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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

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The 27th Legislature

Third Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 1, 2010

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 24 Carbon Capture and Storage Statutes Amendment Act, 2010

[Adjourned debate November 30: Mr. Chase]

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this potentially final opportunity to speak on Bill 24.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, can you pause a moment? We've checked the record. Have you spoken? You must have. Yes. On the record.

Mr. Chase: You know what? I think I actually adjourned it yesterday. You're correct, Mr. Speaker. You can't fool the Speaker. Okay. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: According to the record the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity adjourned debate, and the hon. member for Drayton Valley spoke after him, so his turn has been taken.

From the opposition the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore on Bill 24.

Mr. Hinman: On the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to be able to get up and speak to this as there have been many frustrated opposition MLAs who haven't been able to speak on the different bills as you brought closure to them, seeing as how the government has been able to filibuster and use most of the time on this closure. They said that they refused to speak through the night, yet when they invoke closure, they immediately jump up and use the time. It's been disappointing. As the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East pointed out, it certainly doesn't seem right.

Anyway, CO₂. Bill 24 perhaps could be one of the most expensive bills that we're going to pass here outside of Bill 17, the health care act. The number one question that, I guess, as elected representatives we need to ask is: are we spending our money wisely? Number two is: are we actually protecting the environment and being able to pass on the beautiful province to our next generation, not only environmentally but fiscally as well? I would have to say that on both those questions this bill fails the test. Environmentally there are so many other areas where we could and should be pointing that kind of money if we're really trying to look at protecting our environment and going forward in the future.

You know, in the 2008 election, when I was discussing it with the Premier and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, one of the companies that I talked about was E-T Energy, quite the innovative private company. I was able to go up to Fort McMurray earlier this year and actually have a visual of it from the air. It's a very small bit of area. The CEO has spent over 20 years, Bruce McGee, trying to develop this, and what he says on the bitumen up there: we are the lowest cost producers out there and holder of the industry's most environmentally friendly technology.

This is the type of innovation that the Governor General talked about that Albertans are capable of if we ensure that we have a level playing field and if we put in the proper rules and regulations that direct that innovation to know that they're going to have that opportunity. They use electricity to heat the ground and extract the oil, and other than the fuel used to create the electricity, there are no more incremental gases after that point as they extract the oil from the bitumen. It's quite an innovative and exciting area.

I know that the University of Calgary has been working on bioenzymes.

My point, Mr. Speaker, that I want to bring up on this and why it's so important to realize these things is that, you know, if you actually put the proper regulations in place or have the proper vision on where we want to go, there are such great opportunities going forward.

Back in 2000, when the government had an opportunity, there was not near the interest in the oil sands. That was the time to set the regulations and even perhaps say: "You know what? We want to see some new innovative technologies that don't use SAGD or settling ponds." The people were out there moving and trying to develop that, but because we didn't put the proper regulations in on water use, consumption, and other areas, it was full steam ahead, no pun intended. The SAGD projects continued to come forward because that was the best at the time and the quickest way to extract it. Their growth was quite alarming to many environmentalists and those people that were against the oil sands to begin with.

When we look at CO₂ and the controversial question of whether or not this is the best way to spend taxpayers' money and the most environmental, economical, and clean way to go forward, I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that the answer is no on these areas. Just the extra energy that we're going to need to generate purely to compress and pipe and then pump down into the ground is 25 to 30 per cent. Many people talk about the energy shortage and the fact, you know, that we have this dilemma. Then why would we increase our consumption by such a huge amount when there are so many other ways to look at reducing it?

I've spoken many times about the importance of going to low-carbon fuels, and of course the lowest and the cleanest fuel is natural gas, or methane, a one carbon fuel. There's no reason why we can't look and ensure that we can point in that direction. I think Ronald Reagan coined it best: tax more what you want less of and less what you want more of. We can look at that. It's one thing to put a higher tax on high-carbon fuels, a lower tax on low-carbon fuels, if that's the direction we want to go.

You know, it's been a few years since I've checked the stats, but I believe there are 10 million litres of propane that are extracted and sold in the province here. That's more than enough to run our vehicles and our industry on. Natural gas, with the new technology and fracking: we've gone from what we thought was depleting in, you know, five years, 15 years at the height in July 2008 to where we're now talking 100 years again of this clean fuel.

What is the tax structure setup and what are the incentives on where we should be going on this? This CO₂ bill doesn't address that. It doesn't create a level playing field and allow the entrepreneur to get ahead by being what I want to call economically smart with their investment dollars. What this is doing is actually creating a surge in spending, and people wanting to trace and get after that say: well, if we could get, you know, 20 per cent or 30 per cent of our project paid for by the government, then this is a great way to move ahead.

These are all areas of concern, Mr. Speaker, on why Bill 24 should not be passed at this time. You know, the Government House Leader has said that we've talked at great length to this. He says that

we're filibustering and wasting our time here and that we need to put in time allocations when these bills have barely scratched the surface. If we were really serious about a democratic process and serious about the future of Alberta, this is the type of bill that should be going to a committee.

It astounded me that this government saw the wisdom in withdrawing Bill 29 and saying: "You know what? We need to consult with Albertans. We need to do a little bit more. We haven't done a good enough job." Well, Bill 24 fits in that same category, and there would be nothing that would please me more than the government's Energy minister getting up and saying: you know, maybe we don't have this right. We don't need to pass this bill this evening or tomorrow in order for business to carry on in the province.

