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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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Progressive Conservative: 67

Alberta Liberal: 8

Wildrose Alliance: 4

New Democrat: 2

Independent: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 29, 2010

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. As legislators we give thanks for the rich heritage and the diversity of the people of our province. We are thankful for the many opportunities so abundant in the province of Alberta. On this occasion, as we welcome His Excellency the Governor General of Canada into our Legislature, we dedicate ourselves to both the present and the future in the service of Alberta and Canada. Amen.

Please be seated.

[The Premier and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Governor General]

[The Mace was draped]

The Speaker: Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, the Royal Canadian Artillery Band will now play the movement *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba* by composer George Frideric Handel. The timeless splendour and beauty of this music is a fitting prelude to the entrance of His Excellency the Governor General into the Alberta Legislature. The band is under the direction of Captain Eric Gagnon, who is in the Speaker's gallery.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Ladies and gentlemen, all rise, please.

Mr. Speaker, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, and Her Excellency Mrs. Sharon Johnston await.

The Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Excellency the Right Honourable Governor General of Canada and Her Excellency.

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Excellency the Right Honourable Governor General of Canada, David Johnston, CC, CMM, COM, CD, and Mrs. Sharon Johnston, their party, and the Premier entered the Chamber. His Excellency took his place upon the throne]

The Speaker: I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem.

Hon. Members and Guests:

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

The Speaker: Your Excellencies, hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, please be seated.

On behalf of all members and the people of Alberta I am pleased to welcome Your Excellencies to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

By any measure Your Excellency is an exceptional Canadian of uncommon and high achievement in many fields. Her Excellency and your family mirror your devotion to the service of others, family, and the ideals we strive to embrace as a nation. We congratulate you on your appointment as Canada's 28th Governor General.

This is a rare and significant occasion. Today marks only the second time that a Governor General has addressed our Assembly since its first sitting in 1906. [applause]

1:40

Your Excellency's presence here today serves to underline the connection between the Crown and our Assembly. The authority for all that we do here flows from the Crown, and the acts of this provincial parliament are in the name of the person that you have the honour to represent in every cardinal point in this great dominion, Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada.

Please carry the affection, great respect, and the good wishes of all members of this House with you wherever your travels take you throughout this beautiful province and across our absolutely outstanding country.

It is my honour now to invite the hon. the Premier of Alberta, Premier Ed Stelmach, to deliver his remarks to Your Excellencies and the citizens of Alberta.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Boy, that was quite a rendition of *O Canada*.

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests in all the galleries, ladies and gentlemen, it is my very great privilege to welcome Their Excellencies the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General and also commander in chief, and Mrs. Sharon Johnston to the Alberta Legislature.

Earlier today I had the privilege of hosting a luncheon in their honour at Government House. Many of our guests at the luncheon are seated in the galleries today. At lunch I announced the creation of the David Johnston law scholarship to mark His Excellency's first official visit to Alberta. This scholarship is a new addition to Alberta's already generous scholarship program and will provide two annual awards of \$10,000 each, beginning next year. They will be for students taking a law degree, one at the University of Alberta and the other at the University of Calgary. The David Johnston law scholarship will be awarded to students who demonstrate academic achievement and community service. I'm sure that all members of this Assembly will agree with me that this is a fitting tribute to a man with such a long and distinguished career as His Excellency has had.

Your Excellencies, all Albertans are honoured to receive you as our guests, as we are honoured that Her Majesty's representative in Canada has come to Alberta so early in his term. We hope that you both enjoy your visit to our province and experience the warm western hospitality which Albertans are so well known for. You'll find that there are no more proud or committed Canadians than Albertans.

Thank you so very, very much, and welcome once again to our Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

I would now invite His Excellency the Right Honourable David

Johnston, Governor General of Canada, to address the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

**Address to the Legislative Assembly by
His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston**

His Excellency: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, Members of the Legislative Assembly, dear friends, let me begin with a question. Is there any place in Canada where *O Canada* is sung with the enthusiasm and pride as in this Legislature in Alberta? Wonderful to hear.

Mr. Premier, let me say first of all how deeply touched I am with these two scholarships to recognize the first visit that Sharon and I have paid to Alberta. You could not do anything that would touch my heart more. Thank you.

Je veux dire aussi félicitations sur l'événement d'hier, la Coupe Grey. C'est vraiment une organisation spectaculaire. La Coupe Grey est un festival national, et ici en Alberta vous avez montré à tout notre pays les méthodes d'organisation de vraiment créer un spectacle que j'admire beaucoup, ici à Edmonton cette année et l'année dernière à Calgary. Merci et félicitations pour cet événement.

Now, if some of you have roots in Saskatchewan, you may not have quite the same enthusiasm that I have for the Grey Cup.

In my installation speech some two months ago I spoke about a dream. I spoke about a smart and caring nation, a call for service, the Canada that we wish to be. There were three pillars in that caring and smart nation. One had to do with family and children, the second had to do with learning and innovation, and the third had to do with philanthropy and volunteerism. I can tell you what we've seen in a short 24 hours in this remarkable province of Alberta. You do all three of those things very well and set the standard for the rest of Canada.

Family. We spent a wonderful hour this morning at St. Mary Catholic school in south Edmonton, and for those of you who have not seen the innovative programs there, particularly the information technology, it is a wonder to see, and I urge you to visit it. Again setting the standard.

You know, one of the very special things about this country is that I think we've tried harder at equality of opportunity than any nation in history. Our challenge is to have both equality of opportunity and excellence, too, to see those two qualities or objectives as not competing ones but complementary ones. At the heart of it is our public education system, which you consistently have done so well in this province at every level and are setting the standards for the country and setting the standards for the world.

Our country more than any other is a country of immigrants, people who came to this country with little more than the shirts on their backs but a firm determination that life should be better for their children than it is for them, and that dream lives so well.

Vague après vague, des immigrants sont venus ici, abandonnant tout dans leur pays natal, mais par leur ardent désir d'offrir une vie meilleure à leurs enfants. En Alberta cet esprit de pionnier est encore bien vivant. Vous comprenez l'importance d'aider vos voisins, et je vous en félicite.

We spoke about a couple of paintings at lunchtime that hang in Rideau Hall, and I invite all of you and your families to visit the people's home, which is Rideau Hall. As you come into the foyer, as I was telling Premier Stelmach as we were speaking about his own upbringing, there are four pictures by William Kurelek there. The first shows a scene in the Ukraine in 1931 with a little girl leaving her home clothed in rags in the middle of winter with a begging bowl to go to the neighbours for help. In the background it

shows soldiers rounding up the adults in that village to take them off somewhere unknown. The second picture shows those families from the Ukraine landing at Halifax, at Pier 21, coming to this country with nothing more than hope. The third picture is a scene from the prairies. It's the same families there with the forest, and they're cutting down the trees to clear the land. The fourth picture is a picture some 20 years later of a farmer standing up to his chin in a grain field looking at the bounty that this has promised. This is this land, Canada, with equality of opportunity and excellence, too.

Let me move from family and children to learning and innovation and say to you what you probably don't fully comprehend because you're in Alberta and part of Alberta. When we look at Alberta from the rest of the country and the rest of the world, we see a spirit of entrepreneurship, of innovation here which is breathtaking and is very heartening to everybody across the country. It's the entrepreneurship that I want to teach to my children.

I once was asked by our students at the University of Waterloo to address their conference on entrepreneurship. They asked me to address the question: "Can you teach entrepreneurship, or is it simply something you have? Is it born in your DNA, or do you learn it?" I said: well, let me tell you about my granddaughter Emma. We have seven grandchildren. Emma was then four years old. She's now eight, a lovely little girl adopted from an orphanage in Colombia. She calls me Grampa Book. I was with her one evening in Ottawa and brought the book to read to her, and we finished the book. Because she's a very lively little girl, you always have to keep her engaged, so I said: "Now, darling, your mum and dad tell me that you're taking dancing lessons. Will you dance for Grampa Book?" She said, "Well, Grampa Book, if I dance for you, how much money will you give me?" Four years old. Now, you're always looking for a teaching opportunity, so I said: "Now, darling, Grampa Book loves you, and you love Grampa Book. Will you dance for Grampa Book for love?" She says, "Grampa Book, for love you can dance for yourself."

1:50

There is a cluster effect that is very important in this business of family and children, of learning and innovation and philanthropy and volunteerism. Philanthropy and volunteerism I depict with a metaphor I use from my part of the country, Waterloo country, which is barn raising. When a neighbour's barn burns down, all the other neighbours go to help. When a newcomer comes to the community, the other neighbours come to help that person raise their barn.

A story that Sharon and I tell. We live on a farm, 11 minutes from my office, in Mennonite country. Our neighbours are horse-and-buggy people. Sharon runs a stable with 30 horses boarded there. It's a tough business to break even in, I've got to tell you. Those of you who are farmers here will understand that. We were there a couple of years, and the insurance had gone up, and Sharon was looking at each of the buildings on the property to determine what the right valuation was. Could we lower it to reduce our premiums?

Edgar Shantz, our neighbour who farms our land, happened to be there at the same time. She said, "Edgar, this drive shed: we've got a value of \$20,000 on it; is that right, or could it be less?" He said, "Well, why do you ask?" She said, "Well, I have to insure it." He said, "Why are you insuring it?" She said, "Well, if it burns down, we have to replace it." He said: "If it burns down, we'll replace it. We'll come and help you. That's what neighbours do." Then he said: "Well, on second-hand materials, which we can get, I'm not so sure. You might want something new. So put a \$2,000 value on it. That will cover the materials. If it burns down, we'll come and help you." That wonderful spirit of volunteerism.

These things come together in a very interesting cluster effect. I just leave you with this story, and then I'll finish so that I don't occupy too much time in the Legislature today. There's a reinforcing cluster that's very important. I love history. One of my favourite periods of history is the 16th century. It's a story that has either three characters or four characters or more if I have more time. Today it will be only four characters. The characters are John, Marty, Fred, and Nick. Take 1523 as your year of departure, and ask yourself: who were John, Marty, Fred, and Nick? John is a bit earlier. For Marty, that year would be fine; for Fred, that year would be fine; and for Nick, that year would be fine.

Well, John was Johannes Gutenberg, who developed movable type, who, quote, invented the printing press. That was in 1470 or so in Amsterdam. He was a jeweller, and he went bankrupt not once but twice. His printing press didn't go anywhere. His technology did not take root.

It wasn't until 1523, when Marty came along, who started the Protestant and cultural revolution in Europe. Marty was Martin Luther. In 1523 he translated the Bible from its original Hebrew and Greek, not the Latin translation of the church but the original Hebrew and Greek, into German, into the vernacular, so that people could understand the Bible in their own language.

The most important thing in 1523 was an individual's relationship with God, but heretofore that had been translated for that individual by priests and bishops and cardinals and popes, an intermediation. He began the process of disintermediation and permitted people to seek out those truths on their own, not relying on authority and an oral tradition but reasoning it through themselves in their own language. Others did the same thing. Wycliffe in England and others translated the Bible, the Holy Word, into the language people could understand, and that Protestant revolution of people learning in a different way took the printing press and transferred it across Europe.

What about Fred? Fred was essential. Fred was Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, who in 1523 sheltered Luther for one year in his castle in Wartburg. Had he not done so, Luther would not have been able to translate the Bible. He needed protection from other forces that said: "This revolution in thinking, in communication shall not occur. This revolution in technology of the printed word shall not occur."

All three were indispensable. What happened from that is that the religious tracts, the religious word began being disseminated not through an oral and authoritarian tradition but by people reading on their own, interpreting for themselves, developing critical thinking, and that was the breakdown of feudalism in Europe. The cities began to rise, serfdom diminished, people began to contract for their labour, the Industrial Revolution began, democratic governments began to establish themselves, public education, where people were taught to do this, spread throughout the lands, and Europe advanced.

The fourth person was Nick, Niccolò Machiavelli, who in 1523 wrote *The Prince* in Florence, that beautiful city, the cradle of the Renaissance, and that was the first secular book to become a bestseller. So the printing press no longer was simply for religious education; it was for education and learning of all kinds. Now, it took 250 years for the printing press to reach the stage where a majority of the people in Europe enjoyed the benefits. The Internet took 10 years to achieve the same kind of revolution. Just think about that.

That's how western Europe advanced, and if you doubt that, realize that for 2,000 years the world of Islam, the world of China, and the world of India were advanced beyond western Europe. Western Europe was the backward power for 1,500 years of the 2,000 years, but western Europe advanced because this new method of communication spread into the hands of all people imaginable. China had the printing press when Marco Polo arrived there in 1215.

It is believed that movable type was invented in Korea in the second century AD. Those other civilizations – Islam, well advanced in engineering, India, where mathematics began – those societies all had the Johns. All had the technological revolution. What they lacked was the Martyrs, and what they lacked was the Freds and then the Nicks.

You ask: today who represents the Freds? You represent the Freds right here. We create an environment in which learning can advance, in which we can innovate, in which people can ensure that life is better for their children than it is for themselves, and in which philanthropy and volunteerism are not simply something that we opt into or opt out of when the United Way or the Salvation Army comes canvassing or our neighbour needs a barn built but as a mainstream feature of Canadian life.

In the year 2017 we'll celebrate our 150th anniversary. I hope that as we proceed to that time, the people of Alberta will continue to lead Canada, as you have so well, in being a smart and caring nation. Let me leave you with just two lines that I quoted to the Premier at lunch that I love and I'll use again. They come from Shaw, and they go this way: some people see things as they are and wonder why; we dream of things that ought to be and ask why not.

Thank you for the great privilege of addressing you today. [applause]

The Speaker: I invite all of you to remain standing, please. I'd like to thank His Excellency for his warmth, his enthusiasm, and his humour, all fundamental traits of the people of Alberta, and I believe that from my quick consultation with the Premier, that manifests itself into declaring you an honorary citizen of Alberta. [applause]

Excellency, I'd like to also draw to your attention one situation in this Assembly which is unique in the country of Canada. This is the only parliament in the country of Canada that flies all of the flags of the provinces and territories in it. It's unique.

I would now like to invite all of you to rise, please, to join in the singing of the royal anthem, *God Save The Queen*. We'll be led once again by Mr. Paul Lorieau. Would you please remain standing for the departure of Their Excellencies after the conclusion of *God Save The Queen*.

2:00

Hon. Members and Guests:

God save our gracious Queen
long live our noble Queen,
God save The Queen!
Send her victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save The Queen!

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Their Excellencies, their party, and the Premier left the Chamber as a fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[The Mace was uncovered]

The Speaker: Please be seated. Hon. members, we will continue the Routine momentarily. I just want to ensure that we have one clarification today. As a result of Government Motion 20, passed the other day, which afforded the opportunity for His Excellency the Governor General to be with us today, we had to in essence waive standing orders, which basically say that we would commence at 1:30. We will commence the Routine momentarily, and my understanding is that we will continue to the conclusion of the Routine even if it goes beyond the 3 o'clock that's mentioned in Standing Order 7(7). Is that everybody's understanding?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Then, once we begin the Routine, we will conclude the Routine.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you two groups of people. First of all, I'd like to introduce three board members from the Assist Community Services Centre. I'm not sure where they're sitting, so if you can see from the other side, you can let me know. They're there. Wonderful. Today we have Mr. Allan Kwan, the vice-president; Mrs. Mary Fung, the public relations director; and Mrs. Mei Hung, the treasurer. I would ask them all to now rise and receive the traditional warm greeting of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, carrying right along, the second group that I'd like to introduce is 34 parents, teachers, and students from the Coralwood academy. The Coralwood, a Seventh-day Adventist academy, is a family facility, and they exist to teach children to follow Jesus, to nurture their love for Him and for others, to teach them to think, and to empower them to serve. The Coralwood staff and students are very committed to the highest standards of personal and academic excellence. With our 25 students today are five staff and parents. We have Ms Marian Rochford, Mr. Dan Rochford, Ms Ellen Kim, Ms Sharon Baragona, and Mr. Michael Adams. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm greeting of the Assembly if they're here.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to all members 22 students from Rideau Park elementary school in my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. They're accompanied this afternoon by teacher Mrs. Tanja Burns and by parent helpers Mrs. Susanne Hoffmann and Mr. Oliver Schmidt. This is a fine group of grade 6 students that have asked some very astute questions, many interested in the parliamentary process. I'd like to invite all of them to stand and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today, one a little bit lengthy, that I hope you will indulge as it is a number of individuals in our galleries. I rise to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of 16 students that are here today representing the medical schools of both the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary. They are here along with several other medical students to share some of the great ideas about how we can ensure postsecondary, particularly our medical schools, as an option for all Albertans regardless of their background.

I'll just read through their names, Mr. Speaker, and if they are seated in the galleries, I would ask that each of them stand as I call their name to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. They are Sahil Gupta, Stephane Doucette-Preville, Kelsey Macleod, Inka Toman, Salma Shivji, Kelli Taylor, Mischa Snopkowski, Lise Malta, Alyssa Cruz, Danielle Maurice, Adil Abdulla, Esther Kim, Alistair Waugh, Graeme Mulholland, Jennifer Amyotte, Daryl Dillman.

These students are very concerned about the diversity of our medical schools and the diversity of the clinicians that will be treating our patients in Alberta for years to come. They have come to our Legislature to spread their message of concern. I would ask all members of the Legislature to give them a very warm reception.

Mr. Speaker, I have one more introduction – and I believe that she's still in our gallery – my partner of 30 years. It was our anniversary this year. I've taken several different directions in my career over the years, and she has stayed with me over that period of time as well as taught our three children the values of Albertans and the values of staying in our province. She is a grandmother this year, as I am a grandfather, I guess. The things that I have accomplished could not have been possible without my partner of 30 years, Aukje Rose Marie Horner, who I believe is sitting in the gallery, and if she is, if she would rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've never ever in the time that I've been Speaker had this list of introductions before me. At 2:22 we are going to the question period, so we'll just continue through the process.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to stand up to introduce to you and through you to this House a woman who probably needs no introduction, but it is my pleasure to be able to do so. We are pleased to have Senator Joyce Fairbairn here with us this afternoon, an amazing woman who has worked on the Hill in Ottawa for 50 years next year. That is an amazing accomplishment for a woman. She started off in the press gallery, worked in the Trudeau government, and, of course, has served for 25 years as a senator. Her main focus has always been literacy for all Canadians, and she has used her position as a Senator to forward that. She is here with her aide-de-camp, retired Warrant Officer Glenn Miller. I would ask you to welcome both of them to this House.

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

Was somebody introducing his school group? Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, proceed.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two groups, actually, to introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly. The first group is on behalf of my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview. Crestwood elementary-junior high school is with us today. The group of 38 is lead by Ms Ludwig and is accompanied by parents Mrs. Tracy von der Ohe, Mrs. Lee, and Mr. Procter. They were in the public gallery, and if they're still in attendance, I would now ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

I have a second introduction today, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure also to introduce a former colleague of mine in this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Bharat Agnihotri of Edmonton-Ellerslie. Bharat is accompanied by a past candidate for the Alberta Liberal Party, Aman Gill. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to also rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

2:10

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

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour, a privilege, and a pleasure to introduce an important person in my life to this

Assembly, my wife, Debbie. We've been through a lot in nearly 27 years of marriage now, and it's been a pleasure every step of the way. I believe that I'm the luckiest man in the world, and I believe that because she tells me regularly. My wife, Debbie.

