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The 27th Legislature
Third Session

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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature

Third Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 28, 2010

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. We give thanks for Your abundant blessings to our province and to ourselves. We ask for Your guidance with our deliberations in our Chamber and the will to follow it. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the honour of introducing to you and through you to all members of the Legislature two very special guests, and they are the new mayor of Calgary, His Worship Naheed Nenshi, and also the mayor of Edmonton, His Worship Stephen Mandel. I had the honour of hosting both for lunch today. As you know, Mayor Mandel recently won his third term as mayor of the city of Edmonton. He has brought to the city of Edmonton a lot of the common-sense, down-to-earth approach to local governance. Of course, Mayor Nenshi fought a very exciting, hard-won campaign bringing new ideas and new energy to the city of Calgary.

Our government and all of my colleagues here look forward to working with the two mayors and their colleagues and councils, working towards a more prosperous Alberta, continuing the good growth that we're enjoying, and working together so that we can set an example for the rest of Canada. With that, I would urge both of them to rise, and let's all receive them with the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Hon. members, that was a very nice welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Zwodsky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to also welcome the mayors and someone else who's very special to us. I want to introduce to you and through you Mr. Ken Hughes, who is the chair of the Alberta Health Services Board. He was appointed in May of 2008, when we created the single province-wide health services organization. He has a distinguished public service record, which includes serving as a Member of Parliament for the rural riding of Macleod and as chair of the former Health Services Authority. He's also a certified member of the Institute of Corporate Directors and holds a master of public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of people in the community know him and respect him as the president of Alpine Insurance & Financial, based in Calgary. He was born in High River into a family that has been in Alberta for more than 100 years. He is the spouse of a very dedicated and understanding wife, believe me, named Denise, and he has three school-aged children in French immersion in the community of Springbank. Please rise, Mr. Ken Hughes, and enjoy the applause of the Assembly for your great work.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour for me to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 120 visitors in both the members' gallery and public gallery from a community that is growing in leaps and bounds, and that's Spruce Grove. Our guests today are from the Woodhaven middle school, and I must say that they are an extremely excited and very knowledgeable group of youngsters who do represent the future of our province. They are accompanied today by teachers Ms Deb Schellenberger, Mr. David Hardman, Miss Keri Getz, Miss Ashley Lyster, Ms Joanne Fuminger and parent helpers Mrs. Maureen Gunning, Mrs. Stacey Chadwick, and Mrs. Brenda Koch. As I said, they are in both galleries, I believe, in the Assembly, and I would ask that they rise and our members give them the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 23 of Alberta's brightest and best students from Linsford Park school in the city of Leduc in my constituency. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Derrick Beach, and parent helpers Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Schiewe. They're in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly representatives from two well-known organizations who recently received very prestigious awards of recognition. The Zebra Child Protection Centre was honoured with the gold Laurel award and \$3,000 for organizing an exceptional holiday celebration for our most vulnerable children. The Youth Emergency Shelter was honoured with the silver Laurel award and \$2,000 for their innovative creation of the Armoury Youth Centre program for at-risk and homeless youth. I would ask that they please rise: Barbara Spencer, executive director; Kim Wheaton, board member of the Zebra Child Protection Centre; Shelly Chamaschuk, president; and Sue Keating, acting executive director of the board of the Youth Emergency Shelter. Please join me in giving them very warm congratulations. Thank you.

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

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two constituents from my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford, Mr. Charan Khehra and his daughter Nina Khehra. Mr. Khehra is a former senior economist with the Alberta government, and his daughter Nina is a psychologist. Twenty-five years ago Nina was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and she will be travelling to the United States for treatment later this year for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, a treatment currently unavailable in Alberta. I recently met with Mr. and Ms Khehra. I have a great deal of empathy for what Nina has experienced over the last 25 years. I certainly wish her the very best. I would ask them both to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the House

three new Liberal caucus staff members that I have the great pleasure to work with. I'll ask them to stand as I introduce their names: John Santos is my new executive assistant; Jann Lynn-George, our new director of research; and Kenton Betts, our new researcher at large. Our team of staff are among the brightest and most dedicated people I know, and our caucus is truly blessed to have their support and expertise to call on in our role as Official Opposition. I would ask all members to extend the traditional warm welcome to our new staff.

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

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a constituent whose family and several friends have been ravaged by multiple sclerosis. His name is Warren Stefanuk, and he is a member of the CCSVI, chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, advocacy group in Edmonton. He's seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that he rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of representatives from the advocacy group Stand with Fort Chipewyan. They have joined us today to help raise awareness of the health and environmental concerns expressed by Fort Chipewyan residents. They raised money through efforts and wanted to send the Premier to Fort Chip and hope that with their help he will make that visit. They're joining us in the members' gallery. These are the executives of the group. I would ask Richie Assaly, Saima Butt, and Aaron Samuel of the Stand with Fort Chip group to please stand. I would also ask to join them the former chief of the Mikisew Cree First Nation, George Poitras, and residents of that area Agnes Simpson, Evelyn Simpson, and Marie Marten. They are residents who've come to support this group. Thank you very much. Please welcome them to the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND caucus.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly Mr. Tom Kehoe, a representative of the Canadian Labour Congress. Many members may recognize Mr. Kehoe as a frequent visitor here. He was for a number of years a cameraman for CTV and covered our Legislature on a regular basis. The Canadian Labour Congress is concerned that most Canadians can't save enough to live with dignity in retirement. The labour movement along with retiree and community groups are calling for a gradual doubling of future Canada pension plan benefits. Mr. Kehoe is here to witness the tabling of a CLC report on pension reform. I want to welcome Tom, who is seated in the members' gallery, back to the Legislature, and I would now ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature my two new staff members in my legislative office – it seems a bit pretentious to call it a caucus office for a caucus of

one – here in Edmonton, who have proven already in the brief time that they've been working with me to be a tremendous help to me, and I'm grateful for them both. Jacquie Lycka is my new office and legislative assistant. She is a recent graduate of the U of A's political science honours program, where she completed her honours thesis on voting behaviour here in the province of Alberta. Evan Galbraith is my research assistant. He is from Calgary originally. He's a recent graduate of St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, which pleases the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, who has already been down to my office to compare rings, with an honours degree in political science. He wrote his thesis on intergovernmental relations pertaining to the oil sands. I asked them both to put a little something in their bios, something personal, like you like puppies or something like that. Then they found out I was a cat owner, and they didn't want to go there. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish that you would all give them the warm, traditional welcome of the House.

Members' Statements

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

Zebra Child Protection Centre Youth Emergency Shelter

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today in recognition of two organizations that help children and youth facing extremely challenging circumstances in their lives, the Zebra Child Protection Centre and the Youth Emergency Shelter Society, both recipients of Laurel awards for their outstanding work. Edmonton's Zebra centre, which opened in 2002, helps over 1,000 children each year. It was the first of its kind in Canada and a pioneer in assisting children who have tragically suffered physical or sexual abuse. Working in partnership with police, Children and Youth Services, and Crown prosecutors, the Zebra centre helps children to share their stories in a nonthreatening setting and begin the healing process.

Since 1982 the Youth Emergency Shelter Society has supported thousands of at-risk youth to achieve success. They help young people to overcome challenges such as drugs, alcohol, and sexual exploitation and successfully transition into adulthood. Through programs such as the new Armoury Youth Centre, youth are provided with a supportive environment where they can access a wide variety of programs and activities such as skills development, health services, counselling, and educational opportunities.

The efforts of both the Zebra centre and the Youth Emergency Shelter are truly appreciated. They are outstanding examples of how community groups made up of caring and dedicated individuals can make a tremendous difference in the lives of our province's greatest resource, our children.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All week Albertans have been hearing about the crisis in hospital emergency departments. Most shocking has been the revelation that the Premier and his health ministers have been sitting on details of hundreds of examples of the problems for 32 months, hidden this from the public, and done nothing. Last week this government took what was supposed to be a feel-good news conference to brag about their vacuous Health Act

and meaningless charter to hurriedly talk about new acute-care beds. They knew the latest letter from emergency room doctors was about to become public.

Yesterday they bragged about measures to ensure accountability for wait times. This whole sorry spectacle makes clear the real accountability problem. The Premier of Alberta is unable to provide leadership on this critical issue. In this House he has ignored my direct questions about his personal responsibility. Now, after a couple of days of heat, he's going to get out of the kitchen and hide from NDP questions and an angry public by going on a junket halfway around the world.

There is nothing new to what we are hearing this week. A year ago the NDP revealed plans to reduce long-term care resources and shift to costly private care. This was being kept secret from the public. Months ago the NDP criticized the foolishness of building new facilities and then leaving them vacant. The government does not take responsibility to deliver excellent public health care seriously. Mr. Speaker, people are dying and suffering unnecessarily. Dedicated health care professionals are becoming discouraged and disillusioned. Loving family members are struggling to provide care no longer available from the health care system.

It is time for the Premier to stop ducking and running. It is time for the Premier to look Albertans in the eye, admit he has let them down, and put his job and his health minister's job on the line if he fails again.

Thank you.

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

Canadian Anaphylaxis Readiness Education

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to bring to all the members' attention a very serious situation that affects us all, including a number of my esteemed colleagues, anaphylaxis. As the Assembly learned this week when our colleague the Minister of Infrastructure became ill during a caucus meeting, anaphylaxis is an extreme allergic reaction involving the whole body. After initial exposure to a substance like nuts or a bee sting, a person's immune system becomes overly sensitive to that allergen. On subsequent exposure a severe allergic reaction occurs.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this month the government of Alberta and Anaphylaxis Canada joined forces to create Canadian anaphylaxis readiness education, or CARE, a web-based training program for teachers and school staff. Increased anaphylaxis knowledge and awareness can save lives and will contribute to safe learning environments for all students. This innovative collaboration can literally mean life or death for some of the estimated 22,000 Alberta students who have potentially life-threatening allergies.

Mr. Speaker, a school cannot guarantee allergens will never enter a school environment; however, they can implement policies and procedures to ensure that the school community knows how to prevent, react to, and treat someone suffering from an anaphylactic reaction. Knowing what to do and how to do it can mean the difference between life and death for these vulnerable students.

The new care module complements the allergy anaphylaxis information response resource kits that were introduced to all Alberta public, separate, charter, private, and francophone schools in 2008.

I believe most would agree that the safety of schoolchildren and youth in our schools across the province is of the utmost importance to everyone involved in the education system, and this government indeed is taking action. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

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

Emergency Medical Services

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Someone needs to be accountable for the long-standing emergency room crisis in this province, and everyone seems to be dodging the political bullets. The Premier won't take responsibility; the minister of health won't take responsibility. So taxpayers are left wondering why the only people they can hold accountable are ducking for cover. To the Premier: will the Premier and minister of health accept that this is their fault? Six years. No one else. Will you take responsibility?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, we'll take responsibility for increasing the budgets for the Alberta Health Services Board. We've increased, as I said, the budget 6 per cent this year, 6 per cent into next year. We paid off the accumulated deficit, and we also topped up to what the board thought would be reasonable, reflecting the ever-increasing demands for health care. We will take responsibility for that. We also take responsibility for dealing with the issues on a day-to-day basis, the increase in population. We're just simply doing more in terms of services in health, and the minister has a plan to alleviate the pressures in emergency.

1:50

Dr. Swann: Well, the Premier talks about taking responsibility for everything, except the wait times are not improving, Mr. Premier. People are suffering. The change is not happening.

Yesterday the Premier said that he thought Alberta Health Services has been a success. Is the Premier honestly telling Albertans that 20-plus hours in wait times is a success? Wait times, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, we've just seen the largest merger in Canadian history of a number of regional health authorities plus the Cancer Board into one authority. This has brought down the cost of administration considerably. All of those dollars are going to go back into service delivery. The minister articulated a plan yesterday in the House. If the same question comes forward, I'll ask the minister to articulate the same plan that he brought forward yesterday.

Dr. Swann: No, Mr. Speaker. I'd like the Premier to answer for this. Clearly, the CEO of Alberta Health Services is being set up to be fired, and we'll move on to another one as the plan continues to fail. Will the Premier put his minister of health on the line and make him accountable for this failure to improve wait times?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I have tremendous confidence in my minister of health. I think also that for someone sitting in the position of Leader of the Official Opposition, it brings it to an all-time low to start to talk about someone else's future in this particular House and speculate about somebody's future. That is just totally inappropriate.

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

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Talk about empty promises. The minister of health yesterday held a big news conference to tell the world he will be publishing four-hour and eight-hour

benchmarks for wait times in emergency rooms. These benchmarks were published early in the year under Alberta Health Services' performance report. To the Premier again: since the four-hour and eight-hour targets have been published since March, how is your announcement yesterday going to produce different results? Mr. Premier?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I'll have the minister respond to all of the detail in terms of rolling out the plan for emergency room response.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that in some hospitals those particular benchmarks are only being met at the 20, 30, 40 per cent mark. As this member who's asking the question should know, because these are national guideline standards, we're looking at the 90th percentile. We're looking at something being met at a higher rate. That's what the target is all about. It's going to be improved upon immediately.

Dr. Swann: This is not about targets, Mr. Speaker; it's about results. These have been the same results for several years, Mr. Health Minister. When is it going to change?

An Hon. Member: Good theatre.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we had a very good meeting with the emergency docs. The hon. member asking the question might do well to have that same meeting, because what they told me is that they're very happy with what we've arrived at as an action plan. They're very pleased that this government is listening and responding and reacting to the concerns they've expressed. I'm quite sure that Albertans will also follow suit, and they'll be happy once all of this is done and accomplished. We're getting there.