7:40

That's the other striking problem with all of these bills: Bill 17, Bill 24, Bill 26. They've brought them forward in this short session of the fall sitting and said that we need to ram these through like there's a forest fire, and we couldn't put up a plane unless we passed legislation to say: well, it's okay to go fight it. Business would carry on. It would actually carry on probably in a more sensible nature if we didn't pass this bill. But when this bill gets passed, what the government has done is say that we're going to spend money on this area because this is the technology, this is the direction, this is the hope for the future on CO₂ storage.

I would argue, just as I did with the new royalty framework, that it's going to cost us a lot. The longer it takes us to realize this, the more it's going to cost Albertans and the Alberta taxpayers before we back out and say: "You know what? Let's just have a level playing field."

If, in fact, there are companies like EnCana that want to run an enhanced oil system and set it up, let them do it. Let's go back to what worked so well with the development of the oil sands, and that was an accelerated capital cost allowance. They looked at it. I've forgotten the bill, whether it's under section 41 under the mining act. What they did is they incorporated the mining in Fort McMurray under the mining act rather than under oil and gas, and that changed the whole dynamics of all of a sudden becoming economically viable. We should be looking at that and new technology of being able to have all of those same breaks if, in fact, they could come up with some new ideas.

Like I say, E-T Energy is very exciting in the development that they've got there. There's some research that's gone on for some time at the U of C on bioenzymes and being able to actually inject enzymes that would release the bitumen from the sand that, again, is very clean. The toe-to-heel air injection has been developed. Again, there's a huge leap forward in new ideas on how we can continue to extract and use our energy here but in a very – what would I say? – enhanced environmental way. This is a huge step forward than what we've been doing with SAGD and with the actual mining and extraction that goes on there in the tailings ponds. Yet Bill 24 doesn't address any new, innovative ideas on what we're going to do here in the province.

One of the other problems, though, Mr. Speaker – and I've spoken on this several times, but I feel it's important to mention here at the last time being able to address this – is what we're actually doing with the pore space in the ground. With the province stepping in and saying that we now are declaring ownership on all of this area, we truly are infringing on property rights and, again, passing on that liability to the property owners rather than going through negotiations and being able to stop it, like they've done in several European countries at this point. They talk about Australia, Germany, and these areas that are doing it, but again if you look at the ripple effect,

there are many areas also where they're stopping it because they're looking at the risk and realizing that: oh, there are some consequences here that we haven't looked at.

The liability, of course, is the big one, and I do hope that the government is right on this, that we don't see it coming down the road where it becomes a liability. We have so many gas and service stations where we've spent millions and millions of dollars because the owners have moved on, and this CO₂ is going to last a lot longer than the companies that put it down there.

It's interesting. I didn't have time to finish looking up the stats, because I wanted to do that, but I think that there are only, like, 17 companies that are still on the Dow after 100 years. We're talking of 100 years as a start point on storing this CO₂. I've referred to the article in *The Economist* where they figure that in 100 years 63 per cent of the CO₂ will escape at a rate of just 1 per cent per year out of the ground. To think that we've spent all this money and all this infrastructure on a temporary program for 63 to 100 years, it just really concerns me. Why this government would be so anxious to say, "This is where we're leading in the world; we're leading in CO₂ storage" – again, it's kind of misleading. We talk so much about CO₂ storage and so little about enhanced oil recovery.

This government has talked about, you know, that this \$2 billion is going to be leveraged out to \$25 billion. I have to question that. If we kept that \$2 billion and put it in another area, what would we have? Fifty billion dollars? A hundred billion dollars? I just really have a problem when the government says, "Oh, this is a great business to invest in" and then puts the taxpayers' money in there. Whether you call it a Swan Hills debacle or a magnesium plant that just has a spark at the start, and then if you don't have your fire going, it's too late.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, fails to address the real problem. This is feel-good, put a bandage on it rather than actually curing the problem. Like I say, I'm disappointed that the government has refused to look into this or to, actually, you know, like we can do in committee, bring in some experts. Probably the most important thing that we could and should do is to have a world-class symposium, bring in the experts, and say, "What are the solutions? What are the problems? Do we really have the scientific information?" and not just take it from one source. Let's have peer review, and let's have the other side, the pros and the cons, who are against it.

I've spoken many times about – I don't know what the proper word is – the CO₂ conspiracy that's gone on. I mean, everything from the hockey stick, that a Canadian was the one who discovered that – you know what? This has not passed the test. The government or the courts in England were the first to strike it down when it actually came to court and had to have a decision on the actual facts. So with all of the things that have happened with global warming – the papers that went out but were never properly peer reviewed, the hysteria, the fearmongering that went on – we've made a knee-jerk reaction in saying that this is what we need to do, that this is where we need to spend billions of dollars to store this CO₂.

Mr. Speaker, the answers are not there. We're passing the bill here without the proper information, without the due diligence, without the consultation of experts, and all of those other ones that are out there, and this bill should be withdrawn by the government for the people of Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker: We have under Standing Order 29(2)(a) five minutes of comments or questions. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. You've pointed out examples of failure: the plant up north that was supposed to get rid of toxic waste; you talked

about MagCan. Do you believe that the potential waste of taxpayers' dollars, as you see it, will go far beyond the \$2 billion initial investment? Have you concern about the cost of keeping the CO₂ sequestered and the liability associated with it?