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

Mr. Fawcett: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very good friend of mine, Nick Ziemann. Nick and I have been friends for our entire lives as our parents were good friends. He's come up today to watch the proceedings. Nick lives in Chestermere, and he's a welder. He's been married to his wife, Krista, for almost five years now, and they have a very cute daughter who turns two in April, and her name's Sienna. I would like Nick to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our Governor General made reference to this moments ago, and it's now my honour to introduce a number of individuals who are responsible for arranging the 2010 edition of the largest annual sporting event in this country, the CFL's Grey Cup, which set a record for the fastest sellout ever in just one week. With roots in Saskatchewan and as a Calgary Stampeders season ticket holder, this is not easy for me to say, but the truth is that from east to west people agree. I'd like to thank everyone in Edmonton for putting on the best Grey Cup Festival ever. Over 600 people were involved, and over 30 people served on the steering committee, some of whom have joined us today, including – if you would stand, please – co-chairs Doug Goss and Rick LeLacheur, executive director Duane Vienneau, Joan Forge, Bruce Bentley, Shirley Zylstra, Cathy Presniak, Bruce Keltie, Greg Treble, Terry O'Flynn, John Moquin, Bob Turner, Brad Sparrow, and Keith Keating. Thank you all, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. [applause]

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House two old friends, active citizens and real philanthropists, having given the largest single donation of land to the University of Alberta. May I introduce John and Jenny Boccock in the members' gallery and thank them on behalf of all of us.

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

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had the privilege to dine with six people from Alberta today that are promoting the passport to Alberta's community icons. With us today is the first Albertan to complete the Alberta icon journey, Mario Boulanger, and his favourite daughter, Christina. Along with them are the promoters of this program from Woodlands county, that both you and I have the great honour to represent: first, Jim Rennie, mayor of Woodlands county, councillor Alan Deane, councillor Daryl Yagos, and their communications director, Brigitte Jobin. I'd ask them all now to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Woo-Paw: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you Miss Gwen Cham.

Gwen is the project director for south health campus with Alberta Health Services, which is anticipated to open in 2012. Her role there is to oversee the \$1.4 billion capital development and the \$400 million clinical, nonclinical, and IT operational planning and implementation. This centre is designed to transform health care by way of efficiency and reshaping demand, with the emphasis on patient-family centred care. I see Gwen as representative of a generation of young and innovative professionals working diligently at improving our health services. I would like to ask her to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce three students through you to this House: Nikhil Shah, Ambica Parmar, and Matthew Karpman. This morning I had the great pleasure and opportunity to discuss with them the issue of demographic diversity of the medical students in the universities in this province. I'd like to ask them to rise to receive the warm welcome of this House.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege to rise and introduce through you to all members of this Assembly your wife, Kristina Kowalski. It's great to see Kristina in the gallery today. You are an inspiration to us all. I know my colleagues would want to join me in giving you the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege and an honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Dr. Mike and Mrs. Maureen Mahon. Mike is the president of the University of Lethbridge, recently installed. We're pleased to have him up here today and would ask you to give him the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. It's an honour for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you Mr. Yash Gill, who is visiting us here from India. Mr. Gill works as an excise and taxation officer for the government of Punjab. He came to my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie to visit his friend Sanjiv Aggrewal. Mr. Gill is very interested in the political system of both Alberta and Canada. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Gill earlier this afternoon, and he was very much looking forward to the visit of the hon. Governor General. At this time I ask my guest to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

My second introduction. I'd like to introduce to you and through you a constituent of mine, Mr. Parshotam Aggrewal. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last week. He's joined here today by his son Sanjiv Aggrewal. At this time I'd like him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

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

Mr. Benito: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly

Mrs. Lulu Bernal. Mrs. Bernal, a retired employee of CIBC for 30 years, is the past secretary-general of the Filipino Retirees' Association in Alberta. Mrs. Bernal helps many Filipino foreign workers because she believes that it meets the economic needs of this province. I would ask her to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour today to introduce a very principled and huge community contributor, a philanthropist who knows no boundaries, a quiet man in his own way who has done so much for this city, who recently took leave of his law practice to chair the Grant MacEwan board, a very valued institution with over 20,000 students. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd invite John Day to rise. Let's all salute a man who is doing great things in our community and in Alberta.

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

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly someone that I just noticed in the gallery, a very good constituent of mine who I'd like to have rise now. This gentleman is certainly someone who is known to us all here, and I'd like to introduce to you Mr. Tom Olsen.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature constituents of mine, Loretta Adams and her husband, Keith. Loretta was diagnosed with MS in 2003 and is scheduled to travel to California for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, known as CCSVI, testing in December. Loretta is a member of CCSVI Edmonton, a group seeking to increase awareness of CCSVI and its link to MS, and she encourages our government to support and participate in research on this important matter. My guests are seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

2:20

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

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 representatives from the Palestine Solidarity Network, the Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, and the Canada-Palestine Cultural Association. Today is the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. In 1977 the United Nations General Assembly called for the annual observance on the 29th of November each year as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. My guests are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to rise as I call their name and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. From the group Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East Breanna Ho, Nariman Saidane, Bryan Hosking; from the Canada-Palestine Cultural Association Ahmad Mustapha, Mohamad Issa, Anas Elkhateeb, Mousa Qasqas, Hani Huoseh, Hani El-Zein, Alaa Kadri; and from the Palestine Solidarity Network Alex Freeman. If they would please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I indicated earlier that this is very unique. I still have 11 members that want to introduce their guests. We're now 20 minutes into the Routine; it's 2:22. I indicated that normally under our rules we start at 1:30; at 1:50, 20 minutes later, we'd be into the question period. I'm going to ask if I can have unanimous consent to conclude these introductions.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: Okay. We're into the question period. Clerk, please proceed.

Oral Question Period

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

Publicly Funded Health Care

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our caucus has just obtained a leaked document proving this government's hidden agenda for Alberta's health care system, an agenda which pushes our health care system towards two-tiered, American-style health care. To the Premier: given this document describes the government's plans for private health insurance, delisting, increased for-profit delivery of health care, when was the Premier planning to make this document public? We'll table it in the House today.

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. This government is committed to a publicly funded, publicly administered health care system.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This document shows the government has two phases of the Alberta Health Act: the one we're in now, which does nothing, and the second one, which dismantles everything that Albertans cherish about our system. How can the Premier explain this plan to Albertans?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, if only the member would have read the bill that's before the House. It commits us in legislation to a publicly funded health care system.

Dr. Swann: Is the real reason the government will limit debate to one hour on the Alberta Health Act so that the government can ram this new legislation down our throats?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to having a full and open debate on all the legislation. We have had over 27 hours of debate in this House on the bill. Isn't it interesting? After months of open-door consultation with Albertans, with medical professionals at the table listening to Albertans and health care advocates, what is in this bill that is not what Albertans told us to put in? I want to know from that party.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, what the public assumed was simply incompetence by the government is now revealed as a cynical, subversive agenda to sneak two-tiered, American-style health care into Alberta. Again to the Premier. This

document talks repeatedly about pursuing private insurance options. Does the Premier stand behind what this document says about shifting from public to private health insurance? Yes or no?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I stand behind a publicly funded health care system, and I'll defend it to the very end.

Dr. Swann: While the U.S. is trying to get a single-payer system, this government is trying to dismantle ours. Why is the government pushing towards more private health insurance? How much are Albertans going to be asked to pay?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, we have in this country of Canada a good publicly funded health care system. As we heard earlier today from the Governor General, the province is leading in many ways in terms of compassion and care not only for Albertans but for Canadians. I would ask everybody to just set aside this bickering back and forth. Let's just focus on outcomes, move the system ahead so we can show progress not only for Albertans but for the rest of Canada.

Dr. Swann: Well, I guess, Mr. Speaker, many Albertans are asking: has the Premier kept Alberta's health care system in a state of permanent crisis in order to pave the way for two-tiered American-style health care?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, being the only jurisdiction in Canada to actually have a five-year funding plan, which gives a commitment to a publicly funded health care system, I would say: you're saying that we're moving to a two-tiered system?

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier can say what he wants, but this document shows what the Premier really has in store for Albertans, and just like the failed experiment of the Alberta Health Services Board, the public won't know what he's planning until the next election is over. To the Premier. Let's have some straight answers. Do you or do you not support forcing Albertans to pay for private insurance for services now publicly funded?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times I have to repeat in the House that this government is firmly committed to a publicly funded, publicly administered health care system. Period.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, does this Premier support a single-payer public health care insurance system? If so, why is he opening the door to private insurance?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, once again, as I said, not only in the bill but after hearing hundreds of Albertans that took time during a busy summer to provide their input into the legislation that's before the House, I firmly believe it is good legislation. It reflects the values and priorities of Albertans. Just move on with the bill and get it passed so we can show some outcomes.

Dr. Swann: How can this Premier stand in the House and pretend to be open and transparent when a document shows that the Premier and this government are anything but open and transparent?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, without a doubt, this government is open; it is transparent. It has consulted time and time again with

Albertans. This time we went out and said: look, let's go out there, talk to Albertans, all kinds of Albertans in every corner of the province. They brought their views forward. Those views and priorities and comments were all reflected in the document that went for further consultation. After another round of consultation it came back, it was formed into a piece of legislation, and it's now before the House for debate.

Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, last week the new parliamentary assistant for health called the president of the AMA and told him he was concerned with the mental health of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. This has resulted in the good doctor from Edmonton-Meadowlark being ordered by the College of Physicians and Surgeons to undergo a psychiatric evaluation in order to retain his medical licence. Regardless of the intent of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, what he has done is inappropriate given his position of influence. Will the Premier instruct this member to apologize for what he has done?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the accusations raised by the member are absolutely not true. Nobody in this government has the authority to pull anyone's licence. As I said the other day before the media, we don't even have the authority to pull a driver's licence, let alone a medical licence. There's a professional organization in charge. Leave it to them. Just leave it. It doesn't belong on the floor of this Assembly. I don't want to besmirch anyone's reputation because of some political motives on that side.

Mr. Anderson: As everyone in this House knows, he did make the call, Premier. Quit contorting and distorting the facts.

2:30

Will the Premier now personally apologize for the way this member has been treated by this government caucus and immediately call the AMA and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, asking them to ignore the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and withdraw their order mandating that the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark submit to a psychiatric evaluation? It's absolutely shameful, Premier, that you've allowed your caucus to do this to this hon. member. Shameful.

The Speaker: We've got a point of order here. This is going to discontinue. The language is to become temperate here pretty quick. Hon. the Premier, do you want to participate in this?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, members of this government caucus have reached out to the member a number of times, taken the time to support him through what he described as a bit of a difficult period. We're still behind him to offer any help that may be available. He is a valued representative for his constituency. It's unfortunate that comments have been misconstrued by some opposition members, who, quite frankly, won't even sit and listen to the response because they do not want to hear the truth.

The Speaker: The hon. member. [interjections] The hon. member. [interjections] The member has been recognized. I take it we're finished? Do you have a question?

Mr. Anderson: Yes.

The Speaker: I've recognized you three times.

Mr. Anderson: The public's confidence in this government has been shaken to its core. Last week the curtain was pulled back on a culture of fear and intimidation, and we see that here today: MLAs being effectively coerced to toe the party line even if it means turning their backs on those they represent, whisper campaigns targeted at the very livelihoods of the government's opponents. The government may think this will all blow over, but it won't. This government has lost the moral authority to govern, and Albertans will make that very clear at the next election. Shame on all of you. Shame on every one of you. No question needed.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this government has a justly deserved reputation as a bully. Just ask Dr. John O'Connor from Fort Chipewyan or the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View. Now, steeped in sanctimonious protestations of compassion, the government is attempting to discredit the MLA for Edmonton-Meadowlark. My question is to the Premier. Why are you and your MLAs attempting to discredit this MLA if not for the very fact that he poses a mortal danger to your government?

Mr. Stelmach: I'm not quite sure what the member is talking about. I don't know what was said about the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, but he is the Leader of the Official Opposition, he's in the House, and I'm sure that he is very capable of defending himself and speaking up for himself in this Legislature.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier forgets that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View got fired when he spoke out against climate change when he was a medical officer of health. Now we're seeing the same pattern continue, Mr. Premier. I want to know, again, why this government is trying to discredit the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark if not because his articulate vision for health care completely blows up your government's credibility.

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, once again, nobody is destroying anyone's credibility. This is an open and transparent House. Anybody can bring up different issues and make comments.

With respect to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, as I said, he was elected, he's a member of this House, and he can bring forward any of his comments or any position that he wants to bring forward to the House. He doesn't need him to bring it up.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we realize why this is actually happening. The government has produced a document dated July 12, 2010, that shows that phase 2 of the legislation this government is planning talks about private hospitals, opting out by physicians, and double billing. Will the Premier admit that his secret plan to privatize our health care system is the real reason for the persecution of this hon. member?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, not true at all. Once again, as a province we're trying to move to a position where we can provide equitable health care across the province, sustain it for the next generation, deal with some of the demographic issues that we'll be facing in the province over the next five to 10 years. This is all planning for the future and ensuring that we have the best publicly funded health care system in the country of Canada.

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

Provincial Achievement Tests

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education uses the results of provincial achievement tests for grades 3, 6, and 9 as a key indicator of progress in achieving the admirable goal of attaining excellence in student learning outcomes. I'm interested in what appears to be the minister's curious definition of the word "progress" because his ministry's targets for both acceptable and excellent levels of achievement in the tests in 2012-13 are precisely 1 per cent better than the results achieved in 2008-09 – 1 per cent in five years. Can the minister disclose the rationale for setting a target of a mere 1 per cent improvement in student learning outcomes over a five-year period?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, when you're doing exceptionally well, it's hard to get even better.

Mr. Taylor: Well, it was concise in any event.

Again to the minister: given that he's actually set these targets eight-tenths of a per cent lower for acceptable and over 2 and a half per cent lower for excellent than the targets he set in his previous business plan, can he explain why he's become more pessimistic about the ability of Alberta Education to produce the desired results?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, one of the goals that this government has is to encourage high school completion. I think it probably goes without saying, but I'll say in any event that as we get more students who are dropping out of school to stay in school and complete, it's likely that the results on exceptional and perhaps even acceptable may go down. We have a huge achievement gap, for example, with the FNMI population. If we can bring FNMI students into the school, keep them in school, and encourage their success, it will in fact be better for everyone, but the overall targets will flatten.

Mr. Taylor: Interesting considering that we still have about the lowest high school completion rate in the country.

Can the minister explain why a nearly 70 per cent increase in government funding of basic education between 2004 and 2009 would translate into a 6 per cent decline in the number of students who tested at the acceptable level in '04 and the number expected to hit that mark in 2013?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we have a number of competing values in the system. One is to encourage excellence in education and make sure that every single student has the opportunity to be the best that they can be. One of the other goals that we have is to include more people in the education system, to bring students into the education system and to make sure that every student is a participant and every student aspires to be successful. That will in fact lower the overall results. So there are two competing goals that we have. One is to raise the number of students who achieve the standard of excellence and the acceptable standards, and the other is to make sure more students . . .

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

Emergency Room Wait Times

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents are very concerned about the emergency department issues. Everyone knows that wait times are too long. My constituents want answers. So do I. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Wellness. How long do we have to wait before we see real action, not just words?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the hon. member that action is occurring right now. In fact, it's the most aggressive action with solutions for any jurisdiction in Canada. We're adding more acute-care beds in the hospitals. We're adding more transition beds. We're adding more continuing care beds. We've got a new discharge protocol that's occurring, and there are more improvements coming. We've put that squarely before Alberta Health Services, they are responding, and yet more will occur before Christmas.

Mr. Xiao: Really? Then what action will you take if the improvements are not in place by your deadline, which is December? What is the accountability for that?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the administration at Alberta Health Services has responded very appropriately. There is no option other than to accomplish what they've been asked to accomplish. They're working very hard with a new CEO, who's in there doing the best that he can to make sure that these new protocols are coming forward. That's why 100 of Alberta's top administrators, top medics, top nurses, and other people involved with health care met on November 20. We're trying to move forward with that action plan because that's what people really want to see.

Mr. Xiao: To the same minister. Will there be public transparency and reporting about these actions? How will Albertans know what is actually going on?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question, and I'm pleased to tell the hon. member that the short answer is yes. In fact, Alberta Health Services has been posting and they will be posting more of the information pertaining to Alberta's busiest and largest ER departments as we speak, and even more of that transparency and accountability will be forthcoming, as is characteristic of this government and of them themselves.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

2:40 Health System Acute-care Beds

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that this government has been consistent with in health services over the last few decades is cutting acute-care capacity. In 1989 Alberta had 13,300 acute-care beds. Alberta Health Services' annual report shows that now we have 7,802. That's why we are in an acute-care crisis: a history of government cuts. To the Minister of Health and Wellness. The minister of health states that around 300 acute-care beds will be opened . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister has the floor.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how the question ends, but let me just say that there have been a number of improvements and additions to the acute-care system. Alberta Health Services has a number of details that they'd be happy to share with you. However, in March of 2009 there were over 7,700 acute-care beds, a year later there were over 7,800 acute-care beds, and now they are adding another 360 hospital beds, all of which is in stream and under way right now, and the staff will be there to accompany that announcement.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I won't ask the question because you answered some of my questions. My question is: I want to know the absolute total number of acute-care beds that we have as we speak that are actually with trained staff.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to get the exact number through Alberta Health Services, and perhaps they can accommodate that request. But the important thing to know is that we are opening more beds in the hospitals, in our communities, and wherever we can to help address the pressures that the system is facing, and the response so far has been very good. Alberta Health Services is doing a good job to do that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: I'm fine. Thank you.

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

Arts and Education Grant Program

Mr. Allred: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Constituents of mine have been advised that the funding for the arts and education program has been cut completely from the budget of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts effective March 31, 2011. Could the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit please advise if this is true?

Mr. Blackett: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond by saying unequivocally and emphatically that there will be no funding cuts to the arts and education grant program in the forthcoming year.

Mr. Allred: My second question, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. Why does the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit fund this program and not the Ministry of Education?

Mr. Blackett: Well, Mr. Speaker, arts and culture in our province transcend a variety of different ministries, and we fund this program like many others such as the AFA youth program, the arts summer schools, the community presenting and individual artist grant streams because it's important in our communities right across our province that we continue to fund the vital fabric of our communities.

Mr. Allred: Well, my final question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Education. What, sir, are your plans to provide for education in the arts in the future?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, it should be clear as we move into further discussions about what a 21st century education looks like and what our children need that arts are not peripheral to education; arts are core to education. But education is not just about what the Department of Education does, so we very much value the work that we share with Culture and Community Spirit and with others. We are revising the arts curriculum because it hasn't been revised for the last 25 years. There's been public discussion on that. That will continue. But I can assure the hon. member and all Albertans that arts are core to education, they're not peripheral, and they will be part of our curriculum going forward.

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

Alberta Health Services Board

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government has created hundreds of agencies, boards, and commissions. When critics look for ministerial responsibility or accountability for these creatures of government, we are told that they are independent, that they operate at arm's length, that the government is not responsible for their decisions. We believe the government is responsible. The government creates, funds, and directs these agencies, and indeed the chairman of Alberta Health Services has said that the minister gave clear directions on firing the CEO. To the Premier: does the government rely . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier. [interjection] Okay. We're moving on.