Dr. Swann: For those chirping over there, try sitting in an emergency department for 20 hours if you think this is theatre.

To the Premier: since the Premier is not willing to hold his minister accountable, will the Premier commit that these benchmarks will be posted in every emergency room in Alberta and the minister of health's phone number will be under the sign so Albertans themselves can hold him accountable for these changes?

Mr. Stelmach: You know, Mr. Speaker, in all honesty let's just cool down and apply some common sense to the approach. Nobody wants to wait in the emergency room. Nobody wants to wait for a bed. We do know that we have an ever-increasing number of people that have to be placed in continuing care. We're doing whatever we can. We've already built well beyond our target of 800 beds for this year. I believe AHS says we'll reach about 1,300 new continuing care beds. That's the real issue: moving people that need continuing care out of acute-care beds, and we're doing that.

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

Trade Mission to India

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The health impacts of oil sands development have long been a concern of the people of Fort Chip. However, even though these concerns have been proven by

studies of health care professionals, the Alberta Cancer Board, and independent scientists, they are not a priority of the Premier, but a trip to India mid-session is. To the Premier. Today the Premier was presented with a cheque to buy a flight to Fort Chip. The Premier can find time to travel to India. When will he find time to visit Fort Chip?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, there are two components here in terms of the answer. One is with respect to the students that are here from the University of Alberta. You know, travelling to Fort Chip: we're waiting for the last signature on an agreement in terms of doing even further research and study into Fort Chip and its residents with respect to all of the health effects the public is saying that they're experiencing.

Secondly, if we were to meet the constant demands of every increase in spending that all opposition members want in this particular House, we have to open up new markets around the world, and we have to do that because that is a priority. We have to pay for whatever they're expecting us to pay for.

Dr. Swann: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, we are expecting you to pay for health investigations for the people of Fort Chip. That is an expectation all Albertans have. Do the research and follow the science.

Mr. Speaker, given that a recent study authored by two UBC professors found that no noticeable increase in trade resulted from Canadian trade missions between 1993 and 2003, why is the Premier spending \$84,000 and two weeks away from his duties here in Alberta on such dubious value?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I don't need anybody from UBC or wherever he's quoting from. I can tell you that constantly today there are people moving here from B.C., from Ontario. They're moving into Edmonton. They're moving into Calgary. You know why? Because there are job opportunities in this province like nowhere else in the country of Canada.

Dr. Swann: Since trade experts believe that a regional presence in foreign markets, shopping, and grocery outlets may be more effective than a splashy trade junket, why isn't the Premier marketing products from the Athabasca River fishery in India?

Mr. Stelmach: I guess that's the best the opposition has to offer, and that's why we have to be ever so diligent not to get caught up in that kind of dialogue, you know. Here we are trying to attract more investment to Canada, to the province of Alberta to increase trade, to build a larger economy, and they're just dragging the whole system down. I don't know how you can live with yourselves every morning when you get up.

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

Emergency Medical Services

(continued)

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thought, in light of the fact it's a World Series going on, that Rick Bell, a Calgary columnist, hit a home run in his column today. He described the government as either people who know, people who don't know, or the third, people who don't know what they don't know. My question is to the Premier. Did you know about the letter that went to your office over two and a half years ago about the emergencies? Why did you fail to act on that very letter that was given to you? Will you admit, yes or no, to that letter? Yes or no?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think they've brought this letter up – what? – a couple of days now in the House, and I don't know if it's been tabled. If it has, I'd like to see the tabled letter because I really don't know what exactly they're talking about. It could be any letter. [interjections] Now they're chirping again. It could be any kind of a letter. That's in their question, a letter. Okay?

The other thing is, in all honesty, if it is with respect to emergency room response, as I said before, the minister has met. We've set benchmarks. We're continuing to work. It's not only reducing the waiting times in emergency, but it's also increasing the number of spaces for seniors in continuing care.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He refers to the minister. Is that the minister who really wasn't the minister or the minister who wasn't the minister then? We need to know.

Given that and the non-answer that he just provided – and all the folks in emergency rooms watching Access television are watching for the answer – do you know, do you not know, or do you not know what you don't know?

2:00

Mr. Stelmach: I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that will be on YouTube everywhere around Canada.

In all honesty, if it is to the emergency room response and to the letter that was written, we're very clear in terms of the targets that we're meeting: more nurses trained, more doctors, and also more continuing care facilities in the province of Alberta. We're on the path to achieving all of those goals that were written in the letter.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, given the non-answer once again, the folks that are watching on television in emergency rooms now can see that it's not column 1, I know, not column 2, I don't know. Clearly, the minister and the Premier don't know what they don't know. To the minister of health. You knew about this. Why didn't you act at that time?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I received the e-mail over the Thanksgiving weekend. I replied immediately, and I took action immediately.

Let me just clarify what's going on here. Let's talk about some of the good things going forward here. Alberta has nearly 8,000 more beds today than a decade ago. Alberta has the fastest-growing physician workforce in Canada. We have the fastest-growing nurse workforce in Canada. We have 37 PCNs here. We have MRIs and CAT scans that outnumber anyone else on a per capita basis. And over here we're dealing with the past. Let's deal with what's going on that's good, that gives people confidence, knowing that we have one of the best health systems in the world right here.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: Hon. members, I recognized an hon. member to raise a question, and it was pretty quiet when the question was being delivered. Then I offered an opportunity for the minister to respond, and unfortunately there was a whole bunch of catcalling coming along. Let's just try and lower the temper here now, please.

We'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood so that everybody in the House can hear the question and hear the response.

Emergency Medical Services (continued)

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Instead of staying to accept responsibility for the emergency room crisis, the Premier is running away on a junket to India, something that could have been scheduled when the Assembly was not in session. He's leaving his health minister to attempt to deflect the anger of Albertans with more empty promises. This time it's wait-time targets, another promise waiting to be broken. My question is to the Premier. Why does he believe these wait-time targets will actually be met given the serious shortage of staff and long-term care beds that his government has created?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, we are committed to an increased number of nurses trained in the province, an increased number of physicians and other allied health care professionals, and together with that also increasing the number of continuing care spaces in the province. We targeted about 800. We may be on track at the end of this fiscal period to reach about 1,300 spaces, which will take away a lot of pressure. That's the kind of long-term planning that we're working on. We always know that we will have an increasing aging population, and we've got to meet those demands. It's about 2,000 seniors a month now. It'll be 3,000 here in the next couple of years.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier. Yesterday the health minister announced that he had today directed the Alberta Health Services to implement wait-time targets, but what he didn't tell people was that the same targets had already been set over a year ago by Alberta Health Services itself and were in place. Will the Premier admit that the government is at it again, still just recycling meaningless promises, and that his minister has failed to be honest with the people of Alberta about that?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, about this time last year we were looking at how to deal with the ever-increasing demands in all ministries. Originally we were looking at having the health budget hold similar to the previous year's expenses. After looking and reviewing all of the ministerial budgets, we did find some year-end savings within other operations of government, which went to health care spending. We also knew that we were going to have more pressures. That's why we paid off the deficit and gave the health board an increase.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the health minister failed to tell people that since the targets were implemented over a year ago, things have gotten steadily worse and given that your own hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark's father spent four days recently in an emergency room and given that a doctor was on the radio yesterday talking about a woman who had to undergo a miscarriage in the waiting room of an emergency room, will the Premier admit that without more long-term care beds and more staff the wait-time targets are meaningless?

Mr. Stelmach: The hon. member made one statement that I agree with. We do need more continuing care beds. So we're looking at all options, working with nonprofit organizations, for-profit, looking at additional land and space with municipalities. In fact, part of the discussion today with the two mayors was in terms of how we can

use some of the land that the two cities own. This is all working in the right, positive direction. Next year we will work towards increasing even further the number of beds for our seniors.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that we all get that the crisis in our emergency rooms is ultimately caused by insufficient continuing care beds at the discharge end, which backs up the whole system, and we all know that will take some time to solve. But so what? The sick people waiting up to 22 hours in Alberta's ERs need solutions now. Here's the thing. Even after 16 years of mismanaging health care, this government hasn't completely managed to stamp out the collective memory of those who used to run health care when it did work. To the health minister. Here's a thought: will the minister direct the Alberta Health Services Board to bring all staff, current and retired, to available status and to offer full-time shifts to all nurses who want them so that we not only have more health care professionals available, but they're available not at quadruple time but at straight cost, lower cost, straight time?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm open to any and all suggestions. In fact, when we met with the emergency docs a couple of nights ago, we heard some other innovative ideas. So we'll be taking a look at anything and everything that can help improve the situation so that we're meeting more than the 20 or 30 or 40 percentile mark. We're aiming at a target of 90 per cent, and that, to my knowledge, is a new percentile for this particular suite of targets.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just don't spend too long looking at things.

Again to the minister. Another thought: since several hundred net acute-care beds could be open if only he could find the staff and since I've just given him a clue for how to do that, will the minister order AHS to open those beds and commit to have those beds fully operating and fully funded, all several hundred of them, within the next six weeks?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, when we met with the emergency docs a couple of nights ago, we talked about four time frames: immediate actions, things that could be done today, literally today and tomorrow; a short-term time frame, which would be within weeks, before Christmas; a medium-term time frame, which would be within a year; and a long term, which is within the five-year funding framework that we've discussed. Now, as part of that, certainly, they're looking at where and how more acute-care beds can be opened, where and how more continuing care beds can be opened because we recognize where the backlog is. There are too many people in acute care who ought to be in other settings.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're still waiting.

Okay. One more try. To the minister: since he's always going to meetings, will he actually start listening and acting on the ideas that he's hearing from physicians and their colleagues at each hospital and take specific advice? One size does not fit all.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm not only meeting; I'm also listening carefully, and I'm acting as immediately as possible. This

morning I visited the emergency room at the Grey Nuns hospital, picked up some ideas there. I've been now to about 26 different emergency rooms, listening carefully to what their solutions are because they're all a little bit different; they're all quite unique. You can't have a simple, one-size-fits-all approach, nor can you have a single, silver-bullet approach. It's a complex issue, and that will be told to you in identical words by the emergency docs as well. Yes, we are working . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Home-schooling

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Within Whitecourt-Ste. Anne my constituents are concerned about the challenges facing home-schooled students as they seek admittance to Alberta's postsecondary institutions. While government approves and even regulates home-schooling, my constituents find that postsecondary institutions are less open to the idea and lack consistent policies for accepting home-schooled students. My questions are to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. Minister, it's easy for every foreign student across the world to come to Alberta; there are policies. When are you going to create a policy for our own Alberta students, for our own home-schooled students?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an important issue that all of the postsecondary institutions across the province are addressing. I wouldn't categorize it as being easy for international students to come from abroad, because every international student comes from a particular institution or some other schooling jurisdiction that has already worked with that institution to get the clearance or to get the entrance requirements done. Each postsecondary handles that on their own, dependent upon the curriculum or the course that that student may be applying for and what he may have taken in the other areas.

2:10

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, I think, Minister, that you've missed my point. You're the big wheel here, and the home-schooled students are watching you. What are you going to do to help them prepare for postsecondary institutions?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, while I may be the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology, I do not run every one of the 26 postsecondaries. They are board-governed, autonomous institutions who set their own entry requirements. We have guidelines in place for those things as it relates to the curriculum that is attended to in the K to 12 system. I might add that home-schooled students who are taking the Alberta curriculum don't experience a great deal of difficulty because they are actually taking the same exams that other students are taking. The important factor here is that home-schooled students need to do their homework as well. I would recommend Clicks as a great program to do that with.

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, I think the minister is passing the buck, so I'm going to move over to another minister, the Minister of Education. How does this minister ensure that those students being home-schooled are adequately prepared for postsecondary schooling and can compete with their public school counterparts?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We won't allow the minister of advanced education to pass the buck. We need adequate resources for both education and advanced education.

I want to say that home-schooling is an appropriate choice for many students and their parents if it's done appropriately. If it's done appropriately, they're registered with the school boards for oversight, they need to meet the standards of other Alberta students, and they can challenge exams if they want to have the Alberta diploma, which gives them that ready access to the postsecondary world. There are accountability structures built into our system for home-schooling, as there are for private schools and for public schools. If they do it right, they'll have the accreditation they need.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Critical Electricity Transmission Infrastructure

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are serious problems underlying Alberta's electricity system. The government has served the interests of everyone except consumers, ratepaying Albertans. Bill 50 has not only bypassed the process of government accountability at the Alberta Utilities Commission and raised electricity costs; it has removed landowner rights. To the Minister of Energy. Bill 50 off-loaded the costs of unnecessary infrastructure onto consumers. Does he believe that consumers are willing to pay for increased transmission costs?

Mr. Liepert: Well, I guess, Mr. Speaker, one has to ask the question: in the end, ultimately, who does pay for all of the costs that are associated with upgrading a transmission system? We have a transmission system in this province such that the youngest of the transmission lines is some 37 years old. It needs significant upgrade. We went through an extensive debate in this Legislature, we passed Bill 50, and now the Alberta Utilities Commission will hold public hearings open to all parties in Alberta to determine siting, costs, and all of the other issues. Nothing there has changed.

Dr. Swann: Well, I beg to differ. With all respect, Mr. Speaker, this administration has taken out of the hands of their own commission the right to assess and have a public hearing on a need for these lines. Will you make it mandatory to review the need for these lines? That is the question.