Mr. Hinman: I really appreciate the question, hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity. This is the problem. This, I believe, is going to be the biggest boondoggle that this province has ever supported. Once it's put in there, absolutely; I mean, there's no question. Yes, they say that for one, two, maybe three decades we're going to claim that these companies are accountable for it. You've spoken many times about the orphan wells, that the funding isn't there to really cover those, so the taxpayers need to cover this. This is a real concern on pushing these projects ahead, incentivizing them the way we have without really having those answers on the costs, the liabilities, the environmental damages that could happen. I just do not believe it's worth the risk. Again, like I say, if the risk is that the CO₂ is raising the Earth's temperature, then there are so many other areas.

Again, when you look at changing a coal-fired plant to a combined-cycle natural gas plant, I believe that it's a 40 per cent reduction in CO₂. Like I say, if we want to be innovative and look at those things, there are so many areas where we could and should direct this money, whether it's, you know, to put it into research and development of other ideas or to give tax incentives for people who can come up with an idea. The question is: is there a better place to spend this money? I truly believe there is.

7:50

The second question is that if we're going to spend that money, let's do it on actual research, on a real symposium where we bring the best of the world here, to Alberta, and say: what are we going to do about it? I mean, the government just spent \$25 million to create prion research here in Edmonton. It's leading the world in the research to actually come up with solutions for misfolding proteins, whether that's Alzheimer's, BSE, chronic wasting disease. That's what we should be doing: looking for some real research to solve this. Instead, what we're doing is saying, "Oh, let's stuff this into the closet; let's put this into the ground." Then we can say that all is well when nothing has been solved. How are we going to reduce and be more energy efficient when, as I say, immediately we raise the consumption of energy by 25 to 30 per cent? There are just so many areas.

Hon. member, I appreciate the question. I think that it's a real concern. The liability and the cost are things that we should be addressing and not simply saying: oh, we've got to ram ahead; we've got to do this because the world is looking at us. The tailings ponds are what they're looking at. It's not the CO₂. It's the tailings ponds if it's the bitumen and the area. It's the number of cars that we're driving on gasoline and diesel. Could we and should we be changing it to propane and methane, compressed natural gas? There are so many more exciting areas that we could be addressing, but we're failing to do that.

I hope that answers your question.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you. In terms of all the vehicle emissions, then, we have the belching from our coal-fired generation plants, which produce considerably more CO₂ than what is currently being produced.

Do you have concerns about the government being back in the business of being in business, and do you believe that the companies

producing the CO₂ should be required to have matching funds? The people of Alberta have laid out \$2 billion. What are the expectations for companies, in your mind?

Mr. Hinman: Another excellent question. Those other companies are matching or actually putting more money forward, I've been told. I'm not sure, though, if they're spending the government's money first and then theirs. But that's a real concern. Again, I've had so many people inundate my office with the connections of these companies, North West Upgrading, with this government and saying: why did they get this? I mean, what are the merits? That's another whole area on those 50 companies. Why did the government just pick four? If they had a tax incentive where they'd say, you know, "You get to keep your royalty," like they did with the bitumen, "at 1 per cent or 3 per cent until you pay out," it would be very different than actually giving them the money.

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

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to, I guess, give my final argument on this bill. It's always nice to have an opportunity to give the final argument on a bill. I didn't have an opportunity on Bill 17 but will do so now with Bill 24. Actually, on Bill 17 I only had a chance to speak on the amendment, not on the actual bill. But I do now for Bill 24, and I'm thankful for that.

I have many issues with Bill 24. One of the biggest issues I have is with what was mentioned earlier, the government getting back into the business of being in business. Although the bill is about liability with regard to the CCS project, the whole concept of CCS and this idea that government is going to be giving some of the largest corporations in Alberta \$2 billion in grants over however many years to pump CO₂ into the ground is a shameful abuse of taxpayers' money. Of course, they like to say, "Oh, we'll make royalties off the use of carbon capture and storage as it's used for enhanced oil recovery." Well, you know, that's a logic I would expect to hear from the two members behind me. It's a logic that says that government should somehow be in the business – well, I mean, we may as well just have a state-run oil company or something like that if we're going to do that. If what we're going to do is say, "Look, we're going to start funding businesses so that we can get more royalties," then why wouldn't we just take over the businesses entirely and just get all the profits.

The reason is because in Alberta we've taken a different approach. I think it's a business-friendly approach, and it's a better approach up until this point, with some exceptions along the way, that government should not be in the business of being in business. Where to place capital, what technology to use to get oil out of the ground, when that capital should be distributed or utilized or invested and when it is not to be invested, when it's a wait-and-see approach, et cetera: all those decisions need to be made and should be made by businesses, not by government. To invest \$2 billion in this technology or in this initiative is to go back on that principle.

We've said many times that this government over the last several years has progressively become more of a left-of-centre party, a party that believes more in government intervention, in the government funding projects, funding corporations, grants to corporations, and grants to specific businesses instead of what a conservative, right-of-centre, free-market government would believe in, which is leveling the playing field for all businesses so they're playing on the same playing field so that the best, the cream of the crop, rises to the top and the businesses that are not any good fail and fail for good reason. That's what free-market principles are about.