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Health and Wellness would probably like to clarify the reporting procedure.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let's be very clear. I did not give such an instruction. The instruction – call it a request, call it a direction – that I gave was for an immediate decision because we could not wait for two weeks or two months or whatever for a decision to be made.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. Back to the Premier: given that there have now been resignations from that board on the grounds of government interference along with a call for clarified roles and responsibilities, what will be told to the new board members about their role in overseeing delivery of health care in this province?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the role and the mandate of the Alberta Health Services Board is very clear. They're there to promote and protect the health of Albertans. They're there on an ongoing basis to assess the health needs of Albertans. They're there to help determine priorities for the provision of those health services, for operating the system, and for ensuring that reasonable access is there as well as sustainability of the health system for all.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again, to the Premier: how can the government claim to be transparent and accountable when they deliberately send conflicting messages about who is in charge and, therefore, who is responsible for delivery of health services in this province?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear in the Regional Health Authorities Act, which I would encourage the hon. member and others to have a look at, that the Alberta Health Services Board reports to Albertans through and to the minister of health.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, followed by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Foreign Qualifications and Credentials

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I often talk about wasted potential in two forms. One is those that fail to utilize their

true educational capacities, and two is new immigrants where we as Canadian institutions fail to recognize their educational credentials. To the Minister of Employment and Immigration: why do we encourage economic class immigrants to come here, give them credit for their specific work and educational experience when applying, when there are no jobs for them in their respective careers here?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, let's be clear. It is the federal minister of immigration, not I, who assigns points to individuals for their education and credentials in their assessing of their visa application abroad. I can tell you that this ministry works not only with immigrants but with all Albertans to make sure that those who are unemployed become employed and those who are underemployed become fully employed. For that reason, we have 59 or so offices throughout the province working with Albertans to make sure that their skills and education are utilized to the maximum of their benefit and, by extension, to our benefit.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we really need is we need the minister to push the professional organizations and colleges to recognize their credentials. Minister, what is your ministry doing to help skilled, educated newcomers get their qualifications and experience recognized here so that they can play their rightful role in Canadian society?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Very good question, Mr. Speaker. First, as you may know, just a few days ago I held a forum in Edmonton with experts in that area, those being the service providers, educational institutions, and many employers in the province, to recognize the credentials of foreign skilled and foreign educated individuals. This ministry has programs in place that assist foreign credentialed individuals to enter our workforce. At the same time, we have to make sure that we don't jeopardize in any way the standards that we are accustomed to have over here. So it's a balance.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say that I agree that we should not jeopardize our standards, but at the same time we should push the envelope to ensure Canadians are not engaging in protectionist behaviour. Does this mean, based on what the minister just said, that doctors, accountants, and other highly skilled professionals can hopefully sometime soon stop working in entry-level jobs that are absolutely unrelated to their professions?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what this ministry is doing. I cannot speak for my federal counterparts. First of all, we have published very clear information on our websites with associations, with colleges, and with many self-governing bodies to allow individuals who are contemplating coming to Alberta to find out what the process will be for them to become credentialed. We're working very closely with professional colleges to make sure that the process of accrediting foreign-trained individuals is as smooth and as short as possible. At the end of the day it is to our benefit. We recognize that everybody should be working to the maximum of their credentials.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

2:50 **Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark**
(continued)

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This Assembly has often been referred to as the people's House. We heard that from the Governor General earlier today. What's interesting is that government is now running and hiding. In fact, one MLA on that side has said: we just want to get out of Dodge as quick as possible. That's code for saying: we're afraid of questions in question period. Why is this government so afraid of being accountable to the people of Alberta by invoking closure?

Mr. Horner: As the Deputy Premier I guess I'll answer the question. We're not afraid of anybody, Mr. Speaker. We're here to represent the people of Alberta that elected us to this Legislature, similarly to them. We also believe that no one should hijack the process of this Legislature so that I don't get a chance to vote or that any of my colleagues don't get a chance to vote and move the agenda forward for Albertans.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, the minister of health says that the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark is a friend, yet he votes to kick him out of caucus. The minister of health says that he wants to listen to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, yet he rejects his accountability amendment when it comes to Bill 17. My question is: why did you vote to kick this member, the only ER doctor, out of your caucus? Why did you vote to kick him out?

The Speaker: Hon. member, I have no idea what this has to do with government policy.

Mr. Zwozdesky: I'll just clarify, Mr. Speaker, that I was not present for any such vote.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister of health was not present, it's interesting to say, then: he's trying to distance himself from the decision of this caucus. My question to the minister of health is: why doesn't he support his friend, who is an ER doctor?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the member referred to was my friend, is my friend, and I'm sure always will be my friend. The fact here, however, is that we have a difference of opinion on where these lengths of stay protocols should be in place. He would like them in legislation. I've explained why they can't be in the law from my perspective, but I'll be happy to put them into the action plan and into the performance measures, which will be released very soon.

The Speaker: I don't know what the motivation is here.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Emergency Room Statistics

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Health Services posts on its website wait times for its emergency departments in the large urban hospitals. This information on wait times for both discharged and admitted patients goes back to November 2009. To the health minister: does Alberta Health Services have this wait time data going back to 2002, when emergency room doctors identified the problems around lengthy emergency wait times?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, one of the great benefits of having one single province-wide health authority now is that they will have more consistent gathering of data and, equally important, more consistent delivery of data. Right now that's exactly what they're doing. They're collecting that information on a site-by-site basis at the busiest sites – I've answered this question earlier today – and they're going to continue doing that. Equally important, they're going to be reporting it fully, transparently to all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Again to the minister of health. Sir, with all due respect, you have not answered the question. In light of openness and transparency will you admit to this House and to the people of the province that you have data going back prior to 2009 on how the emergency rooms in the large urban centres were working or were not working?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how data was collected back in 2002, but I'd be happy to take that question under advisement and have a look and see if I can get the answer that the member is looking for.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the health minister. You have to provide this information, sir. Given that these emergency room wait times are very important statistics for the government to know, why is this information not publicly available now if we're trying to solve this emergency room crisis?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, it's hard to live in the past. What I would prefer to do, if the hon. member doesn't mind, is to indicate very clearly that since I've come into this post, I've had some of these discussions with Alberta Health Services. They are posting not only the busiest sites aggregately, but they're also posting information on an individual site basis. I've taken under advisement the earlier question, and I will look into it for the member.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Alberta Junior Hockey League Outdoor Game

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday Alberta hosted a memorable Grey Cup match, but that's not the only major sporting event that happened this past weekend. The community of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo did an outstanding job hosting the first outdoor junior hockey game in Canada last Friday, with their team battling my team, the Drayton Valley Thunder. I commend the community, mayor and council, and of course the local MLA and players all. My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. The province invested \$1.1 million in Grey Cup festivities. Was there any support . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Ady: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, this was a great event. It was inspired by community spirit. I was able to be up there last Thursday for the jersey gala, and I was so impressed with what the community had been able to do. They pulled it together in less than three months. It was sold out in less than an hour. They built a

temporary outdoor stadium at MacDonald Island Park. Although we did not provide funding for this special event, the province had previously committed \$1.3 million for the MacDonald Island Park multiplex to help promote recreation in the region.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you. My final question to the same minister: can the minister tell the Assembly if, in fact, she supports the AJHL, and if so, why didn't the province provide funding for the event, and will they consider future funding for events like this?

Mrs. Ady: Well, Mr. Speaker, the event, as I said before, was pulled together very quickly. It was amazing, the community spirit in Fort McMurray. Volunteers actually built the outdoor stadium, 5,000 seats in it. They raised \$75,000 on their own in order to help cover the costs of this event. It was only one night, but there are great benefits from it. The ice rink is going to stay in place this entire season for the families of Fort McMurray to use. As well, the boards are going to be donated to a community in rural Alberta. A great outcome.

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

Alberta Health Services Board (continued)

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the health minister. I was wondering: will the selection of the new CEO for Alberta Health Services be done in a completely open and transparent manner?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, there are specific protocols on how the Alberta Health Services Board goes about recruiting positions like that. To the best of my knowledge they will be following those protocols. At the end of the day typically people are invited through an application process to submit resumés, and those resumés would be considered through the application process that follows.

Mr. Hehr: Well, Mr. Speaker, again this is for the hon. minister of health. Can the minister guarantee that whoever is selected will be someone with experience in patient care, someone who views patients as who and what they are, people who need care and respect, more than the just a line item on a budget?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that the acting CEO of Alberta Health Services has 33 years of experience in the medical community, 20 of those years include administrative type work in the health area. I think that the Health Services Board, which is responsible for the recruitment of a full-time, permanent CEO, will take every one of those types of criteria under their purview as they design the process going forward. I'll make sure they see your comment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A new CEO is just a person who implements the policies of government. We can see so far that they haven't led us to a very good point right now. My final question for the minister is: will the minister make change that really matters and appoint a task force to immediately start planning the orderly dismantling of Alberta Health Services?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I don't know that that would be necessary. We have a board that laid out a large game plan, and that game plan includes things to do with the health workforce, facility operations, acute care, continuing care, and the list goes on. Now there is a very competent group of people who have the day-to-day job to implement those strategies, and they're doing it. That's why we're anxious to get on with these plans as opposed to being sidetracked by some of these peripheral issues.

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

3:00 School Construction

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over a week ago a group from Airdrie had a rally at the Legislature calling for new schools to address the needs in that community. Airdrie is not alone. There are many other communities in this province needing new schools, such as Beaumont in my constituency. My question is to the Minister of Education. How does the Ministry of Education determine its priorities in the capital planning process to address the needs of its school boards and their students?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, we do consult with school boards on a regular basis. In fact, we ask school boards to provide us with a three-year capital plan and update it annually so that we know exactly what their priorities are in their jurisdictions. Obviously, we have to overlay that with our own demographic analysis with respect to the demographic shifts that are happening in the province, the growth of students and the areas of growth, which hopefully will match what the school boards are telling us, and have those discussions. Then, of course, we have to deal with priorities across the province with respect to health and safety.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate those comments. Again, Mr. Minister, we have communities that are bursting at the seams, communities like Beaumont, where 25 per cent of the population is under 20. How does the minister deal with these priorities where communities are bursting at the seams? How do we deal with these situations?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly, we have to work with communities that have these types of growth issues, and we have worked with Beaumont and with Rocky View with respect to the Airdrie community and others to try and assist them in getting, for example, modular classrooms in place to deal with growth on an immediate term. At the same time, we're working on a longer term capital plan which will put in place immediate construction in those areas that need it, and plan for the longer term for those areas that can wait a while. But there are issues across the province relative to . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: when will you provide Albertans with a long-range, sustainable, and sensible plan to address the urgent needs not only for today but for the future?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, we do have that plan. We're working through it in the department. We're looking at the issues of growth. We're looking at the fact that 50 per cent of our schools are more

than 50 years old, and that has implications for us. We also need to note where we're going to need those schools going forward, which ones need to be renewed and refreshed going forward, and which ones are going to be external to our needs. That's a long-term plan that we are working on going forward, and I hope that we'll have announcements with respect to that within the near term.

Funding for Medical Students

Mr. Chase: Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign the very first promise the governing party made was to aggressively increase the number of health care professionals in this province. Three years later Albertans are still waiting. To the Deputy Premier: if the Premier wants to make it easier for Albertans to study medicine, why did this government cut postsecondary education so much that the U of A and the U of C had to trim medical schools by 31 spaces this year?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, in actual fact, we have exceeded the promise that we made in our campaign in 2008. We had said that by 2012 we would have a minimum increase of physician graduates from 227 to 295. Our target right now is still 295, and in fact we believe we're going to exceed that target by a very good margin. It is true that given that this year's enrollments were down a little bit from last year . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why did health sciences and related clinical fields, the health professionals Alberta desperately needs, have the highest number of qualified students refused admission not only last year but for the last five years in a row? Something is not right here.

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member needs to look at the number of spaces that we've increased. We have increased a tremendous amount, and we've actually reduced the number of turnaways, if that definition is still out there. We have reduced the number of turnaways in every jurisdiction in this province, and we've done it very substantially. We are increasing the number of health care spaces in the province. We're going to increase the number of graduates in the health care fields. That's the important part, the graduates.

Mr. Chase: So like with the minister of health: we'll wait for Christmas for his gifts; we'll wait until 2012 for yours. Mind you, this government won't be around to see it.

How can the government claim that Alberta Health Services has a handle on workforce planning when the College and Association of Registered Nurses said just this month that AHS's workforce plans are not based on sound evidence and research?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I would be in disagreement with that because the number of health officials and health experts that I was in the room with when we did work on the plan and established those targets indicated to us that that was the appropriate level of staffing. It's a staffing mix. You can't listen to just one part of the model; you have to listen to all parts of the system.

We will have an increase of approximately 350 graduating physicians in 2012. We're going to be beyond our 2,000 nurses commitment that we made, and we're going to be beyond our 1,000 LPNs commitment we made. We are building more spaces than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Support for Rural Tourism

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the Grey Cup being hosted here in Edmonton this weekend, we hear lots about what's being done to promote tourism in the big cities. As I will mention later in my member's statement, there are unique, innovative programs in rural Alberta that are worthy of attention. My questions are to the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. How do more operators, especially those in rural Alberta, get funding and support from Travel Alberta?

Mrs. Ady: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to see communities working together, like on the icon passport system. The tourism industry is always stronger when we work together. I always say: hunt in a pack. So we see these kinds of creative initiatives come out, like the passport system. It's a great example of creative thinking that's fostered through Travel Alberta. Last year Travel Alberta provided \$2.6 million to north, central, and south tourism destination regions to come up with these kinds of innovative ways to attract tourism.

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, that's great news.

To the same minister. Mr. Speaker, you know, again, we hear the stats about the visitors to the Grey Cup. We hear about the millions of dollars that are being spent in Edmonton with this great event. My question to this minister is: are we seeing more people visiting and spending money in other parts of this great province, like in rural Alberta?

Mrs. Ady: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right. During the economic downturn there's no question that tourism took some hits, but I've always said that this is a resilient industry. It knows how to battle and fight. It just didn't sit down and mire in the fact that it was losing ground during an economic turndown. They got out; they promoted. They've worked very, very hard. This icon passport is one great example of them working together. I am starting to see the tourism industry turn around, and we're seeing activity out there.

Mr. VanderBurg: Again to the same minister. We talk lots about the innovative ways that operators are continuing to build this industry, but what's your ministry doing to promote more campgrounds? They're all full; you can't get in anywhere.

Mrs. Ady: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do have wonderful campgrounds in this province, and I understand why they're full. We actually created 100 new campsites last year in the province of Alberta. We need to add more. We're out looking at opportunities at this very moment on adding to those. We brought our reservation system—remember we doubled it from 25 to 50? We had 180,000 reservations on that campground reservation system last year. We're doing a lot; we need to do more. It's a wonderful province, and people want to visit it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

School Utilization Formula

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The school utilization formula is creating challenges across Alberta in both rural and urban areas alike. Last year the Edmonton public school board voted to close five of its schools, which was hugely upsetting to the affected

students and their community schools, which are the hub of these communities. My question is to the Minister of Education. Given that schools are a vital component of a community, why could your department not find some way to keep these schools open?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the governance of education and the government of education is a two-pronged process: there's the provincial level, of course, the Department of Education, the ministry, and there are local school boards. We ask school boards to govern in their area by making determinations about what their physical plant needs are, where they need to have school spaces, and in doing so, we hope that they will work with the community. We help to guide some of that discussion where appropriate and work with them on shaping that, but ultimately it comes to a school board determining whether or not the school facilities they have are the ones that are necessary in order to provide the programs. This is where it's really critical. It's all about the appropriate . . .

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

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. Given that these schools are critically important and many of these particular schools had low utilization rates based on your department's admittedly flawed formula for calculating utilization, when can we expect to see a new formula in place?

3:10

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, an important question that needs to be addressed from a number of different aspects. First of all, the utilization formula that people talk about and say is flawed does take into account – people suggest that it doesn't take into account the other spaces in the school, but it does provide a formula which calculates how much gymnasium, how much hallway, how much other space needs to be put in place. It should be clear that the utilization formula, which was critical a number of years ago in making determinations about where new schools were allocated and those sorts of things, doesn't play that significant a role currently in that process. So the utilization formula . . .

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

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. What can communities do to help prevent the closure of these neighbourhood schools and protect them for the future?

Mr. Hancock: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, again a very important question. First of all, we would encourage school boards and communities and municipal councils, et cetera, to work together to talk about the future of the community, what the needs are for the future of that community, what the cycle of growth might be in that community, and how to appropriately use the school facilities first and foremost for education purposes and then when no longer needed for education purposes, for some other community use until the cycle of the community comes around and the school is again needed for educational purposes in that area. That can't be simply a matter of . . .

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

Condominium Bylaws

Mr. Benito: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know some

constituents have concerns regarding the purchase of condominium units. I have heard my colleagues say in the past that consumers need to do their homework before investing in new or used condo units as their new home. My questions are to the Minister of Service Alberta. How can consumers do the homework you suggest before buying a condo when it can be difficult to get condo bylaws and financial information from the condominium association?

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the Condominium Property Act buyers can certainly ask the board for copies of documents, which include bylaws, meeting minutes, the budget and most recent financial statements, and the statement of the reserve fund, which is absolutely so important. The board must provide the buyer the requested information within 10 days. Many condominium boards are responsive. If a potential buyer is concerned, they should put a subject-to condition on the offer to ensure that they get to see the documents before the offer closes.

Mr. Benito: To the same minister. It takes so long for an interested buyer to arm themselves with vital information to help them make the best decision. Why is this the case?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It can certainly take time for the property managers or the board to go through the files, retrieve the documents, and send them to the recipient. As well, if a buyer would like to receive a copy of the bylaws right away, they can do so by logging onto the Service Alberta website, and ordering a copy from the spatial information system for a \$5 fee to expedite the process and to ensure that they get the right information.

Mr. Benito: Again to the same minister: why are there big differences in the charges to the potential buyer when requesting this documentation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently the Condominium Property Act requires that fees charged for producing and providing corporation documents be reasonable. Under the current review of the Condominium Property Act we are looking at options for standardizing fees, making sure that they are affordable to owners and buyers. These kinds of discussions and options will be included in the consultation document as we move forward with the consultation in late spring of 2011.

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, you were catching my eye a minute or two ago. Did you want to rise on something?

Mr. Denis: I wanted to rise, actually, on a point of order.

The Speaker: We'll deal with the point of order later, at the conclusion of the Routine.

Hon. members, 20 members were recognized today for 115 questions and responses.

We'll continue the Routine momentarily.

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

The Speaker: First of all, I want to draw to the attention of all members revisions with respect to the rotation of questions and

members' statements. I want to advise of certain modifications as a result of recent changes to the composition of caucuses. As of Tuesday, November 23, 2010, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark is sitting in the Assembly as an independent. This change affects the rotation of questions and of members' statements outlined in the chair's October 25, 2010, statement in this Assembly at pages 917 and 918 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day.

Given the number of changes to the rotation and to the seating plan so far this session the chair has attempted to integrate the new independent member into the rotation of questions and members' statements with a minimum of disruption to the existing order. As this chair has indicated previously, changes to the rotation are done in the spirit of fairness, that marks the proceedings of this Assembly. Accordingly, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, like the Member for Calgary-Currie, will be entitled to one question every four days.

Today is considered day 1 in the rotation scheme used in the Assembly. As the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark took his new seat Tuesday, November 23, it seems appropriate that he be able to ask a question this Wednesday, which is December 1, 2010, or day 3 in the rotation. He will be entitled to ask the sixth question, and the remaining places will be moved down one, so the Official Opposition will have the seventh question, government members the eighth question, et cetera. It will mark a departure from our previous rotation as the Official Opposition will now have the 18th question.