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, we went through that debate extensively last year, and I'm sure the hon. member had every opportunity to participate. Now, you know, when it comes to need, this government is going to be responsible to ensure that every part of this province has the opportunity to have economic development, that we have electricity where it's needed when it's needed, and that we will not stand by and see the lights go out in this province.

Dr. Swann: More and more Albertans are asking, Mr. Speaker, that this minister and this government rescind Bill 50 and return basic rights to landowners and citizens of Alberta.

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. Bill 50 took away no rights. This is a fallacy that seems to be out there, that somehow property rights were taken away. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing has changed in Bill 50 relative to property rights. What we have done, though, is identified where the need was, and now the Utilities Commission will hold the appropriate hearings.

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

Oil and Natural Gas Land Sale Revenues

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The province recently set a new record for petroleum and natural gas land sales, earning \$1.86 billion. This surpasses the record of \$1.83 billion set back in 2005. My question is to the Minister of Finance and Enterprise. Can the minister tell me what land sales mean in terms of our overall budget impact this year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, land sales have been the bright spot in our revenue forecast this year. When I tabled the budget in February, we were predicting land sales of \$630 million. As the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow just indicated, as of the last land sale that's now above \$1.8 billion, so three times what we anticipated at budget.

There's more good news, Mr. Speaker. Land sales are the best predictor of future exploration development, and drilling rigs in July were 150 per cent greater than they were a year ago.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you. My first supplemental is to the Minister of Energy. Can the minister confirm if this increase in land sales revenue was the result of changes to the royalty structure?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think what industry has asked for is that we have a regime in place that encourages investment. I think we've found that right balance, and industry is responding accordingly. We had a session over the noon hour with a presentation from a number of the industry groups, and clearly they indicated to us that they have confidence in the Alberta economy. Natural gas prices are a concern, but as was identified, our land sales have been very encouraging.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much. A further supplemental to the same minister: what do land sales mean in terms of Alberta's competitiveness?

Mr. Liepert: Well, I think that maybe a better way of putting it is that it's confidence in the future in this province, Mr. Speaker. It's industry that makes these decisions of when and where to invest, when and where to purchase. I would suggest that all the indications we're getting from industry are that this will be the highest activity in the drilling sector in some three or four years in this province, and that's despite the fact that natural gas prices are troubling today.

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

Oil Sands Tailings Ponds

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's toxic tailings ponds are now the size of the Sea of Galilee. The minister has stated that tailings ponds will be reduced in the long term, but the ERCB has already approved plans that do not meet directive 074's requirements for reducing fine tailings in the ponds, and the timelines for final cleanup are still unknown. To the Minister of

Environment: how long is this long term that the minister is talking about? Are we talking one generation? Two generations? Will the grandchildren of today still be looking to deal with tailings ponds?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess my crystal ball isn't quite as clear as hers, and I'm not able to predict the future quite as well as she thinks that I should. This is a technical issue that the answer to will derive over time. But I can assure this member – I can absolutely assure this member – that we're not talking decades. We are, however, talking in the time frame of years. We're looking at full implementation of directive 074 within this decade.

Ms Blakeman: No. Actually, when you look at all the deadlines, I think it's closer to 30 years.

Mr. Speaker, industry is innovative, and they have the resources and the minds to make change happen, but the minister is not requiring this of them. When will the minister bring in targets and standards that push industry to clean up this legacy now?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned in answer to one of the questions yesterday or the day before that we are currently in the process of developing a tailings management program. That's in combination with the whole issue of mine reclamation. I am encouraged by the tremendous amount of progress that has been made on that, and I encourage the member to stay tuned because we should have much more specific answers for her in a very short period of time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that this is the second time this fall that the federal government has stepped in and started their own investigation into either dead ducks or other issues around the oil sands, my question to the minister is: why does Alberta keep getting trumped by the feds?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, that's simply not the case. Alberta Environment and Environment Canada have been partners for quite some time. Any kind of major environmental issue is commonly dealt with from a joint perspective. The member is well aware that the issue that was recently settled with Syncrude from the ducks landing a couple of years ago resulted in a trial where charges from both the province and the federal government were involved. It's not unusual in the least to have joint . . .

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

2:20

Human Trafficking

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across Canada and North America, unfortunately, there has been a rise in human trafficking and sexual exploitation. This despicable crime has even crept into our province, where it preys on our society's most vulnerable individuals, usually women and children. To the hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security: what action is your department taking to crack down on human traffickers and those who profit from these despicable activities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Oberle: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for the question. My mandate and the commitment of our

Premier and the government is to provide communities where Albertans may live and work and play and pursue their dreams without fear. We take the crimes of sex trade and human trafficking very seriously, hon. member, and we've got local law enforcement teams and ALERT teams, integrated policing teams, working together on prevention programs, on arrests. Certainly, we're enforcing laws against traffickers wherever we can, and we're providing training to police officers to recognize the crimes and to aid in prosecutions. We need the help of the community, though.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplemental question is to the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General. The promotion and advertising of human trafficking is done mostly online, specifically through websites such as Craigslist, who allow advertisements to appear under a thinly veiled cover for human trafficking. Can the minister explain what action her department is taking to shut down these activities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the hon. member is correct, and that is currently happening on Craigslist. At our most recent federal, provincial, and territorial ministers' meeting we were able to share our experiences across the country with respect to investigation and prosecution. We're having some great successes. However, besides the work that we do with the integrated child exploitation team and our working groups on human trafficking and the work that our police do, we do think it's important to begin an effort to ask Craigslist, which is the first step that we have to take, to shut down that service. We've been very clear that we believe that it does involve human trafficking, and we are now beginning that discussion in concert with other provinces.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental question is also to the same hon. minister. Is your ministry working with any other levels of government to put an end to human trafficking in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've taken a very strong stand on the issue. We're working in conjunction with our prosecutors and our police. We're also working with the federal government and with other provincial governments. I'm also very proud of the leadership role that Alberta has taken with the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers not only with respect to human trafficking in the way we've been talking about publicly in the last couple of weeks but also with the leadership work that we've taken on the task force report with respect to missing women, which we believe is another component of this. There are 52 recommendations in that report for jurisdictions to follow so that they can have the same success as us in prosecuting these.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Alberta Health Services Board

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. History has taught us that central planning and big bureaucracies do not work, and that's

precisely what the superboard is. The proof that it is failing continues to mount. The Auditor General said this week that the board can't keep track of its budget. Yesterday even the superboard's CEO confessed that the inefficient AHS has continued to put people in the wrong beds. To the minister: given that patients have no confidence in the superboard, staff have no confidence in or support for the superboard, and now even the CEO is admitting doubts, when will the government dismantle the superboard and return control to our local communities and hospitals?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times I've stood in this House and indicated that the centralized, single province-wide board is working very hard as a new entity in bringing information in a more consistent fashion so that we can make important decisions to improve health outcomes such as a five-year funding commitment, such as a five-year action plan, that's coming out very soon, such as performance measures and a host of other things.

Also, having said that, please let's note that the Alberta Health Services Board has actually reduced the number of CEOs and others who are part of that bureaucracy.

Mr. Hinman: Mr. Speaker, that answer was farcical. It's unbelievable.

Given how ineffective the superboard is, the minister's new ER wait time targets are just empty rhetoric. Given that this government only responded this week because the public were made aware of the crisis by ER doctors, the AHS needs to be open and accountable to Albertans. The only way to do this is to publicly disclose all the ER horror stories like those released last week. Will the minister commit to putting all suboptimal triage reports online immediately?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, if the member had been listening yesterday, I directed Alberta Health Services to report on a per-site basis what's going on in the emergency rooms with respect to the protocols that are forthcoming. Albertans want to know how the particular hospital in their area is performing. They have a right to know that. They've told us they want to know that, and that's why I announced yesterday that we will be doing that. What more accountability can you have than to look at each hospital on a per-site basis and be accountable for those results?

Mr. Hinman: That's excellent, Mr. Speaker, so long as it's the full triage reports and not just that the wait-times are four hours.

Given that the ER problem has been escalating for years now – this government has known since March 2008, but it's only getting worse – how much longer will the minister go on defending the superboard while withholding the documents that enable Albertans to see the true state of affairs of our emergency system and why the superboard must go? When will he put the full triage reports online?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I agreed to follow up within two weeks, perhaps even sooner, with the emergency docs regarding a number of their issues. What we're talking about here are the tier 1 performance measures. There will be some tier 2 performance measures, which people on the other side, I'm sure, understand. As part of that, we will be reporting back to Albertans with what it is that Alberta Health Services has in mind and what they have accomplished by way of providing better health services in the emergency rooms and in other parts of the system as well. It is working, it's coming together nicely, and it's all because of the five-year funding commitment that . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Bee-Clean Building Maintenance

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been reported that 122 former and current employees of Bee-Clean are now being paid \$155,000 in overtime accumulated over the past two years for work at the University of Alberta here in Edmonton. My first question is to the Deputy Premier, please. How many of these 122 workers at the University of Alberta are temporary foreign workers who, as we all know, unfortunately, do not have the same rights that Canadian citizens or landed immigrants enjoy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I will take the question under advisement and endeavour to have the appropriate minister respond to the member.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier is the minister responsible for the University of Alberta.

My second question is to the Deputy Premier. Given that this government has helped a former Premier with his problems over plagiarism at an Alberta university in the past, why does this government not now try to help the janitors resolve their differences over fair pay and working conditions at the University of Alberta?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, you know, aside from being a rather ridiculously stated question, my understanding is that the minister of the appropriate department is handling the situation with the employees and with the employer. To suggest that the University of Alberta somehow manages contract employees that they have as janitorial staff is like asking how many employees work at the bank branch that they deal with. It's kind of a ridiculous connection.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, it is not ridiculous that these individuals in this province deserve fair wages and good working conditions, and you know it.

Now, again to the Deputy Premier: given that this government has a contract that over the last four years has paid Bee-Clean \$2.4 million, will you make a commitment that employment standards will review all the pay stubs for the employees of Bee-Clean in the Department of Infrastructure, in particular, over the last four years?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to clarify for the hon. member that I wasn't calling the situation ridiculous; I was calling his question ridiculous.

Obviously, we're always monitoring the workforce standards that are in place, and the minister has an obligation to do that for all Alberta workers, including temporary foreign workers.

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

2:30

Chateau Estates Access Road

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. After two years of lobbying, the Minister of Transportation moved forward with an access road to connect 84th Street N.E. to 100th Street N.E. in Calgary for the residents of Chateau Estates. Minister, construction has started. When will this access road now be completed?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I've got to say that those constituents in that area should be very, very thankful for having an MLA that

just gets out there. I still have the scars from all the lobbying he does. I have to tell you that I have very good news for this member. The road is under construction as we speak, and we are expecting it to be completed by October 31, weather permitting, of course. I think this hon. member can tell his constituents that the wait is over.

Mr. Bhullar: Wonderful news, Mr. Speaker. Wonderful news.

Would the minister mind telling me why the project did take so long to complete?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I just told the hon. member that this road is near completion, but for some reason – he must be getting older or something – he wants to go back in time. This member knows very well what the issue was and why this road took so long. It's because we had issues with pipeline companies, and we had to get the crossing agreements in place. This particular member knows that very well. It'll be just mere days before the road is complete.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you. I did know that, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted him to say it so the pipeline companies had other people to blame, not just me.

Mr. Speaker, my final question to this wonderful minister, who built this one-kilometre stretch of road that we finally have two years later: once the road is complete, Minister, who is responsible for maintaining it?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, Rocky View county will be responsible for the 243A road once it's completed. This is about providing reasonable access for local traffic while maintaining safety and design standards for Stoney Trail N.E. I must say that this project is a wonderful example of our government responding to concerns of local residents.

Legal Aid

Mr. Hehr: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Justice conceded that law information centres are not an adequate substitute for representation by defence counsel in criminal court. Given this admission I would like to ask the hon. minister if her ministry will quit expecting litigants to use these services and, instead, properly fund legal aid for individuals to be able to access a lawyer and not a pamphlet.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has never been our contention that law information centres were supposed to replace counsel or legal advice for people who are appearing in criminal court. I will say that this government has had a commitment to legal aid, has not cut legal aid funding, has actually doubled legal aid funding continuously over the past four years, and we will continue to ensure that people who need to go to criminal court are getting adequate representation through duty counsel whenever they need it.

Mr. Hehr: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm somewhat surprised if not shocked at that answer. Just recently Judge Wheatley's decision in Frick has been interpreted differently by this minister than it has been for me. That Assistant Chief Judge believes that underfunding to legal aid has limited services to criminal defendants. Do you disagree with this characterization by the Assistant Chief Judge?

Ms Redford: I couldn't hear the last part of the question, but what I do know is that as the Ministry of Justice we work with the Legal Aid board on a weekly basis to ensure that people in this province are receiving adequate representation not only in criminal court, Mr. Speaker, but in civil court.

Mr. Hehr: Well, Mr. Speaker, "for an accused without the means to pay for a lawyer, the current situation in Alberta is troublesome." I didn't say that; the Assistant Chief Judge did in Provincial Court. I was wondering: is he right or is he wrong here?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, in this province we fund over \$58 million a year toward legal aid. We have maintained that commitment through difficult economic times. We have talked to the federal government about increasing their contribution. Unfortunately, they at this time are not prepared to do that. But every year, when federal and provincial ministers get together, we raise this issue, we talk about the importance of this issue, and we renew our commitment to this issue. We care about this issue. We have not cut our funding, and we will ensure that people who go to court are provided with proper representation.