When you pick winners and losers, like this government is doing, when you manipulate and you interfere in the marketplace, like this government has done with this bill with CCS and with other projects – you know, we hear all the announcements for all the corporations that have been given handouts by this government – it's just ridiculous. This government should be looking at: "How do we make the playing field for businesses more competitive? How do we do that?" If we're interested in doing so, what we should be looking at is our tax rates. We should be looking at accelerated capital cost allowances, which would arrive at the same policy objective if it is to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Well, why not? If you want people to invest in massive pieces of equipment, large pieces of equipment, then why wouldn't you implement tax incentives for all of industry to use? That would make it more tax advantageous and more profitable to buy new equipment to be used, say, in CCS.

But they don't do that. No. They pick winners and losers. They say: we're going to spend \$2 billion, and we're going to pick who we give it to. It's a very left-wing, socialist mentality, and it goes against the principles that this province, I think, has been founded on, which is that we are supposed to be and we like to call ourselves a meritocracy. A meritocracy is one in which the playing field is kept level, and the best businesses, the best entrepreneurs, the best ideas succeed on their own merits, not because government has interfered and has invested money in their specific business because they happen to have the best lobbyists.

I was in government for two years. I know what it's like to be lobbied by these corporate interests. You know what? They can come up with some very compelling arguments as to why they should have money invested in their particular project or company. Very compelling. It's not a slippery slope. There is no slope. It's a straight-down cliff. Once you cross that line and you decide, you know, that we're going to pick winners and losers, you're automatically disadvantaging one business over another. You're automatically interfering in the marketplace, and it's wrong. It's not the way to go. That's just on the \$2 billion invested in this piece.

8:00

Now, the next piece that I disagree with on this is the priorities. Not only are we in the business of being in business by doing this; we also have decided that this \$2 billion is more important over however many years it is. Maybe it's 10 years it's going to be spent over; I don't know. It's unclear to this point. But we're also spending this money, and meanwhile we've got other needs that I believe and I think Albertans believe are far more important.

We have a deficit, a cash shortfall, of \$7.7 billion. Part of that \$2 billion should be apportioned to that to at least decrease the amount of our deficit and debt and lack of sustainability fund that we're going to be leaving to our kids because we can't control our spending right now. There's one example. How about schools? We still have a school infrastructure shortage. Shouldn't part of that \$2 billion – obviously, not all of it but certainly a portion of it, even just \$100 million or \$200 million of it – be invested over that 10 years in new schools? That's more important to Albertans. How about more health care staff? Certainly not all \$2 billion is needed, but isn't it better served there, where we have an emergency room crisis, where we have a family doctor shortage? Yeah.

It's about priorities, and this is just simply not a priority for Albertans. They say that we need to do it because our customers in the United States need it. They demand it. They demand that we have the CCS. They demand to see that we're becoming more green. Well, good grief. There has been a total rejection of that thought process, of that principle in the last election down in the United States. That type of socialist mentality, the greenwashing

that was going on down there: that agenda was rejected out of hand. Now even Democrats down there are rejecting cap and trade and any of this green agenda that's going on with regard to massive wealth transfers and spending massive amounts of money on government-sponsored pet projects to artificially reduce greenhouse gases. That's been rejected.

Now people are saying: if we're going to go green, let's do it smart. Let's invest in things like mass transit. Let's invest in things like tax incentives to promote green retrofits and things like that. Let's do practical things that are actually going to help people in practical ways rather than pouring money into what they believe is a sinkhole and literally in this case is, essentially, a big hole in the ground. It's priorities. It is such a waste of money to do what we're doing in this regard, and I don't think Albertans will stand for it.

I don't think that this bill will do anything because I think at the end of the day this agenda will also be rejected by the people of Alberta. They will say: we do not want to spend money on this. And guess what? When the government pulls the plug on this CCS project down the road, whether it's a PC government or a Wildrose government or some other government, when that plug gets pulled because the people of Alberta demand it, \$100 million or \$200 million or \$1 billion or however much has been spent will have been spent for no reason. A total waste of money: that is what will happen. I guarantee it. You heard it today. Five years from now we will look back and say: we wasted \$500 million; oops. That's what it's going to be. There will be no fruits shown for doing this.

Now, that's not to say that CCS as a technology is not a good thing. It can be used for good purposes. It can be used for enhanced oil recovery, and when it's economically feasible to do so, corporations should spend their own money, make their own investments in using it for enhanced oil recovery, not put out their hands and get massive subsidies from the government of Alberta. That is not appropriate. It goes against everything that I thought Albertans and the Progressive Conservatives, at least three to four years ago, stood for. Ralph Klein: we're getting out of the business of being in business. And they did so. Well, yeah. Apparently it didn't happen, or it was forgotten in 2006, when new management came in.

The point is that on a go-forward basis I ask and urge the government to please quit pouring more money into corporations with grants. These are nothing but vote-buying schemes. They've got to stop. We don't need to be investing money in companies. It's got to stop. I think that the quicker we do that in Alberta, the quicker we will be able to balance our budget, the quicker we will be able to realize that we should be focusing our monies on leveling the playing field and creating an economic climate where all companies with good ideas can come and invest.

There might be a company out there that would have invested this money in CCS by themselves, but perhaps they won't now because their competitors, another big company in Alberta, have a hundred million dollar head start on them on the technology. Perhaps they won't invest in it anymore. When you interfere with the market, that's what happens, especially interfering in a way that is unnecessary, in a way that pits businesses against one another, in a way that picks winners and losers. It's a totally inappropriate, completely inappropriate, use of taxpayer funds.