Similarly, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark will be able to participate in Members' Statements on the same basis as the other independent member. Given that the member's affiliation was changed last Tuesday, by the rotation used in this matter, he will be entitled to a member's statement also on Wednesday, December 1. The chair will provide calendars and outlines of the order of questions during question period to all members.

Now, hon. members, as the part of the Routine we were at before we moved to the question period was dealing with Introduction of Guests, we will now return to that. I have still, I believe, 11 members that wish to participate, so I'll go through my list, and I will ask you if you want to do an introduction or not.

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The guests have departed.

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

Mrs. Forsyth: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce two very bright women: Corrie Adolph, who is seeking the Wildrose nomination in Calgary-Currie, and Joanne Autio, who is seeking the Wildrose nomination in Edmonton-Mill Woods. Both Corrie and Joanne will be shadowing me today to find out what an MLA does on a daily basis. I would ask them both to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me today and gives me pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members my wife of 37 years, Pauline Prins. Pauline has been a registered nurse for the past 36 years and has worked in the health care system in Edmonton, Bentley, Ponoka, and Lacombe. She retired earlier this year after working many years serving the people

of these communities. She is now on the Lacombe hospital foundation board.

Pauline came by her love of medicine and serving people in need from her grandfather, the late Dr. Klaas Lugtenborg, who practised for many decades in the Netherlands. Mr. Speaker, she has passed on this dedication to our son Mark, who is also a medical doctor, well known to many members in this House. Now, this past summer Mark married the love of his life, another doctor, Dr. Nadia Salvaterra. Our son and daughter-in-law are now working in Rankin Inlet in Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, I've been surrounded by health care professionals for most of my life, including two sisters-in-law and four nieces who are nurses, so I want to recognize all the wonderful work that they do. Pauline is seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask all members to give her the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very good friend and an extremely dedicated volunteer from my constituency. Marcia McLeod has volunteered with the Black Gold Health Foundation, the Leduc hospital, the Edmonton International Airport, Santa's Helpers, Leduc-Nisku EDA, Leduc chamber of commerce, and many other organizations in the city of Leduc. She also served as the president of my constituency association. I'd like to ask Marcia McLeod to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Berger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, my guest, my daughter, had to get on the road back home, so she has left. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, would you like to proceed?

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My guests have also departed the Assembly, so I'll pass on that. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. Is there anybody that I missed? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Vandermeer: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to introduce a constituent of mine. His name is Ravi Grewal. I'm not sure if he's still here, but if we could give him a warm welcome.

3:20

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. minister of tourism and recreation.

2010 Grey Cup

Mrs. Ady: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to congratulate the Grey Cup Committee, the city of Edmonton, and all Albertans in our capital region on an extraordinary weekend of Grey Cup hospitality and celebration. I'm so proud of the welcome extended to the Governor General, the Prime Minister, Premiers of several provinces, and thousands of Saskatchewan and Montreal fans. This city was at its best.

Last weekend you couldn't go anywhere in Edmonton without seeing happy, smiling visitors. From Huddle Town and all the fun activities in Churchill Square to the parade and the amazing game

and halftime entertainment at Commonwealth Stadium in front of more than 63,000 fans and millions more television viewers across the country, Edmonton has once again shown that we know how to welcome the world.

Our government is proud to have supported the 2009 Grey Cup in Calgary and this year's Grey Cup in Edmonton. One truly wonderful and memorable event was the youth brunch that we hosted on Saturday morning. Through our sponsorship of the Grey Cup we were able to provide 50 tickets for deserving youth and minor football players in the Edmonton region to attend the Grey Cup game.

As we did at the Vancouver Winter Olympics, we took advantage of this opportunity to showcase Alberta artists and culture at the Huddle Town Alberta House. Aboriginal storyteller Ron Walker, Rapid Fire Theatre, and artists from U22 Productions entertained visitors while they enjoyed hot chocolate and marshmallows and warm Alberta hospitality. This was a fabulous opportunity to promote Alberta's performers on a national stage.

Mr. Speaker, the economic impact of hosting an event like the Grey Cup is significant. As I mentioned last week, fans stayed in hotels and motels. They ate in restaurants and bars, went shopping, and spent money here. Calgary Tourism estimated that the economic impact from last year's Grey Cup was \$61 million for the city and a further \$20 million in impact across the province. We expect that economic impact for Edmonton may be even higher. This is one of the reasons that we're disappointed that the Edmonton Expo 2017 bid is not proceeding.

Edmonton has successfully hosted numerous world-class events over the years, from the '78 Commonwealth Games, that gave us Commonwealth Stadium, to the '83 Universiade Games, the 2001 World Championships in Athletics, the 2003 Heritage Classic outdoor hockey game, the 2005 World Masters, and four Grey Cup championships.

Congratulations to the Montreal Alouettes on their second Grey Cup victory in Alberta, and congratulations to the Saskatchewan Roughriders and the Rider Nation fans for their tremendous heart and team spirit and camaraderie.

My thanks to the Grey Cup Committee and the more than 700 volunteers and citizens who helped make this the best Grey Cup weekend in Edmonton and such a resounding success. Congratulations to everyone involved. We can all be very proud.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity on behalf of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During its long and storied history the Grey Cup has evolved into one of our nation's most treasured institutions. Though the championship game itself remains the heart of the event, the parties and exhibitions and celebrations leading up to the kickoff have become a phenomenon all their own. For that reason the people of Edmonton must be saluted. They welcomed visitors from across the nation, including Their Excellencies Governor General David Johnston and Mrs. Sharon Johnston, and showed them the celebration of a lifetime.

Thousands of Canadians came together in downtown Edmonton to enjoy the festivities of Huddle Town. It was full of activities which brought together family and friends. Many even had the pleasure of zip-lining through our province's capital.

Without the hard work of countless volunteers this feat would have been impossible. The 98th Grey Cup event showcased the spirit of Albertans, where they had such an overwhelming response that they were quickly at full capacity and unable to accept any more volunteers.

The good-natured spirit of the event can be seen in that not one charge was laid all weekend as a result of the Grey Cup festivities. This spirit is unmatched anywhere in the world.

This Grey Cup was particularly personal for me as it had a potential to create conflict in my family. You see, Mr. Speaker, I was born in Saskatoon, and my brother Greg was born in Montreal. Yet instead of creating divisions between family and friends, this great Canadian game unites all of us in our love of sport, a true testament to how great it is.

I can tell you from my experience playing rugby for 17 years that when it comes to the finals, players always give 110 per cent. This Grey Cup was no exception. While the best team won, all players on both teams played valiantly, and they can all leave Edmonton with their heads held high.

The Eskimos may not have made it to the final this year, but by playing host to thousands of excited Canadians from across the country, Edmontonians have proved that this remains the city of champions.

Mr. Hinman: Mr. Speaker, may I respond to the statement?

The Speaker: I gather there's a request for unanimous consent to allow the Member for Calgary-Glenmore to participate in this.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Wildrose I'd like to congratulate the 98th Grey Cup organizers, who have done an extremely wonderful job in bringing Canadians together for our Grey Cup event. Special congratulations, though, are due to three members of the champion Montreal Alouettes who hail from Alberta: offensive lineman Jeff Perrett – I might add that his parents have come and visited me twice, and I have a photograph from him, an outstanding athlete – and Dylan Steenbergen, both from the Lethbridge area, and defensive tackle J.P. Bekasiak from Edmonton. We also recognize offensive lineman Chris Best from Calgary and defensive tackle Keith Shologan from Spruce Grove, who came up just short as members of the Saskatchewan Roughriders team.

What a wonderful weekend for Canadians and the fans who had the opportunity to enjoy this fine city and the thousands who watched the game on TV. Congratulations to all involved and for those who got to participate.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. Before we move on to the next item, it's now 27 minutes after 3, and I think it would be inhumane on my part to deny hon. members an opportunity to have tea or juice or coffee in the House before we call Orders of the Day. I'm not going to call Orders of the Day, but you can order such if you wish.

Members' Statements

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

2010 Grey Cup Festival

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has been proud to host the Canadian Football League's Grey Cup for each of the past two years. Congratulations go out to repeat champions Anthony Calvillo and the Montreal Alouettes on an inspirational and well-deserved victory.

Mr. Speaker, everything is just fine in the New West Partnership, which originated between the Alberta and Saskatchewan governments, but 2010 just wasn't quite the year for our teams. I'd like to

again salute the Grey Cup steering committee, which I was able to introduce earlier, and their volunteers. It was an amazing festival, and it included an extremely successful parade, the entertaining and free Huddle Town, which featured not only a 520-foot zip line but, for me the important thing, contributions to the armed forces, a great selection of receptions, ever-exciting player awards, and countless other unforgettable activities.

I would like to acknowledge the ministries of Culture and Community Spirit and Tourism, Parks and Recreation for invaluable initiatives. I'd also note the contributions of the ministries of Children and Youth Services, Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Public Affairs Bureau. In the grant agreement \$200,000 was earmarked for cultural activities, which provided a fabulous showcase for our world-class Alberta performers. Another highlight was Alberta House, which featured our trademark western hospitality.

Mr. Speaker, at one time I thought there might be one way for this year's event to be slightly better, for Albertans at least, and that would be if the Calgary Stampeders and the Edmonton Eskimos had both qualified for the big game using the crossover format and played to a tie. But, of course, that scenario cannot happen. There needs to be a winner. My point, though, is that in many ways, with the way things were organized, all of Canada, all Canadians, were winners in the 98th edition of the only truly Canadian professional sport, with Albertans as the gracious hosts.

Next year, with Vancouver arranging the festivities, hopefully the Stampeders or the Eskimos will bring the cup back to Alberta, where it belongs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Alberta Liberal Emergency Health Care Solutions

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday I launched the Official Opposition's plan to help Alberta navigate its way through the current crisis in our emergency departments. It's a long-standing crisis caused solely by the mismanagement and incompetence of this Progressive Conservative administration. I urge the Premier to adopt this plan immediately to undo some of the damage from perpetual disruptive organizational change and revolving doors in senior leadership.

Our health care system is lurching from crisis to crisis to crisis. Conditions in emergency rooms across Alberta are worse than ever before, with patients waiting dozens of hours, some dying before receiving the treatment they need. We must take the pressure off the system and treat the situation as if a major event such as a bus or plane crash or a serious epidemic existed.

In the next few months we must anticipate and avert the potential for catastrophe by creating space, surge capacity in the system. A short-term investment now will reduce costs in the longer term. We must act now. The lack of front-line health care professionals is the number one cause of the crisis. The government must hire more health care professionals while at the same time creating enough long-term care space to meet Alberta's needs.

3:30

Our plan has seven steps: the creation of an emergency task force comprised of top-tier professionals to report daily on bed availability and wait times and ensure people move through emergency departments quickly; a mobilization of all available health care professionals; an advertising campaign to help Albertans navigate the system more effectively; the immediate provision of alternative long-term care settings; extended hours for diagnostic imaging and lab testing;

the opening of mothballed acute-care beds in Edmonton and Calgary; and initiating a long-term plan for the future improvement of public health care, including a regional delivery system.

Mr. Speaker, the Tory administration has caused the greatest health care crisis in our history. This government has a duty to immediately atone for dangerous mismanagement. Act now and save lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Investing in New Canadians Program

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on an innovative research initiative between the University of Calgary and RBC to study how organizations can take full advantage of Calgary's diverse working community. As Roger Straathof, vice-president of RBC, said:

It's estimated that more than 80,000 Canadians with professional credentials are not recognized by industry simply because their credentials were earned outside of [Canada]. This is equal to billions of dollars in human resource waste annually.

A \$1 million gift from RBC offers the U of C's Haskayne School of Business the unique opportunity to look at the ingredients of a successful immigrant-employer relationship in a longitudinal study.

Mr. Speaker, the investing in new Canadians program would develop, promote, and facilitate talent management programs to internationally qualified new Canadian professionals. The fundamental intention is to assist immigrants with professional-level foreign credentials in gaining employment in their field of expertise. The university will partner with a number of Calgary organizations, including the Bow Valley College, Alberta Talent Pool, and the Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council, to look at the effectiveness of current mentorship and recruitment programs when it comes to including new immigrants in the Calgary workforce. The investing in new Canadians program will launch in 2011.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure we can all see how this type of collaborative initiative is immensely important to a growing, developing province like ours. This initiative holds real promise in addressing our critical workforce needs in areas of health services and resource development and, in fact, all aspects of our economy and social infrastructure.

I would like to extend my congratulations and best wishes to this much-needed project that will help our province immensely. Thank you.

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

Alberta Icons Passport Program

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to talk about a great new program that's drawing attention to some of Alberta's most unique attractions and helping to encourage tourism in our great province. Woodlands county has spearheaded the creation of the passport to Alberta's community icons. The passport is a free traveller's guide that's stamped at 24 of the big-things sites across Alberta, from the world's largest bee in Falher to the Taber cornstalk and almost everything in between. The passport program has been very successful so far, and there's already one Albertan, that I introduced earlier, Mr. Mario Boulanger, who has completed the entire passport and visited all 24 sites.

These communities are proud to celebrate their claim to fame on a monumental scale. Their icons are symbols of our heritage. They are reminders of what makes these communities so special. I invite my colleagues to join me in thanking Woodlands county, the

participating communities, and their partners at Travel Alberta for promoting these sites and communities.

Mr. Speaker, on your desk and, colleagues, on your desk is a copy of the passport. I encourage Albertans to visit www.alberta-icons.com to learn more about the big things icon passport program and to get out and explore our beautiful province.

Thank you, sir.

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

Recognition of Legislature House Staff

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is probably fair to say that we don't often achieve unanimity in this Chamber, but I want to speak to a matter today about which I think we can all agree. As you know, in the last few weeks we've been putting in very long hours, and the schedule has been gruelling. Some of us, certainly me, may have felt at times that it was just almost more than a person could bear, almost above and beyond the call of duty.

I was here for the debate in the middle of the night last week at probably about 3 in the morning on Thursday when I slipped out for a short break and happened to strike up a conversation with a member of the security detail. They were doing their usual job plus also taking a turn at some of the duties normally performed by the pages. I asked him when his shift had started, and he indicated that he had started at 1 p.m. the previous day. He also indicated that they aren't platooning. They're not taking shifts because there aren't enough of them, so they just work right through until whenever the session for the day ends. In fact, some of those people had been here since 8 a.m. the previous day.

This got me to thinking about all of the people who work so hard to make it possible for this Chamber to operate, even around the clock when necessary. These security people, pages, table officers and officials, the Sergeant-at-Arms, *Hansard* staff, camera and sound people, leg. and office assistants, researchers, maintenance and janitorial staff all do their jobs quietly and professionally and always in the most accommodating way. They truly go above and beyond the call of duty, and their families often have to make adjustments and sacrifices for them to do their job.

Mr. Speaker, these are Albertans who are great leaders. They lead by example, by their work ethic, and by their service. I would like to thank them for what they do.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. The way you were going there, I thought you were going to conclude that the Speaker was a brutal boss for making people work from 8 in the morning to 4 the next day. But, in the end, I gather that leadership is all important, right?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Assist Community Services Centre

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today in this House to discuss a very important community organization in Edmonton, the Assist Community Services Centre. Earlier I had introduced Mr. Allan Kwan, vice-president of Assist; Ms Mary Fung, their public relations director; and Mei Hung, the treasurer. Originally this organization was known as the Chinese Community Services Centre. Assist was founded by Mr. Kim Hung.

It's a nonprofit, charitable organization that provides many valuable services to its community. It's been a pillar of the Chinese community in Edmonton for over 30 years and has become more prominent as the Chinese community has grown. Although it is primarily a centre for immigrants of Chinese origin, Assist offers services in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Korean, and

Arabic. In helping immigrants, its overarching vision is to enhance the lives of individuals and families through quality programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, it has certainly achieved its vision over the past several decades in a number of ways. Assist empowers immigrants by providing essential services that help make the transition to living in Alberta much easier. These programs include adult English courses, one-on-one counselling, group activities, and an integrated services program. Just this past weekend Assist hosted an information session on employment insurance. Future workshops include one on how to become a journeyman in Alberta and one on the public school system in our province. The centre also provides children, youth, family, and senior services.

Mr. Speaker, the Assist Community Services Centre is a tremendous organization which gives back to the community by helping immigrants adjust to life in Edmonton. It helps immigrants of all ages by providing a number of useful services. The volunteers at this organization are tremendously dedicated and hard working. I would ask this House to please give the members of Assist the warm welcome that they deserve.

Thank you, sir.

Water Allocation

Mr. Dallas: Mr. Speaker, water and access to it is the lifeblood of our province. It sustains our ecosystems and contributes to Albertans' high quality of life. However, our water supply is limited, and in order that we continue to grow agriculturally, industrially, environmentally, and economically, we must face these challenges. We've already seen the ramifications in the South Saskatchewan River basin, where there is not enough water to meet a variety of demands.

3:40

Albertans expect our water resources to be managed in a way that ensures the province can fully weather future growth demands. That's precisely why the government of Alberta is reviewing ways in which water is allocated in the province. Not surprisingly, Albertans are interested in what changes may occur. For example, we've heard concerns about a free market system where water licences would only be available to the highest bidder. Let me be clear. This will not happen. The government of Alberta has no intention of privatizing or selling Alberta's water resources, and this includes any transfer outside of our province. Water is owned by the Crown on behalf of Albertans, and its use in Alberta is regulated by the province. Any new tool for Alberta's future water management would have that same provincial oversight.

No decisions have been made about the future of Alberta's water resources, and no decisions will be made until the people of this province are consulted. Throughout all of this the guiding principle is that the government of Alberta remains firmly committed to ensuring water resources are protected. The review is about enhancing a system that has supported Alberta well over the past century but may not be sufficient to meet our future social, economic, and environmental expectations. We must adapt and be prepared. I urge all Albertans to take advantage of engagement opportunities when the time comes.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand from the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices that we will be in

need of a search committee for the Ombudsman's position. That being the case and given the potential agenda for the House under standing orders to conclude by Thursday unless otherwise ordered, it would be prudent, therefore, for me to put on notice a motion.

Be it resolved that a Select Special Ombudsman Search Committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed consisting of the following members, namely Mr. Mitzel, chair; Mr. Lund, deputy chair; Mr. Marz; Mr. Lindsay; Mr. Quest; Mr. Rogers; Ms Blakeman; Ms Notley; and Mr. Hinman, for the purpose of inviting applications for the position of Ombudsman and to recommend to the Assembly the applicant it considers most suitable to this position.

- (1) The chair and members of the committee shall be paid in accordance with the schedule of category A committees provided in the most current Members' Services Committee allowances order.
- (2) Reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid subject to the approval of the chair.
- (3) In carrying out its responsibilities the committee may with the concurrence of the head of the department utilize the services of members of the public service employed in that department and of the staff employed by the Assembly.
- (4) The committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned.
- (5) When its work has been completed, the committee shall report to the Assembly if it is sitting. During a period when the Assembly is adjourned, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

In providing this notice, Mr. Speaker, I am anticipating perhaps a tabling that might be made later, but I think it was prudent to give notice to the House of the necessity for this motion so that it could come to the floor on a timely basis this week. I would also indicate that I have approached members of the opposition to confirm that they would allow their name to stand in the motion as I have reflected it.

The Speaker: The House will deal with the motion a little later. It was my intent as Speaker to have tabled the letter from the Ombudsman on Thursday last, but unfortunately there was no opportunity to do it. The chair of the Leg. Offices Committee has a copy of that letter. Mr. Button did meet with me, and he's resigning effective May 31, 2011, for personal and family reasons. There are some issues, and both he and his wife want to have a different future than to be under pressure. We will deal with that later in the week, but the letter is there, and the chair has it as well.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Okay. Like Introduction of Guests today, I have a very long list.

