higher taxes, drive out investment, have lower fiscal capacity, and then go hat in hand looking for transfers from wealthier provinces like Alberta.

Alberta, obviously, has benefited from the natural endowment of hydrocarbon resources, but certainly we watched Saskatchewan for three decades, where ill-informed tax policy and ill-informed resource policy drove out investment. What did Saskatchewan do? They all moved here. A lot of them are in our caucus. So tax policy may purport to be a science, but it's also an art.

I'd say that Alberta's record speaks for itself, and I'd say that this government's record speaks for itself. People vote with their feet, and people have been coming to this province. Even in the downturn we continue to have twice the population growth rate over the national average.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

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

**Activity to March 11, 2010**

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

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

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

### **1 Alberta Competitiveness Act (Stelmach)**

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

Second Reading -- 123-24 (Feb. 16 aft.), 135-37 (Feb. 16 aft.), 137-42 (Feb. 16 aft.), 257-67 (Feb. 23 aft.), 286-98 (Feb. 24 aft.), 317-20 (Feb. 25 aft.), 403-09 (Mar. 10 aft.), 414-15 (Mar. 10 aft.), 434-40 (Mar. 11 aft., adjourned)

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

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

Second Reading -- 124-25 (Feb. 16 aft.), 430-34 (Mar. 11 aft., passed)

### **3 Fatal Accidents Amendment Act, 2010 (Weadick)**

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

Second Reading -- 125 (Feb. 16 aft.), 137 (Feb. 16 aft.), 317 (Feb. 25 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 413-14 (Mar. 10 aft., passed)

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

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

Second Reading -- 280 (Feb. 24 aft.), 410-12 (Mar. 10 aft., adjourned)

### **5 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2010 (\$) (Snelgrove)**

First Reading -- 213 (Feb. 22 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 247-49 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 280-86 (Feb. 24 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 312-17 (Feb. 25 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 1 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 1, 2010; SA 2010 c1]

### **6 Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2010 (Bhullar)**

First Reading -- 213 (Feb. 22 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 280 (Feb. 24 aft.), 412-13 (Mar. 10 aft., adjourned)

### **7 Election Statutes Amendment Act, 2010 (Redford)**

First Reading -- 311 (Feb. 25 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 402-03 (Mar. 10 aft., adjourned)

### **8 Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2010 (Griffiths)**

First Reading -- 334 (Mar. 8 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 429-30 (Mar. 11 aft., adjourned)

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

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

Second Reading -- 213-27 (Feb. 22 aft., passed)

### **202 Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act (Forsyth)**

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

Second Reading -- 336-48 (Mar. 8 aft., passed)

- 203      Municipal Government (Local Access and Franchise Fees) Amendment Act, 2010 (Fawcett)**  
First Reading -- 311-12 (Feb. 25 aft., passed)
- 204      Fiscal Responsibility (Spending Limit) Amendment Act, 2010 (Anderson)**  
First Reading -- 271 (Feb. 24 aft., passed)
- Pr1      Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta Act (Weadick)**  
First Reading -- 366 (Mar. 9 aft., passed)
- Pr2      Canada Olympic Park Property Tax Exemption Amendment Act, 2010 (DeLong)**  
First Reading -- 366 (Mar. 9 aft., passed)
- Pr3      Lamont Health Care Centre Act (Horne)**  
First Reading -- 366 (Mar. 9 aft., passed)



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