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

Provincial Achievement Tests

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The results of the provincial achievement tests and diploma exams were recently released, and in most cases the news is very good. However, there are some results that cause me and the parents in my constituency a great concern. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Can the minister tell us why these more troublesome results, particularly for language arts 30, continue to decline? This exam, after all, is the basic entrance requirement for postsecondary institutions.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. An important question, but first of all let's focus on the success of Alberta students. The results on our provincial achievement tests at both the acceptable level and the level of excellence have gone up. The results in our diploma exams have increased. There are some troubling areas. English language arts 30-1 is one of those troubling areas, and we need to be very closely monitoring that and figuring out with teachers and others in the system how we can do better on that because, of course, literacy and communication skills are fundamental. We're working with them. The standardized test will tell us what direction we're going.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My supplemental to the same minister. The results for aboriginal learners also remain a subject of concern. What is being done to improve these statistics?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, what's happening with respect to FNMI students is actually quite exciting. Although the results are still way too low, the trend lines are very good, and the increases in each are very strong. We're not there yet by any stretch of the imagination, but we've gone up five points in one particular area. I can tell you that although we have a high rate of students dropping

out, we also have an above-average rate of students coming back. So there's good news in the FNMI area: the work we're doing with our partnership council, with our MOU, with the treaty chiefs and the federal government, and the good things that are happening in the school system.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental to the same minister: why are students with special needs who may be working on IPP tested on material they have not learned yet?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, all students are taught the same curriculum. What we do expect is that teachers will differentiate their instruction based on the capacity of students to learn, their learning styles, their learning needs. In terms of standardized results we want to know what the system is doing, and therefore it's necessary to be able to include as many students as possible in provincial achievement tests so we know how the system works. That doesn't affect the students' individual marks. Students are working on the same curriculum, just differentiated instruction for their abilities and for their needs.

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

Protection of Personal Information

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Virtually all government databases are web applications, everything from land titles to corporate records to environmental data to judicial fines, but Service Alberta is slashing its IT budget and laying off hundreds of IT workers even though the Auditor General is saying that information security in government is still alarmingly weak. To the Minister of Service Alberta: will the minister admit that the budget cuts are a higher priority for her department than information security?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated yesterday, the security of the information of Albertans is very important to me and this government, and working with the Auditor General, as I explained yesterday, is important as well. When you talk about the web applications, some of the things that the government is involved in, it's critical that we protect the integrity of that.

With respect to employees that have moved on to other areas, when you can standardize technology and do things with technologies, there are always savings, and those are reflected across government.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister didn't answer the question. By cutting \$11 million, it's not going to help the security very much.

Since the Auditor General asked for the new timelines two months ago, when will the minister get around to acting on these two-year-old recommendations?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated yesterday, there were 12 recommendations, of which two are done and then

nine that we're working on with significant progress, as the Auditor General has reported. The fact that the chief information officers for each department work with the chief information officer with Service Alberta, design their plans and present their information security plan for the year, is absolutely critical. That's something we were not doing two years ago, and we are doing that now.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With compliance being the biggest issue with other government departments, will the minister commit to auditing each ministry and make public the ones dragging their feet on IT security?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to what the departments are doing and the good work that all the chief information officers are doing across government, it's really important that, working with us, they do their work so we can communicate to Albertans that their information is secure and their information is protected. That's why, working with the Auditor General, we are certainly on the right track.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the question period for today. Seventeen members were identified and 102 questions and responses.

Statement by the Speaker

Retirement of Clerk Assistant

The Speaker: Just a brief announcement before we move on. Our Clerk Assistant and director of House services, Louise Kamuchik, has announced that she will be retiring at the end of this year after more than 27 years of service to the Assembly, and we'll be recognizing that service at a reception on November 24 of this year, to which you will all be receiving an invitation. [Standing ovation]

On Monday, Dr. Philip Massolin, our committee research coordinator, will commence training as a table officer in addition to his regular duties, and you will see him at the Clerk's table on Monday next.

In 30 seconds from now we'll continue with the Routine.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Pastor Doug Webb

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a dear friend and community leader within my constituency, Pastor Doug Webb of the East Church of the Nazarene. Last year with the help of 98 volunteers Pastor Doug initiated a project in my constituency that connected the community on a grassroots level. This was the first Faith in Action event, a day dedicated to cleaning up the community of Penbrooke Meadows, the community in which I was born. This event was more than just picking up waste. It was about service in the community, about building bridges within a community that often lacks people who step out from their individual institutions and connect.

Mr. Speaker, this year I once again had the privilege of partnering with the Calgary East Church of the Nazarene and the Penbrooke Meadows Community Association for the annual Faith in Action

community cleanup. Faith in Action is just one example of the steps Pastor Doug takes to encourage supportive initiatives within our community. He is someone that has found countless opportunities to bridge communities together and bring down the barriers of faith, that far too often in our world divide people.

Unfortunately, Pastor Doug is leaving Penbrooke Meadows and moving to Grande Prairie to look after a new church. Pastor Doug is an inspiration not only to myself but to many residents of Penbrooke Meadows and all who have met him. I extend my best wishes to Pastor Doug as he pursues new challenges, and I have every confidence that he will inspire others in his many future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Minister's Workforce Forum

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 27 I had the privilege of attending the Minister of Employment and Immigration's workforce forum here in Edmonton. More than 130 officials were there representing employers, industry associations, labour and professional organizations, educators, and government, who all gathered to discuss how Alberta's labour force can contribute to our province's competitive position in the global economy.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's minister's workforce forum had its roots in the building and educating tomorrow's workforce initiative that was launched in 2006. It was about recognizing our changing workplaces and the need to plan for the next evolution of Alberta's labour force development strategy. As our Premier has said, competitiveness is about more than just reducing the cost of doing business. Developing our human capital is an important part of increasing our competitiveness.

I had the honour of moderating the first half of the forum, focused on attracting and retaining talent, that featured insightful remarks from Glen Hodgson, the vice-president and chief economist with the Conference Board of Canada. Some of the issues that stuck out in my mind include: approximately 15 per cent of Alberta graduates leave the province to pursue employment opportunities elsewhere and the increasing recognition and support for workplace training. There was also a strong message that government and industry share the responsibility in building and developing an innovative and creative workforce that will maintain our level of prosperity from now into the future.

Mr. Speaker, the forum was incredibly productive. I want to thank all the participants for giving their time and ideas to building a strong workforce in our province.

Thank you.

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

Canadian Citizenship Week

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. October 18 to 24 marked Canadian Citizenship Week. Last Saturday I had the opportunity to address over 150 Sikh seniors as well as Judge Sonia Bitar, one of Canada's immigration judges and, in fact, an immigrant from Lebanon.

Mr. Speaker, my Canadian citizenship is dear to me, and as an immigrant I know the value the rest of the world places on the freedoms we often take for granted. I remember eagerly waiting the three years needed to apply for Canadian citizenship, and in fact I was ready to apply after only two and a half years. Every day I am reminded of how blessed I am to live in a nation as free and tolerant as Canada.

However, I am also reminded that the rights we enjoy come with responsibilities. Mr. Speaker, it is our duty as Canadian citizens to uphold our rights and take an active role in shaping our communities. I moved to Canada in 1979, and since that time I have been blessed with a home, a family, a dedicated community, good weather, and beautiful nature. On top of that, I moved to a land of opportunity. I remember being asked by a student in my constituency during Read In Week if I would have been an MLA in India if I had stayed. I said no. It was more likely that I would be a soldier or a police officer. I said this because there are few places in the world where a person can achieve success through hard work, and Canada is one of those places.

I ask all members to join with me today and take time out to think about Canada and the rights and responsibilities we have as citizens. Thank you very much. God bless.

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

Distracted Driving

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Whenever anyone gets behind the wheel of a vehicle, their full attention should be on the task at hand: getting from point A to point B without getting into a collision. In the early days of the automobile the task was relatively simple. There were fewer vehicles, fewer gadgets on the dashboard to play with. But today drivers can bombard themselves with a wide variety of dangerous distractions. Chatting with passengers, fiddling with the radio, eating breakfast all take the eyes and ears off the road.

Among the most dangerous distractions is the cellphone, a near universal accessory beloved by entrepreneurs, salespeople, teenagers, and, yes, politicians. Smart phones are even worse, with multiple ways of distracting driving: texting, music, games, social media applications. Despite reams of evidence showing that using cellphones while driving is dangerous, many people persist in doing so.

Alberta loses 400 citizens at least per year and has 20,000 injuries per year at least, many due to distracted driving. As custodians of the public good, how many deaths, how much suffering will Albertans endure if we fail to ban cellphones, including hands-free devices, while driving? We mustn't take another 50 years to wake up to the dangers. I urge this government to move ahead with strict distracted driving legislation, with hefty fines for infractions. A vehicle is a deadly weapon in distracted hands. Let's protect our fellow citizens, our families, our children before another life is lost.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to the standing orders I would give notice that under Standing Order 34(3.1) I would advise the House that on Monday, November 1, 2010, written questions 40 and 41 will be dealt with.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Bill 17 Alberta Health Act

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise to request leave to introduce a bill, that being the Alberta Health Act.

In rising to introduce this historic act, I note that it is our first Alberta Health Act. Bill 17, as it will be known during debate, was promised in our Speech from the Throne earlier this year. It is the product of more than a year-long conversation with Albertans about our publicly funded health system. It began with the Minister's Advisory Committee on Health last year, and it continued with me on behalf of our government accepting all 15 recommendations of the recently authored Putting People First report on October 20, a report, I might add, that I want to sincerely thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for having provided to me a short while ago.

More than 3,000 Albertans were consulted on the Putting People First report. It included 1,300 people in 23 different communities across the province. It included over 1,500 surveys that were completed online and however else. It included more than 80 organizations, representing tens of thousands of Albertans, who provided written submissions or other forms of communication.

This bill demonstrates that we listened to health care professionals and to many others because the advisory committee included leaders of Alberta's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and numerous others. Those professions and several others, in fact, submitted written input and gave us their views in a stakeholder forum together with the Health Quality Council of Alberta and others. That collective input has given us a greater understanding of what Albertans expect from their publicly funded health care system, and that is reflected in this new act. It also shows us what we as a government can do to make it stronger.

More specifically, Mr. Speaker, Bill 17, the Alberta Health Act, proposes a set of principles that describe the health system Albertans want. The bill recognizes and states our commitment to the principles of the Canada Health Act by word and by deed while also respecting and clearly stating an additional set of our own made-in-Alberta principles. These are principles that describe the health system Albertans want now and in the future.

It's important also to note that this bill does not do certain things. For example, this bill does not change any of the existing important health legislation pieces our province already has. This bill does not and is not purporting anything to do with privatization in any way at all. This bill recognizes, on the other hand, what Albertans' aspirations are for our publicly funded health system.

Some of the highlights in Bill 17 and what specifically the Alberta Health Act proposes include these. The minister will establish a health charter that sets out principles and responsibilities within the health system. It also states that we will establish a health advocate office to resolve citizen concerns with the health system as they relate to the health charter, and it will provide for public input in the development of health regulations. Bill 17 is the next phase of our important, ongoing work to build the best performing publicly funded health system in Canada, as mandated by our Premier and as committed to by our government.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we committed to Albertans that we will keep them involved in decisions and actions about their publicly funded health system. Therefore, this act will allow us to live up to that commitment. During debate I will offer yet more explanations and comments than I can do at the moment given that we're only in first reading.

I would ask all members to support Bill 17, the Alberta Health Act, and allow it to move on to the next stage. Therefore, I'm proud to once again move first reading of Bill 17, our first Alberta Health Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a first time]

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

The Speaker: Yes?

Point of Order

First Reading of Bills

Ms Blakeman: Under *Beauchesne* 640 it reads: "The purpose of each stage is as follows: (1) First reading – The first reading of a bill is a purely formal stage as it is decided without debate or amendment. This stage is coupled with the order to print the bill." We in this House have a precedence of two fairly brief sentences, perhaps three, to introduce a bill. We have just enjoyed or endured a four-page speech from the minister introducing the bill, which is a rather unfair way to take up time when there's other business to be done today. Perhaps it could be subtracted from his opening speech in second reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Sorry. Was that a point of order?

Ms Blakeman: That was the point of order.

The Speaker: Well, okay. I'll refer members to two phrases with respect to first readings. The hon. member chose to reference 640. If the hon. member would look at *Beauchesne* 645, *Beauchesne* 645 says:

At this stage it is not permissible to argue the bill. This is dealing with first reading.

Discussion of the bill's merits might take place on the motion for the second reading. The Member is only permitted to explain the provisions of the bill in order that the House will understand its purport.

If the hon. member would go to the House of Commons on page 740, if my memory serves me right, there is a reference at the bottom of the page that basically says: "A minister seldom provides any explanation when requesting leave to introduce to a bill, but may do so."

The intent here would be in first reading, in introduction, to highlight the bill. It's very clear to me that the hon. minister did more than highlight the bill; he gave the history for the first couple of minutes. It would have been entirely permissible to provide highlights for the bill because members are asked to concur in first reading. They can actually vote it down if they wanted to. There's no point of order, but four minutes is a bit longer than I would have anticipated would've been appropriate.

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Under 13(2) I'm wondering if the Speaker can clarify for this member. He referred to one section in *Beauchesne* that referred to other members and one that was specific to ministers. So is it only ministers that are allowed this leeway, or may any member introducing a bill enjoy the four-page speech that the minister was able to do?

The Speaker: Well, actually, under the rules a private member is given even more lenience. That's clearly within the rules, always has been. There's nothing new there.