We will deal with the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to table eight copies of my response to amended Written Question 10 as submitted by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, which reads, "As of December 31, 2009, how many Albertans were on wait-lists for long-term care placement both in hospital facilities and in the community?"

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table eight copies of my response to Written Question 23, as submitted also by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, which reads, "What was the total amount spent by the Ministry of Health and Wellness on external consultants during the past three fiscal years?"

It is my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that written questions 9, 36, 37, and 38, which were directed to my ministry, are being tabled by the Clerk. Thank you.

Also, if I could, I would quickly like to table the appropriate number of copies of the following annual reports: the 2009-2010 report of the Alberta College of Occupational Therapists and the 2009-2010 report of the Health Quality Council of Alberta.

Thank you.

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, two tablings. One on behalf of the Minister of Finance and Enterprise responding to questions from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar with regard to expenditures on external consultants during the past three years.

Also, Mr. Speaker, on my behalf, responding to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to the same question: how much had Treasury Board spent on external consultants during the past three fiscal years? Those appropriate numbers of documents will be tabled.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. It's okay. I'm getting it all down. It's going to take a long time before we ever get there.

The hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg your indulgence for the number of things that I must table. Number one, I am pleased to respond to Written Question 15, that was posed to me by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, which read, "What was the total amount spent by the Ministry of Employment and Immigration on external consultants during the past three fiscal years?" In my correspondence I addressed that question to the point that I'm sharing it with this Assembly at this point.

Mr. Speaker, my next tabling. As required, I am tabling five copies of the 2010 annual report of the Certified General Accountants' Association of Alberta. For those in the House who don't know, CGA Alberta is a self-regulated organization of professional accountants created to further the interests of Albertans in our business community and develop professional standards in the province for that particular profession. Thank you.

My next tabling, Mr. Speaker, is five copies of the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta 2009 annual report, the last available, Bridges, which I'm compelled to share with this Legislative Assembly. Much like the prior report, this self-governing body administers the professional conduct of its members and assures the quality of standards of services rendered to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, my next tabling is again five copies, as required, of the annual report of the Radiation Health Administrative Organization. Not to repeat myself over and over, but this is again a self-governing body that assures the quality of service provided to us in our health care system among radiation professionals.

Next, Mr. Speaker, I again am required to table with you today five copies of the Alberta Dental Association and College 2009 radiation health and safety program. This organization has developed a program for Albertans to ascertain that we receive the best quality of care when it comes to radiation. This is to be tabled with the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, next, from the University of Calgary five copies of the annual report of the University of Calgary, again on radiation health administration issued by that university.

I feel bad for the pages, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Don't worry about the pages. You just continue.

Mr. Lukaszuk: And about your patience as well.

Mr. Speaker, I have five copies of the Authorized Radiation Health Administrative Organization annual report for 2010 as well.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, also the annual report of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta for 2009-2010.

Mr. Speaker, also the last report available for the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association radiation protection program.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to table five copies of the College of Alberta Professional Foresters 2010 annual report.

Mr. Speaker, last but not least, I would like to table five copies of the Workers' Compensation Board of Alberta annual report.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a document that I will table today on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, and I have the required number of copies. The document is a letter scribed by Mr. Earl Kading of Cessford, Alberta, a constituent of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, requesting to have secondary highway 561, known locally as the Cessford road, paved from Veterans highway 36 to secondary highway 884. Mr. Kading notes that as a member of the special . . .

The Speaker: That's probably a pretty good summarization you've got already. You can probably table it now and move on.

Mr. Doerksen: I will do that. It is signed by more than 100 residents from the Cessford area. Some are my constituents. I won't read them this afternoon.

The Speaker: Wonderful.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, you have one, too, now? Same road?

Mr. Hayden: No, Mr. Speaker, unless it's hidden in my papers.

But I do, Mr. Speaker, want to table in response to the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East the response to their request for the amount spent over the past three years on external consultants. I'll table the required number of copies.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to table the response to the question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview with respect to: "What is the total number of complaints regarding zoo standards dealt with by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development from January 1, 2003, to February 7, 2010?"

I also have, Mr. Speaker, the response to the question from the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East with respect to: "What specific programs have been developed to aid Alberta pork producers who suffered economic losses due to the recent H1N1 outbreak?" I have the required number of copies.

I also would like to table the required number of copies of the Stakeholder Consultation: Occupational Health and Safety report as prepared by Stroh Consulting, covering the 10 questions that were to

explore ways to get others involved with health and safety by encouraging collaborative partnerships and initiating processes for agricultural societies to include health and safety activities as part of their program. Also:

Research approaches used for [occupational health and safety] in other jurisdictions and consider adopting best practices in Alberta, [as an example] do we need a safety organization?

Continue [Employment and Immigration] and ARD [occupational health and safety] project team to facilitate industry engagement.

Create and launch a multi-phase awareness campaign for [occupational health and safety] in the agriculture industry.

Facilitate an industry and government process to develop a long term Agriculture Health and Safety Enhancement Strategy.

Investigate possible recognition programs similar to the Partnerships in Health and Safety Certificate of Recognition (COR) Program to cover the agriculture industry.

Identify an industry champion for health and safety on farms and ranches to maintain profile and promote safety initiatives.

Identify possible incentives for improved practices ([and those are like] reduced Workers' Compensation premiums, reduced premiums for crop insurance, interest rates or increased benefits of grant programs).

Investigate possible inclusion of contractors carrying out non-agricultural work on farms under [occupational health and safety] . . .

And finally, Mr. Speaker, to

develop best practices guide for high risk duties.

I have the required number, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to table them.

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

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just have one document I'd like to table. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies in response to Written Question 26, which I received through my office from the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie. This response to Written Question 26 lists payments of external consultants for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, which consists of the Department of Housing and Urban Affairs and the Alberta Social Housing Corporation. I'd also like to note that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs was established on April 1, 2008, and as such, the external consultant records pertaining to the '07-08 fiscal year will be included in the response from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. I would indicate also that the amount is negligible.

Thank you.

Mr. Blakett: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table the appropriate number of copies in response to Written Question 1, raised in the Third Session of the 27th Legislature by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. The question was: "What was the total amount spent by the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit on external consultants during the past three fiscal years?" Two, the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit was constituted in 2008, and we have records for the last three years to that effect.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table eight copies of the response to the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, who had posed a question in the House that had to do with external consultants which the ministry has used over the last three years, which we were able to bring forward, being developed on a lot of these things. I believe that – was it you, member?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. You bet. I appreciate this.

The Speaker: Anyway, would you speak through the chair. He feels lonely if you don't.

Mr. Horner: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I heard the hon. member question where this should go, but I'm sure the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity will provide the answer to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I have the appropriate number of copies here. As I said, the question was: "What was the total amount spent by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology on external consultants during the past three fiscal years?" We've just broken it out into a summary, and we'd be happy to provide that.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Liepert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Calgary-Currie, I think, is going to have a lot of reading to do here tonight if we sit fairly late because I, too, have a tabling of a request, Written Question 25, from the Member for Calgary-Currie, again relative to payments to external consultants as it relates to the Ministry of Energy. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Two tablings today. The first is a government of Alberta policy and strategy document entitled Alberta's Health Legislation: Moving Forward, from July 2010; in particular page 15, advocating allowing opt-in/opt-out provisions by health professionals; page 19, advocating new legislation for different funding models; and page 21, advocating private insurance options for public health care.

The second tabling is the appropriate number of copies of a report that I comprised because I received 307 signed letters from Friends of Medicare from Albertans all over the province. Rather than table 307, I've done a report of those that wrote and a sample copy of the letter that they wrote expressing their concerns about scrapping existing laws, putting too much power into the hands of health ministers. They're wanting to see open and transparent processes and encourage reviewing other options.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to table five copies of the June 2010 Inspiring Action on Education, Alberta Education's follow-up document to Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans. Inspiring Action connects the high-level policy and governance shifts of Inspiring Education to the everyday work of students, teachers, principals, and school boards. Many Albertans have contributed their views about this particular document through an online discussion process at www.education.alberta.ca/engage.

Also, Mr. Speaker, if I may, I am pleased to table today the 2009-2010 year in review for Speak Out, the Alberta student engagement initiative first promised by this government in the 2008 Speech from the Throne. In the past year Speak Out has heard from over 2,300 students about what works and doesn't work in their education and has garnered significant international attention and many awards.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:00

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As per my pledge in the Assembly on April 2, 2007, half my indexed pay raise, \$146.25, is donated monthly to a food bank in southern Alberta until AISH is similarly increased and indexed. I am tabling the required five copies of my letter and donation to, for June, Medicine Hat food bank; July, Lethbridge Salvation Army food bank; and August, Lethbridge Interfaith Food Bank.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter from Anne Landry – she's a concerned citizen – regarding her complaint dated October 28, 2010, to the hon. Premier. This letter outlines her concerns with her personal information being held at ATB Investor Services, ATB Financial, and information regarding a series of unresolved breaches of security of personal information. Ms Landry's case has been ongoing for seven years. She hopes that this letter will encourage the government to change legislation to ensure that the harm that has occurred to her will not happen to others.

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

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to table the appropriate number of copies of your passport to Alberta's community icons, just in case you didn't get the message earlier.

Also, I did an interview last week with the Whitecourt radio station and promised that I would table the appropriate number of copies of the emergency department surge capacity protocols, sir.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Ady: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I only have one tabling today. I'm pleased to rise and table the appropriate number of copies of our response to Written Question 6 from the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity. The question was: what was the total amount spent by the Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation on external consultants during the past three fiscal years?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from me to the Member for Edmonton-Centre responding to her written question as to the payments to external consultants that were provided by my department for the years 2007, 2008, 2009, and a total for the three years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have just two tablings today. The first is a photo and article about Afghanistan's first national park, Band-e-Amir, which became a park on Earth Day 2009 despite three decades of warfare. The park is critical to biodiversity, conservation, and economic development.

My second tabling is from Christopher Shank, PhD, from Cochrane, who wrote from Afghanistan disconcerted that halfway around the world he is working to organize world-class protected areas while this province is dismantling legal protections for its parks and wilderness areas.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, as required by Standing Order 114, I'm pleased to present you with the 2009 annual report of the Legislative Assembly Office and the 2009 annual report of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Alberta Branch. The report includes the LAO annual report, the financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009, and highlights the activities and achievements of the LAO for the calendar year ending December 31, 2009. It also contains a report of members who have participated under various other Commonwealth Parliamentary Association activities as well.

The hon. Minister of Education on tablings? Sorry. Did I miss you?

Mr. Hancock: You did.

The Speaker: Oh, a thousand apologies. How could I have done that?

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No apologies necessary. That was a long list.

As you may have discerned, the written questions that were accepted and the motions for returns that were accepted some time ago are due today. Therefore, we do have an obligation to get them on the table today. I appreciate your allowing me to proceed with the ones that I have, not having had an opportunity to table them last Thursday.

First and foremost, I do want to table responses to written questions 5 and 29. Written Question 5 reads, "What was the total amount spent by the Ministry of Education on external consultants during the past three fiscal years?" And Written Question 29 reads, "What was the total number of sole-source contracts the Ministry of Education entered into in Edmonton during the past three fiscal years?" Those are responsive to the MLA for Calgary-Varsity.

I also have, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of other members who have a responsibility to table today answers to written questions because they're due today. On behalf of the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports in response to a question from the MLA for Lethbridge-East the appropriate number of copies of the response to Written Question 20: "What was the total amount spent by the Ministry of Seniors and Community Supports on external consultants during the past three fiscal years?"

As well, on behalf of the Minister of Children and Youth Services in response to Written Question 4 from the Member for Calgary-Varsity a response with respect to the total amount of payments for Children and Youth Services.

With respect to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General a response to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo with respect to Written Question 7: "What was the total amount spent by the Ministry of Justice on external consultants during the past three fiscal years?"

Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of tabling on behalf of the Alberta Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security the response to Written Question 8 asked by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo: "What was the total amount spent by the Ministry of Solicitor General and Public Security on external consultants during the past three fiscal years?"

I also, Mr. Speaker, have the privilege on behalf of the Minister of Service Alberta to provide to the House the answer to Written Question 12: "What was the total amount spent by the Ministry of Service Alberta on external consultants during the past three fiscal year?"

I have the privilege as well, of course, on behalf of the Minister of Transportation of tabling the appropriate number of copies of the response to Written Question 13 requesting the total amount spent,

in aggregate, on external consultants per fiscal year for the Ministry of Transportation.

I'm sorry. The last one was a response to a question from the Member for Calgary-McCall, and I don't think I mentioned that the previous one was also from the Member for Calgary-McCall.

This one, Written Question 19, was raised by the MLA for Lethbridge-East, and I'm pleased to table the written response to that question on behalf of the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. That is, again, a question relating to the total amount spent, in aggregate, on external consultants per fiscal year.

Then on behalf of the hon. the Premier I'm pleased to table the response to Written Question 21 raised by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition and Member for Calgary-Mountain View, I believe. Written Question 21: "What was the total amount spent by Executive Council on external consultants during the past three fiscal years?"

Finally with respect to those tablings, from the Minister of Aboriginal Relations a response to a question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview with respect to Written Question 22 on the same general matter.

Mr. Speaker, those are the responses to the required tablings, because they're due today, of answers in response to written questions. I do have a few other tablings.

4:10

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table to the Legislative Assembly today the requisite number of the individual audited financial statements of school jurisdictions for the school year ended August 31, 2009, that I'm obliged to table in the House. Treasury Board directive 05/98 requires that the individual financial statements of organizations be tabled in the Legislative Assembly when only a summary of individual statements is included in the ministry's annual report, which is the case for Alberta Education's annual report and the financial statements of school jurisdictions. It's off here because you'll recognize that our fiscal year is from April 1 to March 31 and the school jurisdictions' fiscal year is from September 1 to August 31. This tabling shows that the school jurisdictions' accumulated operating surplus was \$371 million as of August 31, 2009. Our school jurisdictions are in excellent fiscal shape. I've taken the liberty of providing the other copies to the chair because they are fairly large volumes, so the other copies required for tabling have been delivered to the Clerk's table already.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to also table on behalf of the minister of international and intergovernmental affairs the requisite number of copies of a position statement on emergency department overcrowding from the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, February 2007. This is a statement that has been referred to in debate a number of times but was specifically referred to by the hon. minister of intergovernmental affairs during her debate on Bill 17, and as such she was required to table it. She attempted to table it at the time, and it had been returned to her for tabling at the appropriate time, which is now.

I would also like to table, Mr. Speaker, the appropriate number of copies of a document entitled The President's Letter dated November 26, 2010. It's a copy of the letter written by the president of the AMA and published on the AMA website. It references a number of matters that have been raised in the House and may indeed be raised again in the House. In order to make sure that the House has access to the actual document itself, it's prudent to have that tabled.

The penultimate tabling, Mr. Speaker, would be a report on the OECD education ministerial meeting, Investing in Human and Social Capital: New Challenges, which was held in Paris on November 4 and 5 and which I had the privilege of attending on

behalf of not only Alberta but on behalf of the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada. It was focused around the necessity for governments to continue to invest in education even in troubled fiscal times. It's very good reading, and I would commend it to members of the House to read because it is a very important topic. [interjections]

I'm hearing grumblings from the opposite side. Mr. Speaker, we hear them tabling all sorts of things all the time, but these ones are things that we are required to table for the most part.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table five copies of a document entitled *Success in School for Children and Youth In Care: Provincial Protocol Framework*. It's a very important document. This very evening we're celebrating with the participants in the departments of Education and Children and Youth Services and Health and also community partners who have put together this protocol, which helps set the parameters so that we can share information with respect to children in care appropriately so that Children and Youth Services, Education, and all of those who are interested in sharing the success of children communicate appropriate information appropriately.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Directly to the chair I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of my response to Written Question 11, whereby the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall asked for the total amount spent by the Ministry of Infrastructure on external consultants during the past three years. The Ministry of Infrastructure makes use of experts in the province as we work to fulfill the Premier's vision of the most advanced infrastructure in North America. We have a responsibility to ensure that the buildings we construct are well planned and designed for the Albertans who use them and for the communities that surround them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have one document to table from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. I have the appropriate number of copies to table, and this is in response to Written Question 28 regarding the total amounts spent on consultants. We've covered the years 2007-08, 2008-09, and 2009-10. Those, again, include the amounts for both contractors and consultant payments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Knight, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, return to order of the Assembly MR 1 asked for by Mr. Hehr on March 15, 2010.

On behalf of the hon. Minister Zwodzesky, minister of health, response to Written Question 9, asked for by Mr. Hehr on March 15, 2010, and responses to written questions 36, 37, and 38, all asked for by Dr. Taft on March 15, 2010.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have three points of order we have to deal with today. You've been duly notified during the session.

The first point of order was raised by the hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order Improper Questions

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do believe that we are achieving a new low in terms of the decorum and respect that we have in the House. I raised a point of order with respect to a purported question being raised by the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere during question period today. I raised that point of order – and I haven't been raising points of order in this House – because I am very, very concerned that if we do not have the respect that's deserved for elected members in this province in this House, we can hardly expect anyone in the province to respect the process of government. I'm not asking for respect for any individual member. That has to be earned.

I'm rising under a number of citations, Mr. Speaker, and I want to give you the citations because there are a considerable number of ways in which the presentation by the hon. member – and I don't have his exact words with me. I assume that by now you have the Blues. I don't have that benefit. I want to give you the citations and then get into the gist of why I believe that we need to take a step back, calm down, and get to what the regular business of the House is and what the appropriate use of question period is.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 23(h), "makes allegations against another Member"; 23(i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member"; and 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language." It is the very essence of this place that government governs and the opposition calls government to account. In fact, it goes further than that for private members in the House because under the parliamentary rule of government, cabinet is the government, and all members of the House are here to hold government to account and to make sure that government is governing in the interests of all Albertans. It's essential to government that we have a structure and a set of processes that we adhere to. One of those processes is question period, and the principles of question period – and they're clearly delineated in all the rule books – indicate what question period can be used for and what it can't be used for.

Today in question period the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere made allegations with respect to statements that he, obviously, is not privy to. He made assumptions with respect to those statements. He made the suggestion on the floor of the House that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford had done certain things which had led to certain other things which had led to certain other things. Not only was he making allegations under 23(h); he was imputing false and unavowed motives under 23(i). In doing so, I think all members of the House would agree that he used very abusive language, under 23(j).

I want to give a few other citations, Mr. Speaker, which are relevant to the points in question. First of all, I would refer the House to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*. Under that particular document – and I'm reading from the sixth edition by Fraser, Dawson, and Holtby of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms* – number 64 on page 19: "The House has occasionally taken notice of attacks on individual Members." It goes on, and I'll just paraphrase it. It basically goes on to discourage and, in fact, to indicate that it's inappropriate to make attacks on individual members. That's 64.

Then, of course, we go over to 409 on page 120. In *Beauchesne's* 409 there are a number of citations which are particularly relevant with respect to questions. Under 409(1) "it must be a question, not an expression of an opinion, representation, argumentation, nor debate." Well, in the way in which the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere phrased his interceding in question period today, it was

clearly an expression of opinion because he had no knowledge of the facts. He couldn't possibly have had any knowledge of the facts. Clearly an expression of opinion, clearly a representation, obviously, in the very nature of all of those that heard it, argumentation and therefore out of order under 409(1).