For that reason and for the other reasons stated here tonight, I will not be supporting this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: We have five minutes of comments or questions. The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, hon. member, for your speech. I would just like to ask whether the hon.

member believes that climate change or global warming is, in fact, caused by human activity and what he feels about books such as *The Deniers* by Lawrence Solomon. I know the hon. member is incredibly passionate when he speaks about this area, so I would just like some context about what he thinks about human actions causing climate change.

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

Mr. Anderson: Thank you. Well, I appreciate the question. We talked about this a little bit during the all-night session that we had. I made it very clear. We have a very large diversity of opinion in our caucus on that. We have free votes, and we vote according to the way we feel. I know that one of our members doesn't feel that global warming is in any way caused, materially anyway, by man-made emissions.

Personally, my view is this: I think that global warming is occurring. I think that man is contributing to it through their emissions. I think that it has been significantly overblown. I think it has been significantly exaggerated, and I believe that's the vast majority of public opinion that's there. I think that we need to cut our greenhouse gas emissions, but I think that we need to do so in a way that is practical, that is going to result in utility for average people. Things like mass transit would be an example of doing it in ways that are going to decrease pollutants like NO_x and SO_x and different particulates, et cetera.

These are the things that I think we should be focusing on: retrofits for solar panels to make our houses more energy efficient, things that are actually going to make us more efficient, not random sinkholes like pumping CO₂ into the ground, which I don't think is going to do anything to solve our problems because it gives no utility to anybody. It's not advantageous to any Albertan. Not only that, but the money could be spent so much better on projects that would actually help workers to get to their jobs faster, help people to have lower utility bills, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. If I was going to spend \$2 billion on environmental initiatives, that's where I would put it.

Now, of course, I don't think the people of Alberta want us to put it there right now. I think they want us to balance our budget, I think they want to make sure we have the right amount of schools, and I think they want our emergency rooms to work. That's where I think it needs to be put.

8:10

With regard to global warming, I think that if you look at the new report from the Royal Society in the United Kingdom, they do an excellent job of putting together a list of things in the global warming scientific field that are settled, things that are still being debated – there's some agreement, but generally it's still being debated – and then things that are unsettled entirely. Great report. Every member should read it.

That's not to say that they're infallible, that they're completely correct and that no other scientist has an argument. The fact of the matter is that there is no doubt that even the IPCC themselves and the Royal Society say that global warming over the next 100 years will be anywhere from 1.4 degrees to 7 degrees. Well, that is quite a difference. They don't know how much effect the sunspots are having and cloud cover and a whole bunch of other things that have really kind of thrown the doors to questioning open.

Hon. member, in answer to your question I do believe that the Earth is warming. I do believe that man is a contributing cause to that warming. I do think that that contributing cause has been greatly exaggerated and that governments have way overstepped

their bounds, way overspent, and have made some very poor economic and social decisions that are going to have ramifications for years to come.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, we have zero seconds.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod on the bill.

Mr. Berger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this evening to join the debate on third reading of Bill 24, the Carbon Capture and Storage Statutes Amendment Act, 2010. As mentioned in second reading debate and Committee of the Whole, Bill 24 creates the regulatory clarity that is needed for Alberta to pursue carbon capture and storage technology. Specifically, this bill will allow the province to accept long-term liability for the carbon dioxide injected into the ground.

In addition, this act would establish a fund to pay for the ongoing costs of monitoring carbon capture projects. It is important to note that this fund would also cover the costs of any remediation of the CCS project if required. In addition, this fund will not be financed by the Alberta taxpayer but, rather, from the carbon capture and storage operators themselves. This legislation is needed to allow us to aggressively move forward with our carbon reduction strategy.

As members of this House know, in 2008 this government committed \$2 billion towards the development and implementation of carbon capture and storage technology. Of this, \$440 million was slated to be spent over the next two years. Mr. Speaker, this is a long-sighted investment, and it has helped to place Alberta in the global forefront of carbon capture and storage development. It demonstrates to the world that Alberta is committed to reducing its carbon footprint. Moreover, Alberta is committed to developing technology that could be utilized all over the world.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the oil sands are not the largest source of carbon dioxide in the world even though many groups would state otherwise. Rather, the bulk of carbon dioxide emissions come from the generation of electricity, specifically through the burning of coal. Coal is cheap, plentiful, and reliable. However, traditional methods for its consumption have been carbon intensive. Carbon capture and storage technology will allow us to more cleanly utilize this energy source while limiting the impact of carbon on our environment.

As the Member for Calgary-Glenmore commented on SAGD, I was left in kind of a quandary to figure out if he's not believing the technology of SAGD or just where he was going with that. The SAGD process itself can be completely carbon neutral if you're generating electricity with the natural gas that's burned and using the steam as a by-product to bring bitumen up from the ground. So I was kind of lost with the comments that were being made over there, but to say that SAGD is not a proven technology really left me in the dust.

In addition to carbon capture and storage, this bill also has the ability to help us expand our conventional oil and gas extraction process. Rather than pumping water or chemicals into our wells to extract oil, through CCS we are able to use a byproduct from the consumption of energy, carbon dioxide, to bring oil back up. CO₂ is a very effective agent to displace oil in porous rock, allowing us to more efficiently recover our natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Carbon Capture and Storage Development Council estimates that using captured CO₂ in enhanced oil recovery will help produce an additional 1.4 billion barrels of oil. Let me be clear. That is oil that could not be produced without using enhanced oil recovery. That incremental production is expected to generate up to \$25 billion in additional provincial royalties and taxes.