Ms Blakeman: We'll take advantage of that.

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

Bill 23**Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2010**

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 23, Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2010.

Two amendments are being proposed, both of which concern authority for parking bylaws and enforcement. The first amendment gives comprehensive academic and research institutions, Campus Alberta's four universities, retroactive authority to collect penalties for the violation of their parking bylaws.

The second amendment gives the baccalaureate and applied study institutions, Mount Royal University and Grant MacEwan, the retroactive authority to create parking bylaws and to collect penalties for the violation of these bylaws.

The proposed amendments will help both types of institutions control parking on their large urban campuses and will help to protect them from potential lawsuits concerning past parking tickets. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 23, Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2010, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

This is one of the procedures here now with a private member's bill.

3:00

Bill 206**Utilities Consumer Advocate Act**

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 206, the Utilities Consumer Advocate Act.

The objective of this bill is to ensure Albertans are provided with adequate consumer protection and that they are not overcharged for utilities or related services. Bill 206 would also provide greater access to clear, reliable information for utilities consumers and ensure that they are represented at regulatory hearings by an officer who is independent of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to move first reading of Bill 206.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a first time]

The Speaker: Hon. members, we now have a situation. I did not interrupt the last member in introducing the bill, but we've now gone beyond the time allocated for the Routine with respect to this. If we're going to go on, we're going to need a request for unanimous consent. If somebody wants to raise that, we'll put it to the vote.

Orders of the Day**Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading****Bill 26****Mines and Minerals (Coalbed Methane)
Amendment Act, 2010**

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Liepert: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to move second reading of Bill 26, the Mines and Minerals (Coalbed Methane) Amendment Act, 2010.

Mr. Speaker, this particular bill deals with an issue that is very complex, deals with an issue that for some is very emotional, so I want to take a few minutes to try and give some history and background on the bill. I hope that we can get all members that feel strongly about this particular bill to participate in the second reading debate.

The amendments in Bill 26 provide coal-bed methane ownership certainty by declaring that coal-bed methane is and always has been natural gas for both Crown and freehold minerals.

Mr. Speaker, what is coal-bed methane? Simply put, it is natural gas found in coal beds. According to the Alberta Geological Survey Alberta's coal-bed resource could contain up to 500 trillion cubic feet of coal-bed methane, which is also commonly known as CBM, although it's not known how much of this 500 trillion cubic feet could be produced. I'd like to put that in perspective. Remaining established reserves of conventional natural gas in Alberta are about 36 trillion cubic feet.

In Alberta the Crown owns about 81 per cent of the province's mineral rights by land area. The remaining 19 per cent is freehold mineral rights held by the federal government, large corporations and organizations, and individuals, who hold about 1 per cent. During the 1800s and early 1900s some mineral rights were split in part between coal and natural gas. For example, railway companies, which were provided land from the Canadian government, might have kept the coal, or coal and petroleum, and new settlers might have received other mineral rights, including the natural gas rights.

When the mineral titles were originally split, CBM ownership was not generally addressed. Both natural gas and coal mineral rights owners claim they are entitled to the CBM in the coal seams. Now, without examining titles individually, rough estimates suggest that there are approximately 70,000 mineral titles separating ownership of coal and natural gas in Alberta. Approximately 500 different coal owners and roughly 30,000 different natural gas owners are affected by this split-title legislation.

The issue of split-title ownership came up in the CBM multi-stakeholder advisory committee process, which concluded in 2006. In response to one of the committee's recommendations the government conducted a consultation process. In 2009 a freehold oil and gas issues consultation was completed that involved various stakeholders representing individual freehold mineral rights owners, oil companies, natural gas companies, coal companies, and associations.

The consultation considered several freehold issues, including split-title mineral ownership. These stakeholders did not reach a consensus on a legislative approach to clarifying the ownership issue. Some companies have initiated court action to clarify ownership; however, these court cases have been in progress for four years and may take several or even many more years to resolve. Also, a court decision, Mr. Speaker, may only apply in certain circumstances. Therefore, clarity is needed now to help development of Alberta's CBM resources.

In fact, back in 2003 the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar stated that Alberta needed to take a lead role in the development of our CBM by removing the uncertainty that surrounds entitlement to coal-bed methane underlying Crown and freehold lands in this province. I'm pleased to say today that we are pretty much doing what the member suggested back in 2003, so despite what he might say from time to time, we do take their words and advice seriously, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 26, the Mines and Minerals (Coalbed Methane) Amendment Act, 2010, clarifies CBM mineral ownership by indicating that CBM

is and always has been a natural gas for both Crown and freehold minerals. CBM is therefore owned by the natural gas mineral owner and not the coal mineral owner.

I want to also be very clear on a couple of other points. Existing agreements that have been entered into by the natural gas mineral owner or their lessee that specifically provided CBM rights to the coal owner or the coal owner's lessee will not be affected by this bill. The bill also states that natural gas owners and their lessees cannot sue coal owners or the coal owner's lessees, the surface owner, or the Crown for compensation for CBM that was extracted, produced, or removed before the legislation came into force.

There have been precedents for this type of legislation in Alberta, previous Alberta declaratory statutes enacted to clarify ownership rights, including declaring that sand and gravel belonged to the surface rights owner in 1951, declaring that clay and a fine-grained carbonate-rich mud known as marl belonged to the surface rights owner in 1961, and declaring that a large list of natural substances belonged to the mineral owner, also in 1961.

Now, an amendment to the Mines and Minerals Act in 2003, which I mentioned earlier, stated that the Crown co-lease did not grant any rights to the natural gas, including CBM, and this indirectly clarified ownership of CBM on Crown land but did not apply to freehold land. In 2003 the British Columbia government passed the Coalbed Gas Act, legislating that CBM must be considered to be and always has been natural gas and is therefore owned by the natural gas owner.

In 2007 the Energy and Utilities Board, or the EUB, which is now the Energy Resources Conservation Board, held a hearing with respect to certain well licences. When determining approval for well licences, they provided the following information but did not make a determination on coal ownership: "Coal is a rock composed mainly of solid carbon materials, in which the CBM is stored," that CBM has a relatively weak molecular bond to coal and is not an intrinsic part of coal, that CBM is a gas in situ, and that CBM development uses similar practices to producing other gases. This in part led the EUB to conclude that the natural gas rights owners were entitled to produce the CBM from the wells in question.

3:10

By passing Bill 26, the Mines and Minerals (Coalbed Methane) Amendment Act, 2010, we will be able to remove a potential barrier to the development of CBM on freehold land, which in turn may encourage additional development of Alberta's abundant CBM resources.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank members of the multistakeholder committee led by our colleague, now the hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations, who helped with the development of the Freehold Oil and Gas Issues: Stakeholder Consultation report. I'm also happy to announce that further to the recommendation in the consultation report we have provided a grant of \$250,000 to the Freehold Petroleum & Natural Gas Owners Association, which is to be used to inform and educate individual freehold owners.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time to help clarify this particular bill in second reading, and I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill 26.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

The Chair: The chair shall now call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 16 Traffic Safety (Distracted Driving) Amendment Act, 2010

The Chair: We will continue consideration of Bill 16, and we are at amendment A2. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am very pleased that I was able to participate in the debate in Committee of the Whole on the Traffic Safety (Distracted Driving) Amendment Act, 2010. I understand that what we are currently debating is amendment A2, which was proposed by my colleague from Calgary-McCall. Essentially, he's asking that the act be amended in section 2 by adding the following after a proposed section, 115.5, which would then become 115.6:

The Minister shall

- (a) collect statistics on motor vehicle accidents involving the use of hands-free cellular telephones and hands-free electronic devices, and
- (b) provide a report to the Legislative Assembly on the operation of sections 115.1 to 115.5 within 3 years of the coming into force of these sections, including recommendations on whether this Act should prohibit the use of hands-free cellular telephones and hands-free electronic devices while driving or operating a vehicle on a highway.

You know, Mr. Chairman, I'm trying to think back. I believe it was in the early 2000s that my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar first raised the issue, and in fact, I think, brought forward a motion, if not actually a bill, to ban cellphones while driving. I'll admit that the reception that my colleagues gave him at the time was not vigorous, but he has certainly proven himself right, very much so. He was ahead of the curve on that one. He saw what was coming and what was needed, and he was right. I have learned to respect his intuition on things like that.

I've certainly seen a difference, too, but I'll tell you what my experience in Edmonton-Centre is. I am really blessed in Edmonton-Centre to have 16 seniors' facilities, most of them independent living. They have their own apartments. They're very active seniors. They just live in a building that was built for seniors, and often there are meals that are offered with it as well. Several times a year I go out and talk to them about what we're doing in the Assembly and what advice and guidance they'd like to give me.

One of the things we talked about when I went around in September was distracted driving because we knew that it had been referred to a committee – or, at least, I thought it had been – so I was bringing it up. I was very interested by the responses that I got because most of the seniors that live in Edmonton-Centre don't drive. They make very good use of public transit through the Edmonton Transit service. They walk, some of them have scooters, lots of them have those wheeled walkers, and you see them out on the trails in the river valley just going at a clip there.

What they said to me was: you get that bill passed. They were pretty clear in the instructions that they gave to me. Because they are people who walk a lot, they were very aware, and everybody had a story of how they were waiting at a corner and ready to cross and that somebody came whipping around the corner and that when they looked at the driver to see why the driver hadn't noticed them ready to step off into the street, well, they had that familiar one hand up to their ear pose, which indicates they're holding a cellphone up to their ear. So my seniors were very clear that they wanted hand-held devices banned.

We also talked about the rest of the distracted driving issues, and frankly they were less alarmed about that. I think the number one problem is swatting at a bee or a wasp that gets into your car. You know, to be fair, that happens probably several times in your life, but it certainly doesn't happen every single time you get in your car.

For people who do talk a lot on their cellphones, they do talk on their cellphones every time they get in the car. So cellphones and the frequency with which they are used have really moved up that list of concerns that people have with distractions in a vehicle.

Now, the second part of the argument here. I did say to them: "Okay. Well, you guys are really clear that you want the hand-held cellphones banned. What about the hands-free?" Most people weren't aware that there were these hands-free devices because you can't see them. Frankly, I don't know how the police would be able to enforce this unless somehow they're checking cellphone records after the fact. That familiar position with somebody's hand up beside their ear: you're not going to see that when it's a hands-free device.

I, in fact, bought a second-hand vehicle that has the cellphone built into it, and it will not allow me while the vehicle is in gear to change any of the settings or to dial. So when the car is in gear, I can't dial. Now, if somebody dials in, you've got controls on the steering wheel where you can hit a button and it becomes live. It comes through the radio and through the speakers, and you're talking to someone. Or you can just not answer it, I suppose, and it goes to the regular voice mail. For a police officer looking at me driving down the road, they would have no idea that I was talking on a cellphone. I could be singing along to the radio, the way people do, and they wouldn't be able to tell that.

I think there's an issue with the hands-free version that could be creating some problems for the police. As I said – sorry; you don't say second-hand anymore – the preowned vehicle that I purchased that had this particular feature in it won't allow me to dial or adjust the GPS unit or any of that sort of thing once the car is in gear, but I don't know that that's true on all other vehicles. Maybe it is possible to do it on other ones.

There seems to be a lot of uncertainty around the hands-free version of things, and that's why I'm very supportive of the amendment that's been brought forward by my colleague from Calgary-McCall to collect some statistics on this. We are now able to collect the statistics. You know, clearly, if there's an accident and the police come to the door of the car and look in and there's a cellphone and it's still on and it's been thrown down on the passenger side, it's pretty clear somebody was on the phone. That would not necessarily be the case with a hands-free one.

3:20

I think what we need to do is find out whether it's an issue or not. I'm a big proponent of evidence-based decision-making. We can all get anecdotal stuff. Many times you hear the arguments in this House of, "Well, that makes sense to me," and I've said: "It sounds like that could happen. I'm concerned that that could happen." But I always try and step back and go: "Hmm. Well, how many people does it happen to? Are we going to create a whole program for four people in Alberta?" or "You know, how frequently is this an issue?" or "Are we going to be spending money on something that just doesn't happen very often?"

I think this amendment is a really good one because it's saying: "Okay. Let's run this act for three years as it is and empower the police and others" – I'm thinking of the AMA here – "to collect statistics on whether hand-held phones in cars are an issue or not." I can just imagine how the car manufacturers are going to deal with this one when you've got: it's okay in Saskatchewan; it's not okay in Alberta; it's banned in California; it's all right in Montana. Ye gods! You know, what are they supposed to do? Every car that comes off the line has almost got to be tailor-made for where they're going to end up, and that adds to the price of the car, which nobody is happy about.

Obviously, we're looking for safety, but we're also looking for practicality here. I'm a pretty pragmatic gal. If we don't need it and it's not causing accidents, I'm okay with it. If it is and that's costing money – and more than money. I mean, collisions often cause death, but more often they cause injury. As someone that was injured in a car accident a long time ago, I know how you don't get reported, right? You're not a statistic. You're not a fatality. But, boy, those injuries stay with you your whole life. And as you get older, they really start to be a problem. Those broken bones start to get arthritis, and that bothers you when you're older, and you need medication for that. One way or another, traffic collisions cost the individual, their family, and very often society.

You know, I'm fortunate enough to be on a drug plan through the Legislative Assembly, of which the employer, the people of Alberta – thank you very much – pay a share. I'm receiving a benefit here with lower cost drugs that I need because of injuries that were sustained in a traffic accident a long time ago. So this all starts to roll together.