4:20

I would also direct the chair's attention to 409(3). "The question ought to seek information and, therefore, cannot be based upon a hypothesis, cannot seek an opinion . . . be argumentative or make representations." I'll come back and cite why I believe 409(3) is relevant.

Beauchesne 409(7): "A question must adhere to the proprieties of the House, in terms of inferences, imputing motives or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it." The hon. member was clearly out of line on that point.

There has been a very unfortunate amount of public airing of issues relative to the circumstances surrounding the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark and other comments made in that context. The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark has made certain things that he is aware of public, but he was not aware of – no one has been able to comment, other than the president of the AMA and the president's letter, that I have tabled, on what exactly happened with respect to the series of events that the hon. member referred to in the preamble to his question and during his question. He had no knowledge of it. He was making assumptions, and in making the question, he also, clearly, cast aspersions.

Beauchesne 409(10) says, "A question ought not to refer to a statement made outside the House by a Minister."

Then on page 122 of *Beauchesne's* it is observed under 410:

- (10) The subject matter of questions must be within the collective responsibility of the Government or the individual responsibilities of Ministers . . .
- (16) Ministers may be questioned only in relation to current portfolios.
- (17) Ministers may not be questioned with respect to party responsibilities.

I'll come back to those later.

Mr. Speaker, it's also clear in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, on page 502 that a member should

- ask a question that is within the administrative responsibility of the government or of the individual Minister addressed and may not
- reflect on the character or the conduct of Chair Occupants, members of the House and of the Senate or members of the judiciary . . .

clearly reflecting on the character or conduct of a member of the House,

- refer to public statements by Ministers on matters not directly related to their departmental duties;
- address a Minister's former portfolio or any other presumed functions . . .
- create disorder;
- make a charge by way of a preamble to a question.

Now, some of those relate to other actions that have happened in and around the House in the course of the last few days and few months, but making a charge by way of a preamble to a question falls full square on what the hon. member did this afternoon.

At the top of page 504 it goes on. A question should not

- seek information from a Minister of a purely personal nature . . .
- concern internal party matters, or party or election expenses.

Again, you'll see, just by stating those, how they have relevance to the question at hand.

Then, of course, to the bible of parliamentary conduct, *Erskine May: Parliamentary Practice*, 23rd edition, published in 2004. There are just a couple of matters there, but they back up what I've been talking about, and that is that

questions addressed to Ministers should relate to the public affairs with which they are officially connected, to proceedings pending in Parliament, or to matters of administration for which they are responsible.

That's on page 344.

On page 346:

Questions which seek an expression of opinion, or which contain arguments, expressions of opinion, inferences, imputations, unnecessary epithets, or rhetorical, controversial, ironical or offensive expressions, are not in order.

Now, Mr. Speaker, all of that is to say that the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere breached virtually all of those citations that I mentioned in one question today and in many questions over the course of this fall session.

But let me just reference today. I don't have the Blues, as I said, but I clearly heard the hon. member indicate that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford had made a call to the AMA and that that call had resulted in some action being taken by the College of Physicians and Surgeons against the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

First and foremost, there is no evidence of any sort that that happened. The only evidence that there is, and that is evidenced by the president's letter and by an admission made by Edmonton-Rutherford – and he may wish to address this – is that the hon. member made a call to Dr. P.J. White, who is a personal friend, to raise a concern with him about another personal friend so that other friends of Edmonton-Meadowlark could be attentive to his health. Now, that was a perfectly reasonable thing to do, as Dr. White indicates. That was a perfectly reasonable thing to do.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I myself on Wednesday, prior to the debate continuing the way it did, approached members of your office to ensure that we had in the Legislative Assembly, not in the Assembly itself but in the precincts, people who had a first-responder capability in health because I was concerned not just about Edmonton-Meadowlark but about the health of other members of the House. I think it's prudent for us as House leaders, it's prudent for us as members, above all the passion that we bring, to be caring, responsible adults and friends.

I can say very easily that I am friends with members of the opposition, a number of members of the opposition that I would consider friends. We don't necessarily agree on everything, but that does not detract from our humanity. It's very clear that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford engaged in nothing but an act of friendship and humanity, and the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere is attempting to impugn his motives and make representations about things that he has no knowledge of whatsoever. There is absolutely nothing to connect that call with any action being taken by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the first that we've heard of that particular piece. So the hon. member ought to retract his question and apologize to Edmonton-Rutherford and to the House for that alone.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also indicate that it's more than just that allegation of motive and imputation of character that's important although that's the most important piece. It's also the abusive language, the talking about morals and ethics that constantly come from that hon. member. This is important. This is very important to the integrity of the House and how we do our business as all members. If we want the public to respect government – and I don't mean government as in the 24 members now who formally form government. I'm talking about the governance structure of our province, as the Governor General today indicated, that defends our

democracy and allows us the opportunity to speak freely and to participate in our own governance. If we want to have respect for that, we cannot be engaging in this type of degradation that goes on. That's not necessary in a partisan political process. We can have adult discussion and debate about policy issues with honest differences of viewpoint.

I share honest differences of viewpoint with Calgary-Varsity on a daily basis. He and I agree on some things with respect to education, and we disagree on some things on education. We attend a lot of events together. We don't hold hands and sing *Kumbaya*, but we have engaged in a few renditions of *Me and My Shadow*, and, Mr. Speaker, it's important. It's important that we have the opportunity to discuss important issues of public policy and public importance in this House and in public without having people attack our character and our morals. That is not on. That's not happening for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark from this side of the House, and it's not happening for anyone else. We will not be engaged in that kind of activity.

Hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, with a smirk on his face and a laugh on his face, it shouldn't be happening from you. It should not be happening. The only way that government, we the Legislature, does its job is if we are able to come to this place with the passions that we hold for public policy and for the future of this province and be able to engage in that debate respectfully and honestly and for government to be called to account by members of the opposition and private members of the House on the government side for what the government is doing in an honest, respectful way.

I'm not asking anybody to like me as a member. I'm just saying that when I hold office, I hold office not for myself; I hold office for the public of Alberta. You can disrespect me as a person, but you must respect the office. It's the only way government works. We have to raise the level of debate and raise the level of decorum in this House, Mr. Speaker. I have refrained from raising points of order on these matters, but it's gone too far. It's gone too far with today's question and the circumstances today when above all, if for no other reason, we should be respecting individual members of the House, and now I'm talking about Edmonton-Meadowlark.

4:30

It is not appropriate for the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere to be talking about Edmonton-Meadowlark in the House. If Edmonton-Meadowlark wants to talk about the issues that he's had, that's fair game. I mean, that's up to him. Advisable or not advisable, that's in his hands. For the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere to be doing it is, as well, totally inappropriate.

So for all of those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you call the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere to order and ask him to retract the preamble and questions that he raised in the House today and to engage in the future in a much more respectful manner, not respectful of cabinet because, clearly, he has no respect for members of cabinet but respect for the process and the institution, which is something that we all owe an obligation to Albertans about.

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

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, a lot of information there. I do actually have a tremendous amount of respect for this hon. member that raised the point of order. I always have. I've always thought of him as someone – although I disagree with him on some issues, I agree with him on many other issues. I find him to be very respectful and a true democrat, so to speak. He's a parliamentarian that I hold in high regard. You know, it's obviously tough medicine to hear such things from such a gentleman. I will

say that I agree with his viewpoint that we must respect the office.

I, for one, respect the office, and I'll tell you why. The office of MLA is what we're talking about. I respect the office because I believe that there's no higher calling that I am aware of than having the opportunity to represent in this House the people that voted for me in Airdrie-Chestermere. I do so with everything and every fibre of my being. No doubt, there are times when I get emotional and get very passionate about it, and that can be interpreted many different ways, to be sure. One of the things that I am very sensitive to – and the hon. member opposite mentioned it, and you could see it in the way he was defending his friend from Edmonton-Rutherford. I defend my friends when there has been a wrong done to them.

I feel very strongly that there has been a wrong done to a very good friend of mine, someone that I've spent a great deal of time with both when I was in government and since I've been out of government, spent time with him, talking with him, et cetera. I refer, of course, to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. It has been very difficult and has opened up some old wounds in this House to hear and to see first-hand the way that he was ejected from caucus. I, of course, was not ejected from caucus, but many of the same feelings of intimidation that I experienced I feel he has experienced, although he has experienced far more than I have had to.

Going back to the question, Mr. Speaker, and on the point of order, I do have the question in front of me. I have notes of what I said. I said: "Last week the new parliamentary assistant for health called the president of the AMA and told him he was concerned with the mental health of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark." Obviously, the member opposite, the House leader, was very clear that that is not being challenged. That, in fact, did happen. I think that has been very clear both in the media and from the comments in this House. I then went on to say that "this has resulted in the good doctor from Edmonton-Meadowlark being ordered by the College of Physicians and Surgeons to undergo a psychiatric evaluation in order to retain his medical licence." I'm assuming that that's what the hon. member opposite, the House leader, was taking issue with.

Now, obviously, in a 35-second question it's very difficult to explain all the dot to dot to dot things that have happened in this sequence of events this last week, but I have heard two phone recordings on this exact thing. I've heard the three doctors in question first-hand, heard the recordings. I've heard what was said by the president of the AMA to them and also what they thought the direction of this would lead to, which would be a psychiatric assessment for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. I heard these things first-hand. I'm not making these things up. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, of course, will have the opportunity to release those phone messages if he so chooses. That's his right, not mine.

I am very convinced that the actions of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, regardless of whether it was intentional or nonintentional – and I'll get to that in a second. I never impugned his intentions, and I want that to be on the record. Regardless of whether it was intentional or nonintentional, it did lead to what has happened, to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark having to submit to a psychiatric evaluation in order to maintain his licence, which brings me to the intention, Mr. Speaker. Never in my remarks – in fact, I even said: "Regardless of the intent of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford." In other words, I did not impute any bad intentions. I said that what he has done, regardless of his intentions, "is inappropriate given his position of influence."

Now, I don't know the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford very well, but what I do know of him, I do hold him in high regard. I can't imagine that he would be the type of person that would

intentionally do this to injure a friend, nor have I ever said that. What I do think, though, is that he acted very naively if he thought that a person in his position as the parliamentary assistant to the minister of health – it's very naive to think that someone like that calling in the middle of the night to the president of the Alberta Medical Association would not have an unintended effect.

That effect is that you have with the president of the Medical Association, which is, of course, a bargaining unit, a group of people that bargains with the government for the salaries for our physicians here in Alberta. To think that that wouldn't create undue influence on what the president would do next, that for just a layperson, even if it's not true, just the appearance of it seems very – it's not something, certainly, that we should aspire to in this House. It doesn't look good. I would say that although I don't think his intentions were malicious, I do think that it was very inappropriate, and I say that in my question. I felt that it was necessary for the Premier to ask the member to apologize for this. I think this is only right, and I think it's a very minor thing to ask.

Regarding his statements on language and decorum, Mr. Speaker, I'll be the first to admit in this House that I could definitely – like I said, I do often let my emotions get the better of me when I'm talking about things that I'm especially passionate about and especially when I see and feel that democracy and a friend have been wronged. I know that members opposite don't agree that that's the case, and that's fine, but I do feel it's the case. I do feel that the member was wronged, so when I gave the questions, when I talk about moral authority to govern and the fact that I believe this government has lost that moral authority to govern, I do mean that.

It is a serious allegation, but it is one that I feel strongly about because I don't feel that what they have done to the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, ejecting him from caucus for the reasons that they stated, as well as their ejection of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark as well as the way that they dealt with me personally when I started to speak out publicly . . .

The Speaker: Can we stay with what we're talking about?

4:40

Mr. Anderson: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I'm just trying to explain why I think the government has lost its moral authority to govern. I'll move to a different point. Absolutely.

The Speaker: That's not the issue here.

Mr. Anderson: Okay. If that's not the issue and that's not going to be a problem, I'll just leave that out.

I mean, I just feel that, obviously, in a give-and-take opinions are given. The opposite side is not going to agree with my opinion a lot of the time, certainly. Mr. Speaker, I will say that I will attempt – it's like those New Year's resolutions that you keep making and breaking – as we go forward to have a higher level of decorum. But please do not ask me to apologize for defending my friend and for defending his interests from what I think has been an absolutely mishandled and reprehensible situation.

If you just look at the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and what he did, if that's all we're talking about, then I would say the intentions are – I'm not questioning his intentions. I still think it was inappropriate. However, if we're going outside of that and we're talking about some of the other whisper campaigns that I know of first-hand, which we're not talking about, then that's where I go back to that strong language that I used about this government losing the spirit or the moral authority from the people.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat.

The Speaker: I think it's appropriate, as part of the question here today involves the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, that we hear from him on this matter as a direct participant in the question if he chooses to. And if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark is about, somebody might find him.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, please.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's difficult to know where to begin. I will certainly attempt to be brief, and I will attempt to speak as directly as possible to the point of order that has been raised by the hon. Government House Leader.

I do have the benefit of the Blues. The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere began his first question of the hon. the Premier as follows:

Mr. Speaker, last week the new parliamentary assistant for health called the president of the AMA and told him he was concerned with the mental health of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. This has resulted in the good doctor from Edmonton-Meadowlark being ordered by the College of Physicians and Surgeons to undergo a psychiatric evaluation in order to retain his medical licence. Regardless of the intent of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, what he has done is inappropriate given his position of influence. Will the Premier instruct this member to apologize for what he has done?

Mr. Speaker, I can't think of a way to imagine a grosser distortion of the facts, and I find it difficult to imagine how any member of this House could take greater liberty with discussing private and personal affairs of another member of this House as we have observed here today. We've observed it in the media in the last few days, and we've heard other members from other caucuses also speculate as to what took place. I'm going to take a second, if you'll permit me, just to set the record straight.

The Speaker: Oh, I think it's very important to get the record set straight. Proceed.

Mr. Horne: Absolutely. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I entered the House at 1 a.m. on Thursday last. Those proceedings, of course, are recorded as proceedings of Wednesday, November 24, in *Hansard*. I have been close friends – and this is not new – with the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark for a number of years preceding our entry into politics in the election of 2008. I have been involved in discussions with my friend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark for some time, for the last couple of years in fact, regarding some shared concerns and some shared ideas we have around Alberta's health care system, what the issues are and how some of those might be approached.

I've taken a great deal of pleasure in working collaboratively with that member, Mr. Speaker, over the last several years. I know that is true for many other members, I dare say, on all sides of the House. The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark is particularly knowledgeable given his position as a physician. He's in a unique position to talk about the issues, to identify potential solutions, and he has done nothing but work collaboratively with all of us to try to move improvements forward.

Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that I have become concerned about the stress that my friend had been experiencing, particularly in the last few weeks, and this sort of brings to bear the first incorrect statement made by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere. I must say that I feel quite uncomfortable because the subject that we're talking about here is mental health. At no time did I express concern for the mental health of that member or another member of this House. At no time did I suggest that any member of this House suffered from a mental illness or disability of any kind. I am not

qualified and neither is any other member of this House with the exception perhaps of the two physicians who are members, given their experience and training, to make such a determination, and I would never take it upon myself to do so.

What I have been concerned with, in addition to the declining decorum in the House in recent weeks, is the human factor, the stress, particularly in the early morning hours of Thursday last when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, basically carrying a debate on his own with respect to a particular amendment under debate with Bill 17, was obviously very tired. I will leave it to hon. members who wish to consult *Hansard* from those hours to observe for themselves that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark discussed many issues of a personal nature that – and I want to be respectful in how I say this – were completely unrelated to the amendment that was under discussion at the time.

Unlike perhaps some other members in this House, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take the time to reiterate what those are other than to say – and those of us that were in the House at the time observed it – that the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark took upon himself, as an example, responsibility for the deaths and some of the adverse events that have been reported to have taken place in emergency departments and other health care facilities in the last few weeks. He in front of the House took personal responsibility for that. He talked about a number of other personal matters, including family issues, talked at length about previous experiences he had in dealing with regulatory bodies and previously constituted health delivery organizations in the province.

In short, Mr. Speaker, it was very apparent to me that this was a friend who was speaking on the record and perhaps disclosing information that he might not otherwise have chosen to disclose about himself at a time of great stress. As members who might have been here at the time would have observed, I crossed from my seat to the seat occupied by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods so that I could sit closer to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, my friend, and attempt to offer him whatever personal support I might be able to, including perhaps an opportunity to step out into the lounge and chat for a few moments. But the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark was vigorously engaged in the debate. He was not interested in such a discussion, and it was very clear to me that I would be unable to offer him any personal support or advice or encouragement or otherwise that might be of assistance to him in those particular circumstances.

I'm being as careful as I can here in terms of the tone. [interjections] If I do have the floor, Mr. Speaker, I will continue.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford does have the floor. This is a matter that is very serious, and I want everybody else to shut up and listen.

4:50

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I offer all of this because I do believe that under 23(h), (i), and (j) the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere has called my character and my conduct into question.

From that point, then, what I did was that I had a personal conversation to the side with the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. As I said, it was clear to me that he was determined to continue and that he appeared to be unconcerned about some of the information that he was disclosing that was unrelated to the amendment under debate. He made a statement to me, which I won't relate, to the effect that this would all be over very soon, that I need not be concerned, and that he would not be around to have to worry about it any further.

At that point, Mr. Speaker, I made a decision to call a mutual friend, who the hon. Government House Leader had referred to earlier, not to express an opinion about the mental state of any member of this House because I'm not qualified to do so and not to request the commencement of any sort of proceeding by a regulatory body. I'd like to remind the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere that the Alberta Medical Association is not a regulatory body in this province. It does not control licensing of physicians. I made a decision to call that friend, and I made that call in confidence.

When I made the call, I asked for the assistance of Dr. White in perhaps identifying other physician colleagues who the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark might be interested in hearing from, who might reach out to him, who might offer support either here outside the Chamber or subsequently. That was the reason that I made the call. The Alberta Medical Association has a very well-known peer support program, Mr. Speaker, that they make available, much like many organizations offer to their members.

The point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that at the time I had every reason to believe and I should still have reason to believe that that conversation was held in confidence. The fact that the call was made – and I've just relayed what the contents of the call were to others – is not something that I can take responsibility for. The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere has played, I would suggest respectfully, fast and loose with the truth, if not logic, by suggesting a cause and effect relationship between the telephone call that I made to our mutual friend and any other actions.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that if the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere is aware of any proceedings that might be under way by a regulatory body with respect to health professionals in this province, I would have to question why he would be aware of such a thing. I certainly am not, and I am aware that legislation in this province protects our health professionals from such information, including the existence of any sort of investigation or discussion, from being disclosed. I think, as part of this, the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere needs to be called to account for making such a statement in this House, not to mention, if he believes that to be true – and I certainly have no knowledge of any of that – attributing that inquiry or investigation or proceeding to some action on my part.

Mr. Speaker, what it boils down to is this. But for the actions and the statements of some members of this House in the last few days in the media and then quite boldly in this House today during question period, none of what I have just revealed to this House – certainly, it's against my feeling of proper procedure and proper treatment of a human being to actually say what I have said. But for their actions none of this information would be in the public domain. The Member for Airdrie-Chestermere would have no basis – and I hesitate to use the word “basis” – to make the speculation and the innuendo and the other assertions that he's making irresponsibly in this House. Neither would other hon. members on the opposite side who have done so over the last few days as well.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I have felt compelled to offer this more detailed account of events. Again, my telephone call was to a mutual friend. I've explained the intentions behind it. Quite frankly, I'm not interested in the evaluation of the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere of my intentions. I stand by my actions. I believe they were correct. I believe that the person I called took the correct action in terms of trying to initiate some peer support. I think those who have chosen to put this information in the public domain, to speculate loosely about motives, about consequential events that may have occurred, do so at their own peril, and they will be held to account by their own constituents for those actions.