It almost reminds me of when you've got three rounds left in your barley field. If you put in three gallons of diesel fuel, you can finish combining, but why do that? It's an investment in more carbon. You might as well as leave those three rounds out there. This gives us the ability to extract up to 70 per cent of the conventional oil that is still left in the ground. To me, Mr. Speaker, and the people I represent that is a great investment. It's a terrific environmental and financial return on a \$2 billion investment. Before this technology can be used, however, we need to have the proper legislation in place, legislation like Bill 24. As mentioned, this bill will create environmental protections needed to ensure that our carbon capture and storage projects are safe now and safe in the future.

Without a doubt the most important aspect of this is the creation of the stewardship fund. Mr. Speaker, carbon capture and storage is a safe and proven technology that will have long-term benefits for this province, but as wise stewards it falls to us to ensure that Albertans remain protected from any eventuality. This means we must remain vigilant and monitor these projects to ensure they are not leaking carbon back into the environment.

I heard a comment the other night somewhere along the lines that we were going to collect 1 per cent of 2 per cent, which worked out to .001 per cent, but that if we had a leak, that would then blanket the Earth, and we would be in danger. Well, if it was such a minuscule amount to begin with, I don't see how the leak would ever be a danger, but I'll leave that as it is.

Let me be clear on two points here. Leakage is most unlikely to occur, and even if there is leakage, it would be very slow over time. Still, we must be prudent, so in the unlikely event of a leak there needs to be money in place to repair the project and limit the impact on the environment. Mr. Speaker, we have similar policies in place for our conventional oil and gas wells as well as for our oil sands projects. Bill 24 would simply continue this history of long-term environmental stewardship.

Mr. Speaker, like our conventional oil and gas reclamation fund, the carbon capture and storage stewardship fund will not be financed by the Alberta government. Rather, it will be paid for by the carbon capture and storage operators themselves. Industry will certainly benefit from the implementation of these projects, and they will also accept responsibility for the reclamation and monitoring costs associated with them.

The reduction of carbon in our atmosphere is important to this government, and while Alberta may not be the leading cause of carbon emissions in the world, it has stepped up and become a world leader in its reduction. We have done this by investing in carbon capture and storage, a technology that has the potential to reduce carbon dioxide not only in Alberta but all over the world. This is yet another example of how Alberta leads the way in environmental protection.

8:20

Mr. Speaker, as has been stated before, Bill 24 creates the regulatory clarity on carbon capture which is required by industry. The amendments in this bill are required to facilitate the game-changing technology of carbon capture and storage. In effect, this legislation will set the stage for the implementation of this technology. I'd like to reiterate that in no way did these amendments change the definition of land ownership. Companies will still be required to negotiate with landowners for surface access to their land and will be compensated fairly.

With respect to these issues of liability I would stress that before applicants are given access by the minister and the Energy Resources Conservation Board, they must demonstrate that the project will not impact resources such as oil, gas, and coal. The province

accepting long-term liability for the injected CO₂; it is the responsible thing to do. There will be numerous measures in place to ensure the CO₂ is secure and has been for years before the government will accept liability for it.

As our population and economy continue to grow, energy demand will continue to rise. We know it is not a question of whether energy will continue to be developed but how it can be developed in a cleaner, more responsible way. Carbon capture and storage is one tool in the tool box to fight emissions, and it is a game changer in reducing large volumes of emissions.

Mr. Speaker, governments around the world are exploring ways to support CCS, but Alberta is the first jurisdiction in Canada to move forward with legislative amendments to help facilitate this new technology. Alberta's spirit to achieve in many things, including CCS, will reinforce Alberta's image as a responsible energy producer. Governments world-wide are grappling with how to best deal with emissions.

The International Energy Agency, IEA, recently released a report outlining where 16 countries around the world are at in their pursuit of legal and regulatory requirements for this new technology. This document shows that we're not the only ones pursuing regulatory clarity. It shows that CCS is considered a viable technology world-wide, and many countries are moving forward with changes to facilitate it. CCS has long been a key component of the province's climate change strategy. The proposed changes to this act are necessary to ensure Alberta's continued leadership in CCS and responsible energy development, and it is an initiative that all Albertans can be proud of.

In conclusion, I am pleased to recommend to all of my colleagues to stand with me in support of Bill 24, the Carbon Capture and Storage Statutes Amendment Act, 2010. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Hinman: I'm pleased to be able to ask the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod a question. Being a former reeve, I know he's in touch with farmers, but his analogy – I'm sorry – went way over my head. I have never heard of the government needing to go out to farmers and say: here's some extra money to harvest the last three rounds of your field.

What is very interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, is that, in fact, this government is going to oil and gas companies. I understand that 70 per cent of the oil is generally left in the ground. They're not able to extract it. That's why enhanced oil recovery is so exciting for many of these companies. But is he really going to tell me that these oil companies wouldn't go in after that if, in fact, it wasn't economically viable? What farmer would ever leave 70 per cent of his crop in the field and say: oh, we want the government to give us a subsidy on our fuel so we can go out and get the last 70 per cent. I am just astounded with the analogy, to think that farmers would have to be encouraged by government with taxpayers' money to go out and harvest the last three rounds, let alone 70 per cent of the field. It's backwards. I'd like for him to please clarify why he thinks the government should subsidize industry to go get what they're actually producing. If, in fact, it was economically viable, they would go after it and extract it on their own, just as the farmer finishes the field on his own.