As I say, if we knew that we would save money as well as lives and injury and inconvenience and grief, it would be worth it. But I'm not interested in putting something in place just because we think or we worry that it might be a problem. I'd rather have the proof. I think that what's been proposed by my colleague is reasonable. He's not asking that the statistics get, you know, collected over a year, which just wouldn't give us enough to work with. A three-year time period sounds like something where you'd be allowed to collect enough information to give you a baseline reading on it.

They're also talking about hands-free electronic devices. Sorry; I just want to grab the bill itself and check the definition of electronic devices. That's why they give you the definitions in the bill, so that everybody is straight on exactly what you're talking about. They do talk about a cellular phone or a communication device that's capable of transmitting cellphone communication, electronic data, electronic mail, or text messages. Oh, my God, can you imagine if people could text message on those things that are built into the car? That's insane. I know some people watch movies, which also strikes me as a bit insane, but hopefully that's going to be addressed in here.

I'm just looking to see whether we are getting a definition of – yeah, they've taken the GPS stuff out. I'm not getting something specific to that. I'm just trying to think of the stuff that's in my car. It's giving you the data on the litres that you've used, your mileage, and oil and gas that you've used. It can display a map. It can also give you a GPS. Then the phone function, I think, is about all that I can access through that.

I know that there has been some consideration from my hon. colleagues on the government side to supporting this amendment, and I hope that they do. I think that this is worth while. It's going to help us because if we have constituents asking us next year or the year after or the year after, "What the heck; Why didn't you do hands-free?" we've got a reasonable response in saying: "You know what? We didn't know. We've made a commitment to study it. We can look at it three years from now, and if it's warranted, we'll do it, and if it's not warranted, we won't." I think that's a very reasonable, pragmatic approach to take.

I would urge all of my colleagues here on my side and others to please support amendment A2. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: On amendment A2, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I'm also pleased to speak in favour of this particular amendment. I think it advances this issue probably as much as our society is prepared to have it advanced right now. Typically when decisions about things like public safety are made, whether that's seat belts or helmets or whatever, the evidence tends to be years ahead of where public opinion is. I think that in this particular case public opinion has not caught up to the evidence. From what I've seen of the evidence, we should be every bit as concerned about hands-free electronic devices as we are about hand-held electronic devices, but I don't think that the public is there yet. I would argue that it's the job of MLAs sometimes to lead and help the public come to a particular conclusion, but I don't think that's the tendency of this particular Assembly.

I think what's being proposed in this amendment is actually, you know, the next best thing. What the amendment will do, because it says that "the minister shall," is it will require the minister to "collect statistics on motor vehicle accidents involving the use of hands-free cellular telephones and hands-free electronic devices." Then the amendment goes on – I won't read it verbatim – to have the minister provide a report to the Legislative Assembly on the operation of this act within three years and make recommendations on whether the act three years from its passage should then be further amended to prohibit the use of hands-free cellular phones and electronic devices.

What we're doing here is, I guess, being cautious from one perspective. We're not being cautious from the perspective of minimizing risk to public health. We're being cautious about overreacting and overintruding and, certainly, overintruding into how people operate their cars. It's not the position I would hold, but I think that's the position where we'll end up. I have heard it said many times that the evidence on this issue is divided about whether hands-free cellphones are a hazard or not. I'm not convinced that it's divided, and I'll speak to that more when we have voted on this amendment. I know many members of this Assembly are convinced, and they want to have more proof. I guess that being somebody who likes to base decisions on evidence, more proof, up to a reasonable point, is better.

I think it will be interesting to see how this evolves and how the issues of enforcement and incentive might be played out. My colleague from Edmonton-Centre raised the question which many others have: how would you possibly enforce this? As the Member for Edmonton-Centre said, if somebody is driving down the highway and you're beside them and you look over and their mouth is going, how do you know if they're talking on the cellphone or just singing away to their favourite song on the radio? That's a good point. These are complex issues.

3:30

On the other hand, I think that with a bit of creativity some of those can be addressed. I suspect the insurance industry will end up thinking hard about this. I could imagine the insurance industry coming up with various ways to help police this issue, perhaps by adjusting deductibles or, frankly, by putting provisions into auto insurance that if you're in an accident and it turns out that you were talking on your cellphone, regardless of hand-held or hands-free, the coverage is restricted, that kind of thing. I wouldn't be surprised if the insurance industry starts getting thoughtful and creative about how to enforce hands-free regulations as well as hand-held.

As it was put to me by a group of very well-spoken, well-informed university students just yesterday, Mr. Chairman, if it isn't the law, it cannot be enforced. So if we don't make this the law, well, it doesn't matter what we think we can enforce; nothing is going to happen. On the other hand, if it becomes the law, then as ideas develop around enforcement, those can actually be implemented.

Given the realities of this Assembly I hope that we can pass this particular amendment, brought forward by my colleague from Calgary-McCall. I know that I will be voting in favour of it.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to speak to this amendment. Like many amendments that have come forward, I still don't know that it's quite complete. There's no question that those people that aren't paying attention while they're driving create a lot of accidents. We know that accidents are usually something that we could control if we were paying more attention.

My concern with this amendment, though, is that we're narrowing it on a very narrow focus. From the reports that I've read and understand, one-third of all accidents, the highest in any one area, are from fatigue. The problem that we're focusing on – human nature is that if we can see something that we can immediately point our finger at, we grasp at that. As the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East talked the other day, I think she said that in 2 out of 3 cars that were passing her the people were actually speaking on their cellphones, which is an incredibly high percentage.

The problem that we have is that we don't know where the accidents are going up. I have not even been able to read reports, that I'm aware of, where they've actually passed hand-held cellphone laws and the accident rates have in fact gone down. In some states in the U.S. they have actually gone up. They feel the reason why the accident rates have gone up is because now people are trying to hide them below the dash while they're driving so that they're not seen, trying to mask what they're doing. It's actually exacerbating the problem, and accidents have gone up.

I have two or three questions. Perhaps what we really need to do is have a report on all accidents and see whether it's fatigue, whether it's someone not paying attention. It seems like in our world there is an ever-increasing amount of diagnoses of children with ADD. I think that it's human nature that we have ADD, which is an attention deficit disorder while we're driving. It just seems like it's a monotonous activity. There are lots of things going on, and if it's not our cellphone, it will be something else that we're engaged in while we're driving.

As much as I want more information gathered – I think that's important so that we could actually look at it – the problem with this amendment and with the bill itself is that in our justice system traditionally we go by innocent until proven guilty. Here we're saying that people are guilty without having done something wrong. I would like to see a lot more latitude in this bill to where if someone is driving erratically or poorly, they're just pulled over and given a ticket rather than saying, "Oh, I see you're holding a hairbrush, so I'm going to give you a ticket," or "Oh, look, that person is eating" or "They have that newspaper in their hand," though they were swatting a bee, but they're saying, "Oh, no; you're not allowed to hold something."

It seems like we're trying to make a narrow-focus law against cellphones when distracted driving is a much broader law. I think that that's what we should really be looking at. If a police officer is driving behind someone who is speeding up and slowing down, swerving left or right, it doesn't matter what's causing their distraction and poor driving. They're going to get pulled over and given a ticket, whether we want to call that distracted driving or poor driving. I think that we should be looking at a much broader bill that actually points to someone doing something wrong and risking other people's lives while they're driving.

Like I say, this is a nice thought, but if we're going to pass it, I feel that it would be far better if we were to actually take statistics

on all accidents and look at that and realize that human beings have this ability to become distracted easily while they're driving. Cellphones are just one of many items or pictures or things that are in our vision that cause us to be distracted.

I hope at this point that this amendment will perhaps be amended. I didn't realize it was coming forward; otherwise, I would have had an amendment to increase the latitude of it, that this report would look at all accidents and not just report back on hand-held or hands-free cellphones.

The Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. Allred: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd just like to make a few comments with regard to this amendment. I certainly support the principle behind it, but I do have a number of concerns with regard to the amendment. Firstly, I think this kind of detail probably shouldn't be in the legislation; it should be in regulation form or really just a directive to the minister, perhaps. But I guess my major concern with the amendment, Mr. Chair, is that the amendment talks about "within 3 years." If I remember right, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie yesterday talked about a period of something like two, three, four, or five years.

I think we need a period, at a very minimum, of three years to provide statistics, and I think five is probably more appropriate. But the amendment doesn't say to provide statistics for three years but to provide a report within three years, so that really means that you're only going to be able to gather statistics for about two years in order to provide the report within three years. I think the intent of the amendment is excellent, and I would hope that if this doesn't pass, the minister would take the intent under advisement and compile the statistics in any event.

The way it's written now, I'm afraid I just cannot support it even though I believe in the intent. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays on amendment A2.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I had originally spoken to the Member for Calgary-Varsity last evening and the Member for Calgary-McCall today saying that I could see some good in the amendment and that I could possibly support it if there was an absence of direction in information by the Ministry of Transportation. They already have a number of initiatives that they do related to this. So I can be accused of flip-flopping, but I'll give you the reasons why.

They cannot provide stats for the hands-free. It's not done at this time. Any information that starts to be gathered probably would be towards the middle of next year, so he felt that they would need probably five years. They already produce an annual report on collision statistics, and they have to track the causes. They presently have what they call an A form, or accident form, that the police use, and they're looking at putting another category in there. So that would have to be done. You'd have to use up all the accident reports that are in Alberta, and then the new ones would actually have that area for the statistics. That would be a neutral cost, basically.

3:40

So there is no need to put into legislation a review of our collision stats and various causes. It is already done on an annual basis, like I mentioned. Three years is too short a time period. There's an ongoing review regarding the effectiveness of many of the traffic safety initiatives, and that applies to legislation as well. They have formal evaluations also in Transportation.

In summation, there is no need to put this in the legislation. I think it was mentioned earlier that there could be a directive to the

minister or in the regulations. Based on that new information, I could not support this amendment.

The Chair: Is there any other member wishing to speak on amendment A2?

Seeing none, the chair shall now call the question on amendment A2.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: We shall go back to the bill, Bill 16. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's the first chance I've had to rise to speak to this bill, and I've been looking forward to it for quite some time. I always pay close attention to issues of highway safety because of a painful experience through my life and the lives of people who I care for as a result of car accidents and fatalities.

Quickly to list, in my case one of my sisters' husbands died in a car crash, my wife's mother was killed in a car crash, my wife's grandfather was killed in a car crash, and one of her uncles was killed in a car crash. As I think about friends and neighbours, some of the fatalities have been absolutely horrendous; you know, a large part of families killed. A couple of years ago there was a terrible crash south of Edmonton. It involved a neighbour family of mine. The grandparents were both killed, the mother was killed, and the daughter, who was in high school at the time, was left permanently paralyzed. This daughter now has made the best of recovery. Her father was left a widower, a single parent, and lost both his parents in this crash. Another neighbour: about three years ago their family was in a terrible collision out towards Radium. The grandparents were both killed, the parents were both killed, and the two children were left as orphans and are now in the care of my neighbour. So I take these issues very seriously, and I think we all should.

Traffic safety is often spoken of in terms of the costs and the lost time and so on, but I think the biggest cost in many ways is the heartache and the emotional pain felt by families and friends who see lives ripped apart in a single instant. These are closely felt issues for me, Mr. Chairman.

I also reflect on my immediate experience: August 2009, so just about 15 months ago, the middle of the day, perfect driving conditions, not a cloud in the sky, nothing that could possibly go wrong. I was in my constituency, stopped at an intersection, and a car plowed into me at full speed. It totalled the car of the woman driving it and did I forget how many thousands of dollars of damage to my car. Now, she admitted at the time that she hadn't even touched the brake. She thought maybe she was going 40 kilometres an hour at the point of impact. That's a lot of impact. I had my foot on the brake because I was at an intersection. Ever since then I've actually been in physiotherapy and other treatment. I had to go to the doctor, get X-rays, all of that kind of thing because of the lingering effects of that impact.

I reflect on a situation from just this last March, which could have been so much worse. I was with a friend. We were driving on a narrow highway north of Calgary, a secondary road that has some hills on it, through that beautiful country just north of Calgary. We came over the crest of a hill, and just as we got there, an oncoming car was in our lane. The shoulders are narrow, and it was a very frightening moment. As the guy wrenched his car back into his lane and went zipping by at high speed, we could see that he was holding onto a wireless device and texting as he was driving. That probably could have cost us our lives and him his life. So I actually think advancing this issue is very important for this Legislature to do.

This is not, in my mind, about intruding into human rights to speak on the phone and to drive. If somebody wants to be stupid enough – and I'll admit to having done it myself many times – to talk on a cellphone while they're driving, if the only person at risk is yourself, well, I wouldn't really care. The problem is all those innocent people who are stopped at that intersection ahead of you or who are in the middle of a crosswalk or who are on the highway and are doing their best to be good, safe drivers and who innocently get caught in a collision. This isn't about the right to talk on the phone while you drive. Those are privileges, Mr. Chairman. They're not rights.

The real right in question here is the right to a safe driving environment. We give people licences to drive because we understand as a society that it's a privilege, and if you violate that privilege by being impaired or getting too many demerits or for other reasons, you actually have that privilege revoked. That's what a privilege is about. So I don't buy the argument that this is big government intruding into the rights of people. This isn't about laws curtailing individual freedoms, and it's not particularly about individual responsibility. It's about protecting innocent people from being maimed and killed through no fault of their own. That's the perspective from which I approach this legislation, Mr. Chairman.