The final thing I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that in addition to the transgressions under 23(h), (i), and (j) with respect to allegations against myself, with respect to imputing false or unavowed motives to myself, and I dare say with respect to using abusive and insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder – I think, quite frankly, we’re quickly approaching that point in terms of the way that this Assembly is addressing an issue as important as mental health and an area of health that is subject to such a legacy of stigma. We – I guess I would have to include myself by virtue of the comments I’ve just made – do a disservice not only to this House but to Albertans and particularly those and their families that deal with these issues.

To conclude, I made no such allegation regarding the health of another member. I completely deny the allegations, as loosely framed as they have been, with respect to any of my conduct. I hope I have explained it to the satisfaction of yourself, Mr. Speaker, and I leave it to your good judgment as to whether this member should be called to order.

Thank you.

The Speaker: As I listened very attentively to the exchange, I heard the Government House Leader, the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford mentioned. Only one other member, who just has risen here, was ever mentioned in any of the context, and that was the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

I don’t know how you get into this, but if you have something to add to our understanding of it, please proceed.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in my note, I’ll be extremely quick. I understand the hon. Government House Leader’s desire to have decorum in the House. That’s something that yourself as the Speaker and every other Speaker attempts to achieve to the best of their ability. What happens when short sessions lead to stress, which leads to inappropriate actions and words, particularly at 12 o’clock, 2 a.m., 5 a.m. . . .

The Speaker: Okay. I think, hon. member, we’d better have relevance with respect to the question being discussed, okay?

Mr. Chase: Yes. Thank you. The relevance is that allegations, perceived intentions, innuendo are very difficult to interpret, to judge. That’s what you’re being asked to do today, Mr. Speaker, and you have qualifications to do so. There is precedent, and there is a reason for the individual from Edmonton-Meadowlark to feel chastised. Dr. John O’Connor is an example of an individual being beaten up by both the provincial government and the federal government for speaking out on health issues relating to First Nations in Fort MacKay and Fort Chip.

The Speaker: Please, please, please. This is a very, very fine point that we’re dealing with, and the truth is all that’s important to me. Let’s focus on what it is. If you have something further to add, fine, not speculation that because something happened over there, this obviously happens over here. Let’s be very specific. I’ll still recognize you. [interjection] Airdrie-Chestermere, we’ve already heard from you.

Calgary-Varsity, if you want to continue.

Mr. Chase: That’s fine. [interjection]

The Speaker: Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, you do not determine who speaks.

Are you finished, Calgary-Varsity?

5:00

Mr. Chase: I thought that was your wish, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No. I said: just focus on the issue.

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

The Speaker: We’re going to have full transparency here if it applies to this issue. Only if it applies to this issue.

Mr. Chase: Right. What I’m saying, Mr. Speaker, is that we do not operate at our best at 2 a.m.

The Speaker: But we’re now at 5 p.m.

Mr. Chase: And, I gather, Mr. Speaker, you’re suggesting that we’re not operating at our best at 5 p.m.

The Speaker: Oh, no. We are at 5 p.m. much better than 2 a.m.

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Who else wanted to participate? Now, how does Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood get involved in this? You were not mentioned by anybody.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, I have been involved in this, and I have prepared to discuss this point.

The Speaker: Okay. We’re on the point now. Were you here in the House to hear all the other debate?

Mr. Mason: I heard it. I heard it on the speaker and came as quickly as I could.

The Speaker: Okay. As long as you’re up to date so you’re not missing anything.

Mr. Mason: And I have the Blues as well.

The Speaker: Proceed. Proceed on the point we’re talking about.

Mr. Mason: Now, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Government House Leader has stood up in this House and has brought an allegation against the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere under sections 23(h), which is making allegations, (i) imputing false motives, and (j) abusive or insulting language. Now, I have, in fact, the Blues, and I have the question.

The Speaker: But, hon. member, you haven’t concluded the list. There are another nine more. Well, okay. Now, let’s do them all.

Mr. Mason: I’ll address these ones, Mr. Speaker, if I can.

I have the questions of the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, and here’s what he said. He said that “the new parliamentary assistant for health called the president of the AMA and told him he was concerned with the mental health of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.” That much, I think, is all agreed.

The Speaker: Okay. I said earlier, when we were listening to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford: everybody, shut up. The same applies now.

Proceed.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The suggestion of stress has been used, and of course other things have been implied, and this is something that needs to be taken into account, the implications here that are coming from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and from other members on the government side.

Stress. It was interpreted as mental health. I have the letter from Dr. White to AMA members with respect to this matter. I have also followed his other public comments with respect to this, and he has acknowledged that he used – not the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford – the word “manic,” and he drew the conclusion that that would be used, in a sense, in a general way rather than in a specific medical application. That was based on his conversation from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere said, “mental health,” and I think that is a reasonable interpretation. Then he goes on to say that it

has resulted in the good doctor from Edmonton-Meadowlark being ordered by the College of Physicians and Surgeons to undergo a psychiatric evaluation in order to maintain his medical licence.

He is making a connection with respect to this, a call that was made by Edmonton-Rutherford to the doctor as contributing to – he says “has resulted.” That is an interpretation, Mr. Speaker, which I share. I believe that the call which was made to the president of the Alberta Medical Association and a practising psychiatrist has led directly to the College of Physicians and Surgeons now being involved. That is my opinion, but I think it is a reasonable opinion that a reasonable person could hold.

He goes on to say that “regardless of the intent of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, what he has done is inappropriate.” My goodness, Mr. Speaker, there’s language that is designed to incite disorder in the House, to say that someone did something inappropriate. Then he asks the Premier to instruct the member to apologize.

Mr. Speaker, he goes on, then, in the second question, to ask the Premier to personally apologize and asked him to “ignore the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.” In the last question I don’t believe the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford is mentioned at all.

So, Mr. Speaker, the whole charge that’s been brought by the Government House Leader against Airdrie-Chestermere is based on his suggestion that Edmonton-Rutherford said that he was concerned about the mental health of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark and his interpretation that that has led directly to the action by the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that those are both very reasonable assumptions and connections. I fail to see that there is anything here that would fit the definition of (h), (i), and (j). I know that government members are angry and frustrated at the situation they’ve found themselves in, and they want to lash out. We have seen some of the things that happen to people when they dare to criticize this government.

I think that there is not a point of order here that I can see in any way. I think that the statements by Airdrie-Chestermere simply say two things: one, he alleges that Edmonton-Rutherford said “mental health,” and I think there is plenty of evidence that that is an interpretation that is reasonable; and secondly, he connects that phone call to the subsequent actions of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which is a connection I share.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I hope that we can expect that when members stand up in this House, they have a wide latitude to make political points, and the fact that the government and government members right now are feeling an enormous amount of heat frankly is immaterial.

What the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford did was

inappropriate. As much as he would like to address it in terms of friendship between three old friends, there are other relationships that are very, very pertinent. He is a member who has just been appointed as the parliamentary assistant for Health and Wellness, a government that’s under heavy attack for its mishandling of the health care system, hurting badly, and he phones a psychiatrist and the head of the Alberta Medical Association about an opposition colleague who’s creating a great deal of trouble for the government. That’s another way to look at it, Mr. Speaker, and a legitimate way to look at it. It’s certainly how I look at it.

Frankly, I think some of the hypocrisy on the other side is not a sufficient reason for us to proceed with a point of order against Airdrie-Chestermere, who was doing his job as an opposition MLA in holding the government to account for its bullying tactics.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. I want to deal only with people who have an interest in this matter directly, not speculative debate.

How are you, sir, minister of housing, involved?

Mr. Denis: I’m involved, sir, because I wish to correct the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood in a statement that he had just made which I believe is inconsistent with the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

The Speaker: You want to correct the statement made.

Mr. Denis: That’s correct.

The Speaker: A statement of fact or a statement of opinion?

Mr. Denis: It’s a statement of fact that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood indicated that we were agreed on the whole facts of the whole situation. In fact, that is not the case. It’s inconsistent.

The Speaker: Well, obviously you’re going. Proceed to conclude it.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to rise and correct that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood had indicated that there was somehow an agreement as to a statement of facts here between the earlier submission and the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. The correction is, first off, that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford contacted the Alberta Medical Association, not the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta. There’s a distinct difference between the two. One is a licensing body; one is not. That’s like the Law Society and the Canadian Bar Association.

In addition, the manner in which the comments were disseminated, you have to include the tone and the context, and we have to stick to the facts here, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford did not make that agreement, and that’s very material to the entire issue that we are debating here today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Now, hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, how are you involved in this?

5:10

Mr. Boutilier: Well, sir, I am because I actually heard the tape recording by the member.

The Speaker: But that's not unique, hon. member.

Mr. Boutilier: No, it's not unique.

The Speaker: Everybody else has heard the tape.

Mr. Boutilier: But I also must say that as a member who spoke directly with the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark . . .

The Speaker: That's not unique either. Virtually everybody else has, too.

Mr. Boutilier: Also, I might say, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark and I talked about the actual tactics of a government that have taken on me as a member who got kicked out.

The Speaker: Well, that's not relevant to this either. Okay, I'm going to recognize you, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, but you are going to stick to the point that we're talking about. Your issue and your case are nothing to do with any of this, okay?

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I had spoken to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. We had spoken specifically about what had transpired pertaining to this actual point of order that's being raised, that we didn't know was going to be raised. However, it's important that the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere clearly had pointed out something that I believe is not a point of order.

Even more importantly, I can say this: the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark and I had talked about the whisper campaign that was going on about him relative to this point of order. Specifically, there were two things that the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark had heard, the whispers of the government about him and his health condition, the same whispers that were about this member a year ago, but also the member's comments that were made about: you don't know the whole story. It seems to be a common theme that is being made by this government.

Mr. Speaker, when the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark actually called me, he provided me with a tape of the recording. The term that was used in the recording was "hypermanic," to be very specific. I do know that tomorrow that the member and perhaps you would like to hear the tape recording by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark in terms of making your conclusion on this point of order, which I do not believe it is. Clearly, that information the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark has I think is very important to this issue, and the term that was used was "hypermanic."

Mr. Speaker, I clearly do not believe there is a point of order. I can say that the whispers that continue on relative to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark and the whispers – and I might add just one final note, that in actual fact the same reporter, and I will name him, from the *Calgary Herald*, Don Braid, called the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. The same call came to me, and it was about: watch your back because of the whispers they're making and the allegations they're making against both of you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Hold on, now. Hold on, please. Please. How does the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar get into this? You're next on my list. What's your involvement in this?

Mr. MacDonald: I would be delighted to share that with you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm not interested in opinions. We're dealing with the point of order.

Mr. MacDonald: No. I'm certainly not going to express an opinion, as much as I would like.

The Speaker: Proceed, then.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I've been listening to this. I was present in the Assembly for the recorded date of Wednesday. It was Thursday morning. I think it was well after 4 o'clock, when I was preparing for debate on amendment A3 on Bill 17, when I saw the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford come across with the hon. Member for Camrose-Wetaskiwin to have a talk to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. Of course, we were in committee. That's certainly allowed. I'm surprised that as a result of that chat we now have a classic example of damage control.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, certainly in my view, did not violate 23(h), (i), and (j), as has been suggested. He was, in my view, doing his job. If you look at *Beauchesne* and you look at oral questions and what's permitted, specifically 409 suggests a question must be brief. The hon. member's question was brief. He was certainly trying to seek information. It is an important matter. It certainly was not frivolous, as *Beauchesne* indicates it should not be. The matter ought to have some urgency. Well, I would suggest that it certainly does, when we had such a quick letter from the president of the Alberta Medical Association to all members of this Assembly regarding the matter before us in this point of order.

In conclusion, I would like to remind all members, Mr. Speaker, before you make your decision, that the primary purpose of question period is a seeking of information and calling the government to account. Well, we have government members here. We certainly have the cabinet here, as the hon. House leader pointed out. But the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere was just doing his job, and the greatest possible freedom should be given to members consistent with the other rules and practices during question period.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, with due deference, everybody's your friend; everybody says they're your friend. Have you heard anything of what's gone on in the last hour and 15 minutes?

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, to be honest, I was in my office when my assistant said that there were some allegations about me saying something to the effect that I wasn't going to be around much longer so nothing mattered. My assistant said: you'd better get your butt in the House and clarify some incorrect statements that were said here by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I haven't seen the statements.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Dr. Sherman: I guess, everyone should actually hear from me.

The Speaker: We're on a point of order, hon. member. If you want clarification, it's with a point of order that we have. We're not interested in the history or anything else. We're on a specific point of order here.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, if you can just give me a two-sentence, Coles Notes version of what went on in here because I'm not privy . . .

The Speaker: I can't do that, hon. member. I cannot give a précis of what these hon. members have said in two minutes, so take your place. The Blues will be available. They'll be provided. You can get a hold of them.

Mr. Hinman: Mr. Speaker, I rise to address this point of order with Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j); *Beauchesne* 64; *Beauchesne* 409(3), (7), and (10) on page 120; and *House of Commons* 502 and 504. It's interesting and it needs to be brought up that the discussion has gone on, but the point of order that's being asked is missing the whole point of the actual question, which was asking for an apology.

I, too, have no understanding of why there was a point of order called on all of this. It has been totally inappropriate, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, on the evidence and the speaking notes that the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford put in there. He continues to imply and make innuendos concerning the health of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. He made specific statements with absolutely no proof of evidence, saying: this is what he told to me when I was in there. I won't repeat them. They were very damning, and they were inappropriate. If this was a court of law, there was no evidence on that.

The point going back is . . . [interjection] Did you not listen to the things that he said?

The Speaker: Through the chair.

Mr. Hinman: Mr. Speaker, I guess I'll repeat some of them in the fact that . . .

The Speaker: No. You don't have to. I heard them.

Mr. Hinman: Well, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark perhaps hasn't, so to bring him up to date . . .

The Speaker: No. You'll deal with the point of order.

Mr. Hinman: Okay. He continued to undermine the character of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark in his remarks. He said that he was a close friend. He understands very well, and he sits there with a straight face and says: I had no idea, nor do I have any desire for any repercussions to come out of this. There's absolutely no question of the repercussions that have come. The letter has come from the Alberta Medical Association stating these things. To declare that nothing happened – he continues to imply and now makes remarks with no proof of personal conversation stating that the member said to him: not to worry; it will be over soon. He continued to go on with that line of speech.

They're missing the whole point of this point of order, which was that the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere asked the Premier to ask that member to apologize. That's what it was. Then it got out of hand from there. Again, the comments and the statements that have been implied by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford continue to undermine the character, implying that this member is not of stable mind. Again, he should be apologizing for what he said here because he acted like this was a public conversation. He said: oh, I really don't want to put it on the record, but I feel like I have to. Then he continued pouring all of this information out that is absolutely inappropriate and wrong. He should get up and apologize for that.

Mr. Speaker, there was nothing wrong with what the member asked. The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, though, very much made many comments in here, insinuating that the Member for

Edmonton-Meadowlark was suicidal, though he was very careful not to say that. That's what's on the Blues, and I'll stand by that. He needs to apologize, Mr. Speaker.

5:20

The Speaker: Well, that is quite a statement. That really, really is. I sat here; I've listened, one of the few people in the Assembly that has not moved since this started. I've seen people go in and out, go back and forth, papers flying. I'm the one sitting here. I never heard that. I don't know where that came from with those words, hon. member. Now, look, it's very important – okay? – that we use the words that were used. He never said that, and I've sat here and listened. Why do you say that he said that?

Mr. Hinman: Because that was the whole point of what he said when he talked about that he's not going to be around long, that it's going to take care of itself.

The Speaker: That's what he said. That's what he said.

Mr. Hinman: Yes. Those are all great innuendos undermining the character and the state of mind of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, and he did a very, very good job of doing that.

The Speaker: Oh, you know, hon. member, whoa. We've got some great connections here. Whoa. Okay. I'm not a psychiatrist. I don't pretend to be. What I am is a wordsmith, and I listened very attentively to the words, and I know what the meanings of the words are. After that it's supposition and a whole series of other things. I just want the truth, okay? I just want the truth.

Now, who else has something important to add to this situation? Hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, I'm happy to recognize you on the point of order.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not much for wordsmithing.

The Speaker: Oh, you're good at it. I've known you a long time.

Dr. Sherman: Let me set the record straight. I have not been suicidal or homicidal. Period. The words that I heard, I didn't utter those words in this House to the hon. member when he sat beside me. Those are incorrect. I would ask the hon. member to apologize and withdraw those statements.

At 9:30 in the morning Dr. Chris Evans telephoned me and said, "Raj, you have to listen to this message" on his machine. The message was from the AMA president. The message went something like this: "Hi, Chris. P.J. here. Fred called me and said Raj is manic."

I had another doctor, Andrew Stagg – I have a message on my machine; you can listen to it. He said that a fellow by the name of Dr. P.J. White, who identified himself as my friend, as the AMA president called to rally support and he alluded to the fact that I was hypomanic and I was – what was the word, guys?

Mr. Boutilier: Hypomanic.

Dr. Sherman: Hypomanic and destabilizing in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, as a physician – I am a physician – I am the one who certifies people; so are the emergency colleagues. When they are manic or suicidal or homicidal, for mental health reasons we fill in the mental health form, and we certify people to the hospital to protect them against their will.

I take offence at the fact that these allegations, these smear campaigns, have happened against me. They've been going on for six weeks. Don Braid told me this was happening; Jodie Sinnema told me this was happening. I've heard this from PC Party insiders who've said: "Raj, watch your back. We like you. The knives are out for you." I take exception to the fact that we are even having this conversation. [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark has the floor.

Dr. Sherman: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and the hon. member from Camrose came beside here – I don't know – at 4:30 or 5 in the morning while I was doing my job. It's a filibuster, and I introduced an amendment. I am doing my job to stand up for the people of Alberta.

The Speaker: Okay. Sir, please, the issue we're talking about.

Dr. Sherman: I am alleged to have said these statements, which are absolutely incorrect. It's a lie. Why would I say those when I'm doing my job, and I stayed doing my job until 4:30. I'm still here doing my job. I would ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to apologize and withdraw those statements.

Thank you so much. Let's stop this nonsense.

The Speaker: Okay. Does anyone else want to participate in this discussion? Hon. Member for St. Albert, how are you directly involved?

Mr. Allred: On a point of relevance, Mr. Speaker, the issue is the conversation of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. The issue is not what the subsequent consequences were between Dr. White and the AMA or whoever. The only thing that is relevant is what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford said, nothing more.

Thank you. [Dr. Sherman rose]

The Speaker: Sorry, sir. I've already recognized you.

Does anybody else want to participate?

All right. Let me, first of all, point out *Beauchesne* 494: "It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted." So from that perspective I will accept the word of everybody who has spoken today. It goes on to say, "On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident." Okay. We have a point of order. All of the citations were correct, every one of them. The citations are absolutely correct, and they could be used in the whole thing.

I am not finding a point of order with respect to this. [interjection] No, don't do that to me, please. It's not a popularity contest. I will do what's right, not what you think is right.

This is on the edge, however. This is on the edge with respect to the use of language. I heard the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, but I've heard him before, say that he believes that decorum in this House is important and he will try really hard. Well, I've heard it before. The sledgehammer is coming down next time. This House cannot afford to have that decorum.