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

Mr. Berger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for Calgary-Glenmore for asking that question. As many of you have

probably realized, that's not the first thing that went over his head. Regardless of that point, the analogy I was making is for the Alberta government. If we have the ability to extract \$25 billion more in royalties and taxes because of the 70 per cent that is left in the ground, then a \$2 billion investment, to me, is very good money spent to access that \$25 billion. I have a hard time with the math that the hon. member has done over there, but the comparison was not to say that government would pay for the farmers' fuel. It was to say that any farmer is going to go out and buy that last bit of fuel so he could finish harvesting his crop.

Now, I hope I've gone slow enough and clearly enough that that clarifies it for the hon. member. I'm sure it has because he is also a farmer, and I believe that his common sense has been fighting to come forward right now and think about this logically. Also, we are in opposition, so we have to have those comments back and forth. I can see that he's chomping at the bit to jump back up.

Mr. Mason: You will be in opposition.

Mr. Berger: Pardon me? He's over there with you, Brian.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, through the chair.

Mr. Berger: Yes. Anyway, I hope that generally puts it in perspective for the member.

I do have to say, Mr. Speaker, that as members of this Assembly we are here to do the best for all Albertans, not just one, another, or three over here or there. In my job representing the constituency of Livingstone-Macleod, I feel that an investment in the future of our oil extraction, when you look at 70 per cent of conventional oil still left in the ground, the way of extracting it through carbon as opposed to using water, like I would assume some people are saying is acceptable across the floor – I think this is a very wise use of carbon. It may take a little bit of incentive to say: "Here. There is that capability of withdrawing that much more in royalties." Over time that money will be well spent.

There was also another comment earlier on about investing in pipelines. I'm not sure if the hon. member would like to take out a map, but I would think he might find that there are quite a few pipelines already buried in Alberta that are no longer in use that could be utilized for moving carbon around. We're not talking about taking it from the vehicles and that type of thing. We're talking about single-source emitters, where it can be easily captured, sent down the pipe, sent to a hole that's no longer producing, pumped down. It releases the oil, brings the oil up. I'm having a hard time understanding why that would not be attractive to the hon. member . . . [interjections]

Mr. Hinman: I'll tell you if you sit down.

Mr. Berger: Actually, I have the floor right now, so I'm not sure that I really would like to sit down.

There are the comments coming out of the hon. member that he did not understand it, so maybe I should go through it once more very slowly. I can do this. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has the floor.

Mr. Berger: Maybe we need to go through it again. [The time limit for questions and comments expired] Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want a couple of things on the record. I have spoken to this before, but I would like to make sure that, again, I could say what I think. I listened to the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar this afternoon, and I wasn't exactly sure that I understood what I thought my questions were. What I can't understand is that further down the road, actually, we say that it's safe. What do we know in a hundred years? Do we know that we're going to have earth tremors? We have no idea. So I don't understand.

As has already been mentioned, there will be CO₂ escaping and all those sorts of things. I don't think anybody can predict the future. But I don't understand why the taxpayers of Alberta should be the insurance company. Why is there not an insurance company? Has Lloyd's of London been contacted? Would they be interested in making lots of money off an insurance policy that would protect Albertans from a catastrophe that could happen with CO₂?

8:30

It's one of the points that I have been very interested in because I really don't think that we should be the insurance company. We insure our homes. We insure our cars. We insure all kinds of things if we're famous. Betty Grable insured her legs, and I do believe that it was Lloyd's of London that insured her legs. However, the point is that that's what insurance companies are there for. They do insure against catastrophic events. If they looked at it and they decided that, yes, it was worth their taking that risk, then, no, we Albertans should not have to pay for that. Again, I don't see why we are accepting the liabilities.

Just a couple more things. The CCS operator would be responsible for any mitigation work during the operation and up until the closure certificate has been issued by the province. But the time between the closure and the transfer of the long-term liability remains undefined. I really have a problem with why the taxpayer should be picking up that part of it.

We've seen in other security funds in the oil and gas sector that there's a potential that the fund would not cover the full liability. Again, an insurance company is going to weigh the risks. They're going to decide how much they are going to insure it for. If we insure our homes, then, yes, we put a value on it, and if something happens, that's what we get paid for it. But a good insurance company – Lloyd's of London or any of the big fellows – would have done the work that I think should have been done.

I want to know what that insurance is going to cost me. Yes, it says that the companies are going to be putting money into it, but it's for the mitigation and for the work that they will do to make sure that the CO₂ is safe in the ground. It's got nothing to do with a catastrophic event that could happen further down the road. By doing that, the industry is not liable for any assumption of the risk being taken by the government. Again, why should we be taking the risk as Albertans? We're not going to be making any money other than probably a pittance in the royalties, so why should we take that risk? Why shouldn't we be paying an insurance company to take that risk?

Mr. Speaker, that's my main concern. I just don't see why we should be taking the risk when insurance companies are there for that purpose.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has brought up another extremely important concept that this government seems to miss. I'm just wondering if the hon.