Now, like all of us, I expect, I've had quite a lot of correspondence on this bill, and I just thought I would mention some of it to you. I had a meeting yesterday with a group of students who are in a public health master's program at the University of Alberta. They've done a lot of work on this particular issue and gave me some very helpful information. I've had correspondence from the Alberta Motor Association supporting the idea of restricting the use of cellphones while people are driving. I've had correspondence from the city of Edmonton on it. This dates back to the spring. They also support the whole notion of this legislation, and I think they actually advocate that it go further and include hands-free devices. I've had correspondence from Students for Cellphone-Free Driving, who have put together a really good fact sheet. I'm hoping that all MLAs have had this kind of correspondence because it's, after all, how democracy works.

The students that met with me yesterday brought forward a couple of substantial studies, which I think are pretty interesting. There's one in particular from New Zealand. I'm not sure if it's being tabled during the debate or not, but I'll refer to it carefully so that it's easy for people to track down. It is from, I guess, the journal *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, volume 41, 2009, pages 160 to 173. The home page for that journal, in case people want to get the electronic copy of this, is www.elsevier.com. The title of the particular article of this research is *Driving While Conversing: Cell Phones That Distract and Passengers Who React*, and it's authored by Samuel G. Charlton.

3:50

I won't read the whole abstract into the record, Mr. Chairman, but it's quite fascinating to read because they actually did a range of studies. They were testing the conversation patterns of people when they've got a passenger in the car beside them or if they're on a cellphone and whether this cellphone is hand-held or hands-free. They did a pretty thorough job of testing in laboratory situations, good mock-ups of real driving situations, what the effect of all this distraction was. What they found – and I'm sure many of us have heard this – is that when there's a passenger in the car in conversation with the driver, the actual pattern of conversation, when it's carefully studied, is quite different from a conversation with somebody who's on the end of a cellphone. What they found in this quite significant research when they tracked the conversation pattern is that something they label as conversation stalling occurs if there's a real live passenger in the seat.

I think that as soon as you think about it, you realize this is true. If you're driving along, talking to your kid on the way to the hockey game or something and suddenly there is a tense moment in the intersection or somebody is coming into your lane or something else happens, the passenger stalls the conversation. The conversation actually stalls, and both the passenger and the driver pause to address the situation, and then the conversation gets picked up again. Even beyond that, the passenger will sometimes point out the risk before the driver sees it.

I know this has happened to me. I'm sure it's happened to many of you. Driving down the highway – say it's a late summer evening, and there are lots of deer out on the road – I'll actually ask the passenger: gee, do you mind keeping an eye out for deer in the ditch? Sure enough, my wife has done this for me many times, or I've done it for her if she's driving and said: oh, watch out ahead. That kind of thing happens all the time.

That is in marked contrast to when you're in a conversation with somebody on a cellphone, because the location of the person you're talking to is entirely remote, is entirely disconnected from the situation the driver faces. So that conversation continues, and it creates something that in this study and elsewhere is called inattention blindness.

Again, I can identify with that. You're driving along, your eyes are open, they're on the road, but your brain is somewhere else completely. Sometimes I marvel; I frighten myself. I'll get to work and sit down in my office, and I can hardly remember how the heck – you know, what route I took to get here. It all happens so automatically. Well, the risks of that happening are even higher if there's somebody on a cellphone because they have no awareness of what's going on for the driver behind the wheel. So they just keep right on chatting. It doesn't matter whether everything is okay or whether there is a deer standing in the middle of the road or a semi-trailer coming head-on or you're in the middle of an intersection; they just keep talking away. And because they're talking away, you as the other end of the conversation are engaged more in that than you are in driving, and that creates something called inattention blindness.

I would urge everybody to have a look at this particular study. It's really quite interesting how they arranged it all. What they found was that cellphones actually are considerably more dangerous, whether they're hands-free or hand-held, than other forms of distraction. They also talk about things like adjusting the stereo. Well, if I'm adjusting the stereo, like I was on my way to work this morning – I was listening to some pretty vigorous rock and roll . . .

Mr. MacDonald: Seventies rock.

Dr. Taft: . . . '70s rock that my son had given me. But if something comes up on the road, I can just stop turning the dial. I was turning up the base, actually, this morning, getting fired up for question period. But if there's something going wrong on the road ahead of me, I can stop doing that. There's nothing about that stereo that forces me to just carry on. I stop. Likewise with many other distractions. Not all, though. The Member for Edmonton-Centre spoke about, you know, a bee or a wasp in the car. They don't stop for anything, so there are some things we cannot legislate against.

I think these things all have to be considered very seriously, Mr. Chairman. I know that there's a reluctance in this Assembly to step into these kinds of issues. I think that philosophically we're nervous about government getting too far into people's lives. But I can tell you that if somebody in this Assembly ends up losing a family member or a loved one to a distracted driver, that's going to be extremely painful.

Mr. Chairman, I did want to make those points. I support this bill. I wish it went further – I really do – but I guess we're going to have

to take what we can get. I wish the previous amendment had passed, but it didn't. I would like to have seen this bill brought forward again by law for review within three years, which is what the previous amendment proposed, but that was unsuccessful as well.

I've been cautioned that the politics of this are dangerous, that if we're seen as being too aggressive, being too far ahead of the public, there will be a political backlash. I guess that's a chance I'm prepared to run, Mr. Chairman. I'm reluctant to have this bill proceed out of committee so quickly because I know there are other members in the public who want to wade in.

I know my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar is passionate about speaking on this bill, so I will cede the floor to him, but I may have other comments later. Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. member, you said previously about tabling your report. Do you wish to do that on Monday, not today?

Dr. Taft: Yeah. It may well have been tabled previously. I'll check. Thank you for asking, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have been listening to the discussion so far this afternoon on the bill and the proposed amendment, that was unfortunately defeated. I certainly hope that a lot of members on all sides of the Assembly thought: well, we should have a look at this within a three-year period. Hopefully, it will go to a standing committee or one of the policy field committees, and they can have a look at it and hear directly from members of the public. When you consider what some people are suggesting, that this bill does not go far enough at this time, well, this would give those individuals an opportunity to speak.

Now, certainly, there are people who are suggesting that we are not going far enough, that this is an opportunity for the province of Alberta to be a leader in North America by removing the exemption of hands-free cellphone use from this bill, of course, and they have the view that it would certainly prevent even more injuries and save the lives of even more members of the motoring public. In my view, they would be right.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays has started something here that probably should have been started a decade ago, when cellphones were larger than a pound of butter. Now they're so much smaller and, of course, a lot cheaper, and everyone uses one. Unfortunately, everyone would include members of the motoring public, particularly drivers, and this bill is a good first step in changing the habits of all Alberta drivers, including this member.

4:00

I said in second reading that members of my constituency, the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar, had given me clear direction over the summer that this bill was to be passed. They were satisfied with the direction they were going in. I expressed their gratitude to the hon. member earlier this week, and certainly they appreciate this legislation.

Now, I've heard from a lot of citizens over the course of the summer, Mr. Chairman, but I didn't hear directly from anyone in the automobile insurance industry. I heard from the AMA about Bill 16, and of course the AMA does write some insurance policies for some Alberta drivers, but I didn't hear from the insurance industry. The insurance industry in the past has been very active. Is that the right word, hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview?

Dr. Taft: I would say that they probably even lobbied. I hope they're registered.

Mr. MacDonald: They've probably even lobbied for legislation to suit their industry. I'm sure they're registered under the lobbyist registry, whatever that means, but I'm not going to be distracted and get into the Lobbyists Act, which I think is an act that, hopefully, will be reviewed and strengthened.

With Bill 16 I'm surprised. The insurance industry has a lot at stake here. I'm confident that the hon. member is absolutely right. This legislation will start to reduce not only the fatalities but the number of accidents that are occurring on our roads and on our streets in this province. If we can make our roads and streets safer, with fewer collisions, hopefully it will mean our insurance rates will go down as well.

I haven't heard from the industry on this, and I will be watching as this proceeds, just like, Mr. Chairman, I'm watching the province of Quebec and the mandatory use of snow tires in certain months of the year. I could stand corrected, but I believe it's November through April, or it could be December through March. If an hon. member has the right answer for that, I would appreciate it.

Certainly, that's a law. It's been very good for the tire shops in Quebec, yet we should start seeing very soon if it is reducing the number of collisions and vehicle accidents in Quebec. I think this is the third winter since it's been implemented, and it'll be interesting to see how that has changed the accident rate in the province of Quebec. It'll be interesting to see in three or four years in this province our accident rates, our insurance rates. Hopefully, all drivers through cheaper insurance will benefit from this legislation.

Now, some individuals are questioning the exemptions. We'll see how this works out. The hon. member has certainly provided a satisfactory explanation to me regarding questions I've had around the exemptions. This law will be like a lot of others. Hopefully, it will be improved as we go along.

When we look at Bill 16, Mr. Chairman, I do hope that as the regulations come out, there will be an advertising campaign. Now, I don't know whether this would be under the direction of Alberta Transportation or if it would be under Service Alberta. I know the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview was thinking about the Public Affairs Bureau in this, but I don't think they are the ones to organize this. They'll spend a lot of money – there's no doubt about that; he's right about that – but whether the job will get done is another question. I know why he would have those concerns.

As this bill proceeds through the Assembly, hopefully we will see this proclaimed and enforced very soon, and Albertans will be alerted. I don't have any problem with money being spent on a program like that to promote public safety. Before anyone can complain about not knowing and getting a fine, we could have a good program available to educate the motoring public as to what is directly going to happen with this bill.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore talked about the county of Strathcona, and certainly it doesn't seem to be an issue there anymore. I drive through there frequently, and I feel safe; I certainly do. I have trouble with that rolling four-way stop they practise in Strathcona county, but certainly their cellphone use, I think, has been controlled. The public that I talk to seem to feel safe, and they seem to feel comfortable with the law, and they seem quite willing to abide by that law.

Mr. Chairman, hopefully, this Bill 16 will proceed through the House, and by springtime, by the time the snow melts, we will have to curtail or control our use of cellphones.

Mr. Liepert: Start now. Get used to it.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I'm probably very, very guilty of that, and I have done some rather stupid things while I've been driving and on the cellphone. I won't deny it – I won't deny that – and this will certainly help.

In conclusion, again, Mr. Chairman, I would like to also thank the Minister of Energy for his kind remarks when he was talking about Bill 26 earlier. I appreciate that.

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition on the bill.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Ironic that I follow my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar. I was going to surprise members today by saying that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar a decade ago raised this issue in the House.

Dr. Taft: He's ahead of his time.

Dr. Swann: Very much ahead of his time, and many people thought he was nuts. We know now that he was prescient and very clearly calling for something that would have saved lives – would have saved lives – over this decade if it had been in place for this last decade. One distracted driver can decimate a whole family.

I was a medical officer in Pincher Creek for a number of years. I sadly remember certifying five teens and a mother coming back from a ski hill who were involved in a collision by a distracted driver, not by a cellphone at that time but a distracted driver nonetheless. It's, indeed, so tragic that many of these are so preventable. I certainly want to acknowledge the member opposite for introducing this bill and for pushing us on a very critical public safety issue.

This has the potential to save thousands of lives. I said earlier in my member's statement that over 400 lives and 20,000 injuries a year are happening on our highways. When you think about the suffering and the loss of life and the cost to the health care system, you realize that what we're talking about here is so fundamental, that anything we can do to reduce distractions is going to reduce death and suffering.

4:10

As it stands right now, it does not go far enough. My colleague from Calgary-Varsity has proposed solid amendments to the bill that would make driving in Alberta even safer, and I urge the Assembly to pass these amendments. As I say, I'm all too familiar as a physician with the carnage that is wrought by car crashes. We have a chance to greatly reduce such tragedies but only if we heed the scientific evidence. That includes evidence that hands-free devices are just as distracting as traditional hand-held cellphones.

We must not allow ourselves to believe that hands-free cellphones are a safe alternative. The brain cannot safely handle attention-demanding tasks such as driving and talking on the phone at the same time. We're simply not wired that way. Just because you're holding the phone pressed up against your ear doesn't mean you're not just as distracted by the same conversation held over a speaker. According to studies using a cellphone while driving, whether hand-held or hands-free, delays reaction time as much as if the driver was under the influence of alcohol.

Surely, we know in the 21st century that our policy must be grounded in good science and the precautionary principle: where there is reasonable evidence of human risk, choose the policy that assures health and safety. Our duty as legislators and leaders is to encourage drivers to pull over to a safe place if you have to talk, and we need to provide real disincentives for people who fail to follow that common-sense advice.

Alberta's rate of cellphone use while driving happens to be double that of the national average. Clearly, the longer you're on a cellphone, the more the risk of an injury. If people are more likely to listen and talk on a cellphone that is hands free than one that is hand held, they're still increasing the risk of injury and accident.

Clearly, the province is in dire need of more comprehensive

distracted drivers legislation and the enforcement to go along with it. We have an opportunity this week to significantly reduce the death toll on the roads. I urge the members of this Assembly to do the right thing and support this bill, including the opposition amendments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Any other hon. member wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Yes. Thank you very much. I did, as I indicated earlier, want to make some more comments on the record on Bill 16, and I will start by tabling, as the chairman suggested, a couple of the studies I referred to.

The Chair: Hon. member, table the report at the Routine time on Monday, not today.

Dr. Taft: Even if I refer to it in debate, I can't do that? Okay. Then I won't table it.

The Chair: You can refer to it in debate today, but you table it on Monday.