I heard the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere say, "Please, do not ask me to apologize." Well, why, sir, did you ask the Premier to apologize? This is the contradiction that I find in all of this. On the one hand, it's okay to do it; on the other hand, don't have it apply to me. I don't think anybody has to apologize for what they say in here

unless they're completely, 100 per cent off base and erroneous, deliberately erroneous. Then there's more than an apology that is required.

I think it's been a really stressful week. We're on the edge here with respect to some really difficult issues. I think that hon. members should take a deep breath. Everybody, take a deep breath. Politics, once to be played outside of this House, is now coming into this House. I think this is not good. I think this is inappropriate. I think this is wrong. Everybody in here purports to be a friend of everybody else. Let's show the respect that's required. Some people argue and shake their head and say: no, no; I'm not a friend of somebody else. Well, too bad. Poor guy. Sit by yourself in a feeling of paranoia. That's your choice. But I think that most people here should have respect for one another.

So I repeat. It's not a point of order. It was a useful discussion. We have to accept the words of different members because that's important. I would like to see an elevation of decorum, please. I'm saying this on behalf of the children of Alberta who continue to send me e-mails mentioning some of you by name as being bad. Well, we can make all that public, too.

That was point of order 1. It's 5:29.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader, point of order 2.

Mr. Hancock: The Deputy Government House Leader?

The Speaker: Sorry. I meant the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: It's just a series of times in which I've been demoted, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No, no. That was no disrespect on my part.

Point of Order

Questions about Caucus Matters

Mr. Hancock: I'll be very brief on the second one, Mr. Speaker, because I think that much of the discussion that happened was the important discussion we had this afternoon. Under Standing Order 23 and under *Beauchesne* that I cited earlier – and I won't waste the House's time by citing them again. Suffice it to say that in those citations "Ministers may not be questioned with respect to party responsibilities" and "Ministers may be questioned only in relation to current portfolios," *Beauchesne*, page 122, 410(16) and (17), and questions that "concern internal party matters" are not appropriate, *House of Commons*, page 504.

5:30

Today in question period the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was raising questions about the participation of the minister of health in kicking a member out of caucus and a lot of language around that. Again, I haven't got the Blues in front of me to get the precise language, but, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for us to put on the table in a point of order of this nature the question of what is appropriate for questions and what's not appropriate for questions. It's entirely appropriate for the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo or any other member to hold the government to account and certainly to ask tough questions of the Minister of Health and Wellness. Albertans want tough questions asked. They want issues around health raised in this House, and there's certainly nothing wrong with that.

But we've heard day after day from members on the other side with their own version of reality relative to why a member might or might not still be a member of our caucus, and that is really a matter for individual members of the House, Mr. Speaker. As you've said

from time to time in this House – I’m paraphrasing, and if I paraphrase wrongly, I’m certain you’ll correct me – we are members of party caucuses by virtue of choice. We are elected as individuals to this House, and we choose to sit together to form a caucus so that we can form a government or be part of an opposition.

No one commands our vote in this House. Our vote is our own vote, that we hold and we use in the interests of our constituents, but we remember that our constituents elected us not only because we are such upstanding individuals but because we have aligned ourselves with a party platform and a leader and those other things. When we come to this House, we sit here as members. We choose whom we sit with, and we choose when we won’t sit with them anymore. That’s a matter of choice.

But it is not under the rules of this House for the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to ask a minister or anyone in this House what role they had in a member staying in or leaving a caucus or what the circumstances were around a member staying in or leaving a caucus. That’s, quite frankly, party business. That has nothing to do with the policy nature. Unless they can carefully craft a question around a policy issue, it’s totally inappropriate, and I would ask that you rule so.

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

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Government House Leader’s comments relative to choosing to sit in a caucus and choosing where we sit in this Legislature. I proudly represent my constituents of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo as I’ve always viewed them as my boss. Having said that, what he makes reference to, I chose to sit in the PC caucus, that the Government House Leader has now just brought up. Then at that point it was one person, not actually the PC caucus but one person, the Premier of Alberta, who kicked me out of that caucus that I chose to sit in representing my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, on the point of order that the member raises and the words that he just said, I would like to make a point of clarification. I chose not to be over here, but actually based on what the Government House Leader has said, in actual fact I was kicked out not by caucus or by that party; it was by one person. I sit here proudly to represent my constituents. I have been in direct relation on the ER crisis with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, and I do say that I do not believe it is a point of order on any of what I have asked this afternoon.

The Speaker: Anybody else want to get involved in this? Well, now, pray tell, what’s the involvement, please?

Mr. MacDonald: As a member of this House and a witness to what happened in question period this afternoon.

The Speaker: You’re not a member of the caucus.

Mr. MacDonald: Pardon me?

The Speaker: You’re not a member of either caucus.

Mr. MacDonald: No. I said that I’m a member of this House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Agreed. Proceed. Right to the point on the subject we’re talking about.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much. Certainly, I would disagree with the hon. House leader that there’s a point of order

here. I would remind hon. members of this House that the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was certainly asking a valid question. When we consider that we now have a new parliamentary secretary of health – and we know where the old parliamentary secretary of health is now sitting, on this side of the House – and that the salary for that individual is paid for by taxpayers, the hon. member has every right to ask for direction and seek opinion on that. The new parliamentary secretary is certainly one of the architects of the rather controversial bill that’s before the House, the Alberta Health Act.

The Speaker: Would you please get to the point?

Mr. MacDonald: The point in all of this is – and we get to *Beauchesne* 416: “A Minister may decline to answer a question without stating the reason for refusing, and insistence on an answer is out of order, with no debate being allowed.” When we look at *Beauchesne* 416, I certainly don’t see any point of order here. The hon. minister of health could simply do as he usually does if he’s not satisfied with the question, refuse to answer it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. I think that’s enough. Hon. members, the question is very, very clear with respect to the Blues with respect to this. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo: “My question is: why did you vote to kick this member, the only ER doctor, out of your caucus? Why did you vote to kick him out?” Well, okay. Then the hon. minister of health comes back and says, “I was not [even] present.”

Then we have the most important citation of all. This is traditional. It’s been raised time and time and time and time again in that questions with respect to party matters are not the purview of the House and have nothing to do with government policy. Participation in a caucus is by those who belong to a caucus. If a caucus chooses to ask someone to leave, that’s always a right, a fundamental right of that particular caucus.

In this case there was an inappropriate question. The point of order is a valid one. I’ll start ruling all of these questions out of order before they even get here if they have to deal with party matters.

Okay. Number three. The hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Point of Order

Referring to the Absence of Members

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With your indulgence I just want to rise on a point of order, and I’ll undertake to be brief. An infraction occurred on Thursday, November 25, but I was made aware of this alleged offence the evening of the same day, well after this House had adjourned. *Beauchesne* 319 says:

Any Member is entitled, even bound, to bring to the Speaker’s immediate notice any instance of a breach of order.

It also states:

Even the provisions in the Standing Orders that action must be taken “forthwith” or “forthwith without debate” with respect to certain proceedings do not bar a Member from raising a point of order when a serious irregularity occurs.

This point of order is raised at this point at the earliest opportunity after learning of the alleged infraction. *Beauchesne* 289(3) under Attendance of Members states: “This absence from the chamber should not be the subject of comment.” That particularly gets to the crux of the matter, Mr. Speaker. It doesn’t restrict it to verbal comment; it restricts it to comments that are made within this House.

Keeping this important principle in mind, the point of order I have arises from the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere's comments. He stated on November 25 at 3:26 a.m., "No," and it's the last name of the Minister of Energy; "No," and there's the last name of the Minister of Health and Wellness, "just a lot of sleeping Tories." This clearly indicates an absence of a member in the House. I'd put to this chair that this is a clear violation of *Beauchesne* 289(3) and may also be a violation of Standing Order 23(h) and (i).

Mr. Speaker, you had raised a similar infraction on November 24, last week, when ruling on pictures taken of members in this House with a cellphone camera by another member. In your words you said:

Members in this Assembly are elected to have all the freedom and all the rights of privacy and privilege when they work in this Assembly, and they are not to be interfered with by anyone, intimidated by anyone under the guise of whatever it is.

You further went on to state that

it is a fundamental right for members to be in this Assembly and to have every right without harassment, intimidation, interference from any other member to do their particular duties.

Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* 1 indicates that a principle of parliamentary law is "to express opinions within limits necessary to preserve decorum." That is the crux of the matter that we've been debating today. This is an important, time-honoured principle that is relevant today with the new opportunities available to communicate with Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, you also stated on November 24 that "the transgression goes to the very heart of the integrity of this Assembly and the right of members to do their work and the security and the privacy of members in this Assembly." There are no precedents in *Beauchesne* for using social media to violate the rules of this House, but I put it to the chair that we need to set some.

Moving forward, we're in a different situation than we were even five, 10 years ago, than I'd say even two years ago. The method used to disseminate the information that led to the infraction was a social media application called Twitter, an application I actually find very useful as a member of this Assembly. However, this application was used as a tool to violate the very principles and rules of this Assembly.

5:40

Mr. Speaker, I put to you and to all members of this Assembly that we all work hard. There is a long-established rule that we do not name members that are not present within the House. It is true that the medium used was not a traditional one, but this should not change the fact that rules were broken and that principles were in fact violated. The important distinction is that the application was used during House proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, my submission to you is that we need more established rules for dealing with social media. I'd ask you to take the appropriate action against this member or rule me out of order. We need to know one way or the other what is acceptable.

Just in conclusion, I do want to mention something that the Member for Calgary-Varsity had mentioned in an earlier point, that I think was quite astute, the fact that we are not our best at 2 in the morning. Well, similarly, this same member, quoted, just said: "Quick." The Minister of Education "is getting his jollies in the house calling points of order." Mr. Speaker, this is inappropriate. We need to have some decorum in and outside of the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Well, you were identified, so I'm going to recognize two of you. First of all, the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, then the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to a ruling on this, too, because I think there's not a lot of precedent, obviously, around this new technology, Twitter, and its use in the Legislature. I do look forward to and will respect any decision that you make on the matter, obviously.

I do want to point out the incredible hypocrisy of this member on this point. I'm not denying that I made this statement on Twitter. I absolutely did make the statement on Twitter. This same member retweeted on Twitter just the day previous that the Wildrose Alliance members were not in the House for the third reading vote on Bill 16, so he's actually done exactly what he's accusing me of doing. Of course, we have four members, so if none of us are here, that's impugning that we're all not here, obviously. I would say that it is extremely hypocritical.

With regard to the photo that he talked about earlier, Mr. Speaker, there was no photo. That was just people at 2 o'clock being jumpy. There was no photo; it wasn't there. So they can be – I don't know – paranoid if they want, but there's no photo. I don't think that that should even be assessed in this argument. I don't see any evidence of a photo. There is no photo. I can show the pictures of my kids on my phone to prove it.

Anyway, I will say this. I'll put in quickly what I hope you will find on this point of order and, of course, will leave it completely to you. With regard to Twitter and with regard to social media I think it's important that we're able to communicate with people outside of the House about the goings-on in the House that perhaps they can't see. Now, I think that's an important kind of new way that we've involved people in the process, and I think it's been very helpful.

This hon. member talks about and quotes another couple of Twitters that I've put on there. You know, it's funny because I follow the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, as I think a thousand other Albertans do. I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I've heard him many times slag the Wildrose and slag our leader and slag other people in his Twitter comments. Of course, what slag means is subject to interpretation, but the point is that this is part of the give-and-take. Usually the comments are good. They're just good debate back and forth, and sometimes we poke a little fun at each other, as is the case in this case.

I just don't see the difference, Mr. Speaker, between somebody watching the online version of the Legislative Assembly, that you've set up very nicely for us, that people from home can watch – I don't see the difference between if I was sitting there, you know, and somebody was watching from home. They can see who's there and who's not there. As long as it's not done in this House – if I was to say it in the House verbally, then I totally agree that that's out of order. I think that it's in Twitter nation, so to speak; it's a fair way to get people involved in the process. Again, I defer to you on your ruling on it, for sure.

The Speaker: Okay. Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of individuals, including yourself, here who are teachers. You referenced bad-behaviour letters you had received from elementary schoolchildren.

The Speaker: Oh, and older folks, too.

Mr. Chase: And older folks as well.

The point is that we're elected to respectfully carry out the wishes of our constituents, and I think we all need to learn lessons. We could probably cite all kinds of examples where someone took offence. I remember, Mr. Speaker, for example, that I think it was

14 times that you drew to my attention how loud and raucous I'd been in the Assembly. That was probably about two and a half years ago. I would offer myself as an example. If I can tone it down, if I can avoid the heckling, if I can avoid the raucous behaviour, then I would put out the challenge to everyone in this House to get on with the business that we were elected to do.

I don't see it as a point of order, the tit-for-tat bit that was going on that evening. If all we dealt with were points of order, we would never have even approached the debate on amendment A3.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this is a fairly narrow but fairly important piece that we need to deal with. In the ordinary business of the House members come and go. We have a lot of duties that we attend to. We're not all sitting here all the time, and it is the assumption and the rule that we will not refer to the presence or absence of members. The one exception to that is when there's a standing vote and votes are recorded so that people know who was there for the vote and who wasn't there for the vote.

It's an important piece for us. It's important in the House. The fact of the matter is that once we've moved past a period of time, you can make whatever allegation, I suppose, outside the House that you want, but there's no record of who was present and who was absent except for when there's a standing vote. Therefore, the assumption is that members will attend to their business in the House, but there's also an understanding that we often have meetings or other things which take us outside the House, and we need to maintain a quorum in the House to carry on the duty of the House.

It is important, then, when you get to the question of the social media piece, where people are starting to follow, and we have members – and I use it myself periodically – trying to engage people in public discussion and an understanding and interest in what we're doing here. We always want to try and make sure that the public is interested in what we're doing here.

There are protocols, I think, that we need to utilize, and those protocols include – I mean, I don't have any problem with somebody on Twitter, whether it's Airdrie-Chestermere or somebody else, making comments. People make comments all the time. They'll be judged for their comments, and I'll be judged for my comments – that's quite appropriate – even the comment that Airdrie-Chestermere made about an hour ago saying: "Quick – Hancock is getting his jollies in the house calling points of order on me – how fun is this?"

Mr. Horner: Great respect for the institution.

Mr. Hancock: It shows a complete disrespect for the discussion we had, but it's up to him to say it. He has to be accountable for what he says, and people will judge it.

The point is that because I was here at that time in the morning, I could easily have written a tweet at the same time commenting on a member on that side who was absent or resting his eyes or some other characterization of what he might have been doing. It would have been true, but it wouldn't have been appropriate, and I didn't do it. I think that we have to govern ourselves.

I'm not chastising the hon. member in this. I don't intend to. I'm just saying that the rules in the House are here for a reason. Again, to go back to a point I made it seems like eons ago, if we want people to respect the job we do, then we need to have that decorum recognized. If we want them to respect us, we have to guard what we say in public and make sure that we say things that are appropri-

ate and that we handle ourselves appropriately. I've always been of the view that I shouldn't do anything I wouldn't want my mother to have read when she was alive, rest her soul, on the front page of the newspaper. That's a personal thing, and that's how we get our personal respect.

With respect for the institution and respect for Albertans in terms of governance, we do have to be very careful about this sort of thing, so I'd ask you to consider this. I would ask you not to clamp down on use of social media, and quite frankly I would hope that we could even broaden it so that we could actually use our iPads during question period because it's very useful to check our calendars and to do other things.

I'm not suggesting that we should clamp down on this. I'm suggesting we should as members follow the rules that we have in the House with respect to what we do in the House even when we're communicating not on the record, not shouting across the floor, but communicating using social media tools.

5:50

The Speaker: This is not a generational thing, okay?

First of all, a clarification. If you're here in the question period, why are you dealing with items in your calendar? Why aren't you listening to what's going on in the question period and paying attention to what's going on in the question period?

Secondly, if three people say, "You did this" and you stand up in this Assembly and say, "I did not" and you were before a court of law, what would the judge say if three people verified that you did it? I think there's some thinking here with some statements that I've heard this afternoon because I have written evidence about certain things being denied in the last little while.

Now, what's really interesting in here is that the hon. minister has raised a point of order concerning the use of technology. Okay. Fine. We're dealing with principle. The technology of today will be outmoded five years from now. All the twittering we're doing today will be something else five years from now. It'll be gone. It'll be forgotten. It'll be like the 33s, the 78s, all the other stuff, so don't get captured with the little toy of the day kind of thing. If you've been here for more than 35 years in your life, you'll know what I'm saying. We have evolved. Twitter is just a game that somebody is making a ton of money on.

The point of order that was made here is that the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere announced on Twitter that certain members were absent. The principle is, though, that if the member would have said that in the House, he'd have been called to order. How is this any different if we're dealing with a principle?

It's like saying that you can do something if you go through the back door which you can't do if you go through the front door. The point is that you can't do it, period, but somehow you can go one way, and you can get it. You can't beat the system by using words to say: well, if the principles don't count, why have any rule?

Without any doubt, if that would have been made in the Assembly, it would have been called to order, and it would have been right. You can look at the references in *Beauchesne's* paragraphs 289(3) and 481(c) and page 213 of the second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*.

I want to make it very, very clear that whatever technology we have today will become outmoded in a couple of years, before we even get the investment return on it. Look back to see when the first computers were brought into the system and why we have a policy that says that every two years it's going to be changed and that something else is going to happen. It's the rules and the principles that we have to make and common sense and a whole series of other things, not the technology, that should be driving us. If our rule is

that you don't make mention of the absence of a member, it has to be applied in all worlds. It has to be applied universally across the spectrum. Otherwise, why have it?

Needless to say, there's nothing in the standing orders with respect to twittering, I'm sure, in the same way that there's nothing in the standing orders with respect to 33 records or anything else. It's the decorum. It's the dignity and what this is all about. Unless you can elevate it, this is childlike, juvenile action. "Oh, sir, sir, sir, can I?" "No." "But sir, sir, sir, Johnny is getting away with it." Basically, what we're coming down to is childlike behaviour at some point.

A guy walks around in this Assembly at 3:30 in the morning with a camera in his hand, verified and witnessed by others: that's wrong. That's wrong, and this is going to lead to a point of privilege one of these days in which there is going to be a prima facie case of privilege. It's going to go to a committee that can actually do a lot of very serious things to the reputation of a member. If a member wants to stand up at 4 o'clock in the morning and say, "I don't believe in rules; I don't follow rules; I won't abide by any rules," you go home and tell your children that. Tell your children that. Go to Sunday school on Sunday, and tell everybody there: "I don't believe in the rules of this place. It's not important for me to abide by rules."

It's on the record. *Hansard* is fabulous reading. A lot of people should actually take time to read it. It's amazing what we'll learn about one another.

So, darn right this is a point of order. This should not have

happened. The Legislative Assembly of Alberta provides for the materials. We're not going to take the materials away from anybody. We're not going to end it. We're not going to have a universal rule because 82 people out of 83 abide by the dignity and the decorum and the honour of the Assembly and one violates it. We'll recognize the one who violates it. That's what we'll do. This is a point of order, and that's where it will land.

Hon. Government House Leader, I was going to call Orders of the Day. Did you want to do something else?

Mr. Hancock: I think you have to call Orders of the Day before I do something else.

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that in light of the hour and in light of the afternoon it would be prudent for us to move adjournment until 7:30.

The Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. Government House Leader. I have not left my chair since 1:30, and it's time for me, too.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]

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