Dr. Taft: Okay. It used to be that we could table things as we use them. Far be it from me to question that. I'll handle it on Monday. That's okay. That good old Speaker of ours keeps us on our toes, doesn't he, Mr. Chairman? Then I will table these on Monday.

But I did want to discuss some other issues here. One of the questions that's been put to me – and it's a reasonable question – is: well, if cellphones are so dangerous, why haven't we seen accident rates climb as the use of cellphones has spread? I think that's a very reasonable question that's worth exploring. I've made some inquiries around this. I wish I had absolutely clear evidence on it. The explanation that has been put to me is that accidents have not increased but that the rate of accidents has not declined as much as would be expected from the improvement in the quality of roads and in the performance of motor vehicles. You know, I think that's an interesting way to try to understand that. If you think of a modern car, say a car built in the last two or three years, compared to one from 20 years ago, there's a dramatic improvement in the safety of those vehicles, with airbags, antilock braking systems. In fact, the more recent ones have all kinds of warnings about ice detection on the road ahead, much better tires, all kinds of things that have been improved in cars to make them safer. As well, of course, the interior is designed with safety in mind.

It's kind of interesting to appreciate this. Once or twice a year I end up at one event or another where there are old cars there. It's part of, you know, an antique car day. You get into a car from the 1960s, and you think: "Oh my goodness. How did people drive these?" There are big pointy steel dashboards, and there are no seat belts, and there are no airbags, and they take about half a block to stop because the brakes are so weak.

So we've seen a real improvement in cars, and we've also seen a real improvement in road safety. I think that's evident in the design of the major roads in Alberta, where instead of intersections you have highways being connected through cloverleaves and interchanges, which are much, much safer. Even little things that we may not appreciate.

I mentioned earlier the loss of one of my close relatives in a car accident. I don't need to name who it was, but it was a close relative. She was driving alone down a secondary road early in the evening, fell asleep, drifted into the ditch, slammed into the abutment of an adjoining driveway – this would have been about 25

years ago – broke her neck, and died instantly from the impact. In the ensuing years those road abutments were redesigned and rebuilt so that instead of a solid wall when you hit them, they're actually sloped so that if a car drifting into the ditch hits one of these, it's not just a solid impact into earth or concrete; it's actually a sloped rise. That's had a significant impact on lowering accident rates and fatalities. If that had been the case, the woman I'm speaking of may well still be alive today.

We've seen improvements in road safety, improvements in car safety, but we haven't necessarily seen the reduction in fatalities and injuries that we might expect. That may well be explained by the widespread use of cellphones and other electronic distractions. I thought that was an important point to make, which was made to me by one of the groups I met with.

I also thought I would refer at a little bit greater length to some of the correspondence I've had from others. I need to correct myself, Mr. Chairman. I referred to a letter from April of this year from the city of Edmonton. In fact, it wasn't an official city of Edmonton letter. It was a letter from one of the city councillors, Dave Thiele, who didn't run again in the most recent election, so he's not a councillor now but was then.

Councillor Thiele wrote to me with quite a widely cited study attached by the National Safety Council, a study titled: Understanding the Distracted Brain: Why Driving while Using Hands-free Cell Phones is Risky Behaviour. What Dave Thiele suggests in his letter is that

Bill 16 must include a total ban on hands free phones. Not to do so will yield little in the way of meeting those goals.

Those goals are reducing crashes and loss of life. Mr. Thiele goes on to refer to efforts he made in 2006 to research the issue, and he says:

What hands free devices do not eliminate is cognitive distraction (taking your mind off the road). The attention that ought to be focused on the driving responsibilities is elsewhere.

4:20

So I wanted to be clear in the record, Mr. Chairman, that that letter was not from the city of Edmonton per se. It was from one specific city councillor. But it is a very good letter, and he did attach, as I said, this well-known study to it, which is one important piece of evidence in this debate.

I also wanted to elaborate a little bit on a very well-put-together handout, I guess, a double-sided handout from Students for Cellphone-Free Driving. It gives various figures in here about the number of Albertans who die or are injured in motor vehicle collisions every week. Roughly speaking, depending on the figures you read, somebody dies every day of the year in Alberta from a car crash, and many, many more, many, many times that, are injured. I would count myself among one of the injured.

This particular handout claims – and it cites a study on it, a study from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in 2006 – that “driver distraction, including the use of cellphones and other electronic devices, is responsible for up to 80% of these collisions.”

Ms Blakeman: How much?

Dr. Taft: Eighty per cent. Not just cellphone but driver distraction overall.

Ms Blakeman: So that includes the bugs and the makeup.

Dr. Taft: That would include all forms of distraction.

It goes on, and I think this is important to read into the record. I quote from this handout from Students for Cellphone-Free Driving.

If you drive while talking on your cellphone:

- You are four to six times more likely to be involved in a collision
- Your reaction time is slowed by 18%
- You double your risk of having a rear-end collision
- You increase your risk of running red lights
- You may be more impaired . . . than a legally intoxicated driver.

I won't read this whole study, Mr. Chairman, but there is one particular note I want to make about this. This handout includes several photographs down one side of it, and one of these is a photograph of a car that's come into obviously extreme collision with a large truck. I recognize that photo because it was circulated to me on the Internet. However, what was circulated to me was a complete series of photos from that accident that include shots not just of the accident, which was from a distracted driver losing track of which lane he was in and colliding head-on with a large truck, but the photos show that the bumper of the truck actually goes right through the driver's compartment, right through into the back seat of the car.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. That's good.

Dr. Taft: Well, it's important to hear this because when I saw these photos, it was quite shocking. It was almost enough to make you sick to your stomach because as the photos unfold – and I guess it was an accident scene investigator who took them – you see them ending up removing the remains of the driver from the collision. It shows a human body in multiple pieces, a human body literally pulled into parts from this collision.

I can tell you it's shocking when you think about those kinds of consequences from distracted driving. I think we need to take this legislation very seriously. So I did notice that particular photograph on this handout, and those images come to me often when I'm driving. I will move on from there, but if anybody would like to see those photos, I will forward them to you.

I want to also cite from the Alberta Motor Association letter that was sent out to me and I believe to all MLAs. I know the hon. Member for . . .

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member. According to Standing Order 4(3), as it's 4:25, the chair shall now call to rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on Bill 16. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? The motion is carried.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, November 1.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:26 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

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

Activity to October 28, 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.), 487-89 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 519-27 (Mar. 17 aft.), 556-61 (Mar. 18 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 660-61 (Mar. 24 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 25 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2010 cA-14.9]

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)

Committee of the Whole -- 489-92 (Mar. 16 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 678 (Mar. 25 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 25 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 25, 2010; SA 2010 c7]

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)

Third Reading -- 492 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 25 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 25, 2010; SA 2010 c6]

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.), 489 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 529-32 (Mar. 17 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 678-79 (Mar. 25 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 25 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 25, 2010; SA 2010 c4]

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.), 489 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 527-29 (Mar. 17 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 679-80 (Mar. 25 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 25 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 25, 2010; SA 2010 c5]

- 7* **Election Statutes Amendment Act, 2010 (Redford)**
First Reading -- 311 (Feb. 25 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 402-03 (Mar. 10 aft.), 492-503 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 533-37 (Mar. 17 aft.), 561-62 (Mar. 18 aft.), 769-82 (Apr. 14 aft.), 850-62 (Apr. 20 aft.), 869-76 (Apr. 20 eve., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 878-84 (Apr. 20 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2010 c8]
- 8 **Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2010 (Griffiths)**
First Reading -- 334 (Mar. 8 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 429-30 (Mar. 11 aft.), 503 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 532--33 (Mar. 17 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 680-81 (Mar. 25 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 25 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 25, 2010, with exceptions; SA 2010 c2]
- 9 **Local Authorities Election Statutes Amendment Act, 2010 (Johnson)**
First Reading -- 576 (Mar. 22 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 615-16 (Mar. 23 aft.), 735-43 (Apr. 13 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 798-804 (Apr. 15 aft.), 868 (Apr. 20 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 878 (Apr. 20 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force April 22, 2010; SA 2010 c9]
- 10 **Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Amendment Act, 2010 (\$) (Redford)**
First Reading -- 486 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 518 (Mar. 17 aft.), 618-20 (Mar. 23 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 682-83 (Mar. 25 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 876-77 (Apr. 20 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force April 22, 2010; SA 2010 c12]
- 11 **Witness Security Act (Drysdale)**
First Reading -- 486 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 518 (Mar. 17 aft.), 620-24 (Mar. 23 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 683 (Mar. 25 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 877 (Apr. 20 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2010 cW-12.5]
- 12 **Body Armour Control Act (Quest)**
First Reading -- 486-87 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 518-19 (Mar. 17 aft.), 624-28 (Mar. 23 aft.), 743-49 (Apr. 13 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 862-65 (Apr. 20 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 885-87 (Apr. 20 aft., passed on division)
Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2010 cB-4.8]
- 13 **Securities Amendment Act, 2010 (Morton)**
First Reading -- 552 (Mar. 18 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 616-17 (Mar. 23 aft.), 681-82 (Mar. 25 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 865-67 (Apr. 20 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 877 (Apr. 20 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2010 c10]
- 14 **Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2010 (Ouellette)**
First Reading -- 552 (Mar. 18 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 617-18 (Mar. 23 aft.), 682 (Mar. 25 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 867 (Apr. 20 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 877-78 (Apr. 20 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force April 22, 2010; SA 2010 c11]
- 15 **Appropriation Act, 2010 (\$) (Snelgrove)**
First Reading -- 576 (Mar. 22 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 608-15 (Mar. 23 aft.), 627-28 (Mar. 23 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 643-60 (Mar. 24 aft., passed on division)
Third Reading -- 675-78 (Mar. 25 aft.), 684 (Mar. 25 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 25 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 25, 2010; SA 2010 c3]

- 16*** **Traffic Safety (Distracted Driving) Amendment Act, 2010 (Johnston)**
 First Reading -- 763 (Apr. 14 aft., passed)
 Second Reading -- 956-67 (Oct. 26 aft.), 980-81 (Oct. 27 aft., passed)
 Committee of the Whole -- 991-98 (Oct. 27 aft., amendments agreed to), 1013-20 (Oct. 28 aft., adjourned)
- 17** **Alberta Health Act (Zwozdesky)**
 First Reading -- 1010-11 (Oct. 28 aft., passed)
- 18** **Government Organization Amendment Act, 2010 (Evans)**
 First Reading -- 916 (Oct. 25 aft., passed)
 Second Reading -- 984-90 (Oct. 27 aft., passed)
- 19** **Fuel Tax Amendment Act, 2010 (Griffiths)**
 First Reading -- 916 (Oct. 25 aft., passed)
 Second Reading -- 981-84 (Oct. 27 aft., passed)
- 23** **Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2010 (Weadick)**
 First Reading -- 1012 (Oct. 28 aft., passed)
- 26** **Mines and Minerals (Coalbed Methane) Amendment Act, 2010 (Liepert)**
 First Reading -- 980 (Oct. 27 aft., passed)
 Second Reading -- 1012-13 (Oct. 28 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)
 Committee of the Whole -- 577-85 (Mar. 22 aft., passed)
 Third Reading -- 709 (Apr. 12 aft., passed)
 Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2010 c13]
- 202*** **Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act (Forsyth)**
 First Reading -- 154 (Feb. 17 aft., passed)
 Second Reading -- 336-48 (Mar. 8 aft., passed)
 Committee of the Whole -- 586-89 (Mar. 22 aft.), 698-704 (Apr. 12 aft.), 705-09 (Apr. 12 aft., passed with amendments)
 Third Reading -- 819-25 (Apr. 19 aft., passed)
 Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2010 cM-3.3]
- 203** **Municipal Government (Local Access and Franchise Fees) Amendment Act, 2010 (Fawcett)**
 First Reading -- 311-12 (Feb. 25 aft., passed)
 Second Reading -- 709-10 (Apr. 12 aft.), 825-32 (Apr. 19 aft.), 836-37 (Apr. 19 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Community Services), (Oct. 27 aft., reported to Assembly, not proceeded with)
- 204** **Fiscal Responsibility (Spending Limit) Amendment Act, 2010 (Anderson)**
 First Reading -- 271 (Feb. 24 aft., passed)
 Second Reading -- 922-28 (Oct. 25 aft., adjourned)
- 205** **Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Act (Quest)**
 First Reading -- 916 (Oct. 25 aft., passed)
- 206** **Utilities Consumer Advocate Act (Kang)**
 First Reading -- 1012 (Oct. 28 aft., passed)
- Pr1** **Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta Act (Weadick)**
 First Reading -- 366 (Mar. 9 aft., passed)
 Second Reading -- 732-33 (Apr. 13 aft., passed)
 Committee of the Whole -- 749 (Apr. 13 aft., passed)
 Third Reading -- 804 (Apr. 15 aft., passed)
 Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force April 22, 2010]
- Pr2*** **Canada Olympic Park Property Tax Exemption Amendment Act, 2010 (DeLong)**
 First Reading -- 366 (Mar. 9 aft., passed)
 Second Reading -- 733-35 (Apr. 13 aft., passed)
 Committee of the Whole -- 749-50 (Apr. 13 aft.), 768 (Apr. 14 aft., passed with amendments)
 Third Reading -- 804 (Apr. 15 aft., passed)
 Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 31, 2009]

Pr3* Lamont Health Care Centre Act (Horne)

First Reading -- 366 (Mar. 9 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 735 (Apr. 13 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 768-69 (Apr. 14 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 804 (Apr. 15 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Apr. 22 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force April 22, 2010]

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