Member for Lethbridge-East understands the foolishness of the answer given by the Member for Livingstone-Macleod. That's caustic, CO₂, and you need stainless steel pipelines. It's people like that that really worry me. If the government is in charge and says, "Let's pump CO₂ through these pipelines," then we're going to have all of these liability costs. Are you aware that CO₂ must go through stainless steel pipelines in order to be transported to its destination of use?

Ms Pastoor: Yes, actually, I was aware of that. I would hope that we would not buy our pipe through China. Why I'm saying that is because I bought something the other day.

Mr. Lukaszuk: A blender?

Ms Pastoor: No, it wasn't a blender. Actually, it was just a stopper for the bathtub. Off that was a chain that said: stainless steel. It was from China. The very first time it was exposed to water, it rusted. That's not stainless steel. So, yes, I am aware of that.

I think another thing is that if all Albertans looked at a map of Alberta and saw all the pipelines and all of the holes that are dug – actually, there probably isn't one square inch that either isn't sold or leased to oil and gas companies – they would be absolutely astounded.

But to answer the question, yes. Let's just not buy it from China.

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

Mr. Boutilier: I don't have any questions, Mr. Speaker. She has answered them all, unlike the other side.

The Deputy Speaker: On the bill, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise and participate in this discussion today on Bill 24, the Carbon Capture and Storage Statutes Amendment Act, 2010. I'd like to take the opportunity to clarify some misconceptions about Alberta's leadership in carbon capture and storage. Alberta committed \$2 billion to CCS in 2008. That said, government did not take \$2 billion and put it in a bank account earmarked for this technology. This financial commitment, the largest in the world for a jurisdiction of around 4 million people, is a commitment that will be paid over the next 15 years or so.

The grant agreements government is pursuing with four project proponents ensure that payment to them is based on performance. None of that money will be given out until, first, the grant agreements are signed; secondly, the project meets the milestones outlined in the funding agreements; and, thirdly, the project submits a claim, which is verified. For the first 40 per cent of funding the Department of Energy receives security against the payment in the event it becomes refundable to the government. The next 20 per cent of funding will be paid upon commercial operations. The final 40 per cent of funding is paid out once over a 10-year period as CO₂ is captured and stored.

The reality is that this is a long-term commitment for the funding. There is no pot of \$2 billion that we can just reroute to something else. Let me be perfectly clear. The money in the \$2 billion CCS funding program has to be allocated through an open and transparent process. Industry is making investments into these projects based on this money, and any delay or reduction of funding would have a detrimental impact on this industry. It would impact our global

reputation as a leader in responsible energy development, it would impact our province's long-term economic development, and it would impact our commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that Alberta is not the only government providing funding to this leading-edge technology. The federal government has also committed money to some of the same projects, and earlier this week the Australian government, through its Global CCS Institute, also committed millions to one of the projects. We like to say that Alberta is a leader, and in this case we've shown we're leading as other governments are following our lead.

I'd also like to shed some light about the application of this technology. CCS is not a one-hit wonder. This technology is applicable at any large emitter of greenhouse gas emissions. That means it can be used at cement plants, bitumen upgraders, coal-fired electricity plants: any large industrial emitters. To refine and hone our skills in the technology provides an opportunity for Albertans – that's Albertans, this generation and those still to come.

The World Coal Association says that coal fuels over 40 per cent of the electricity world-wide. That means the potential for this many existing plants to be retrofitted with this technology is tremendous. It also means new plants that will be coming online can be built with this technology. This is not only a game-changing technology for Alberta, Mr. Speaker; this is a game-changing technology for the world. We will be at the forefront, developing the know-how, the knowledge, and the skills, and we will ultimately be sharing that knowledge around the globe as greenhouse gas emissions are a global challenge.

8:40

Maybe it's easy to be short sighted and say that we shouldn't do this and we shouldn't do that, and we should spend the money on something else, but Alberta and Albertans are not short sighted. Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago the government of the day invested in natural gas infrastructure to take that waste that was being burnt at flare stacks and put it into pipelines, had the foresight and didn't have a party saying: don't invest in this, and don't do that. Well, they invested, and today Alberta has reaped the benefits of that investment for 50 years.

Where would this province have been if it hadn't been for that pioneering ingenuity, if we hadn't spotted that oil gusher, Leduc No. 1, in 1947? The province and its people embraced that new industry, Mr. Speaker, and look where we are today. That one well changed the course of history for Alberta and for Canada.

Let's move forward a couple of decades. That's when Great Canadian Oil Sands, now Suncor, started operation of its mine in 1967. Thankfully, these members weren't there saying, "Let's not do that either," because we wouldn't be there either, would we? The government of Alberta was as instrumental in partnering with industry then as we are today, Mr. Speaker, to ensure this valuable resource was developed, and today we're reaping the benefits of that.

It's now 2010. To me, it seems clear that history has proven that we Albertans are doers. Mr. Speaker, we take the initiative and venture forth into territories where others are afraid to go. We take that initiative. We are the best place in the country to live, the best place to invest, and the best place to do business. We know that climate change is real and that something needs to be done about it, and we're going to do it.

The world needs energy, but the question of what type the world will use is continually evolving with the concept. For now it would appear that while the global appetite for energy is still increasing, so,

too, is the demand for energy that is also becoming cleaner. The pursuit of carbon capture and storage technology is a part of our government's response to both demands. Alberta's future as a global energy provider is linked to an ability to create clean energy. CCS will help us in our pursuit of wise energy production because the capture of carbon dioxide can and will be used in enhanced oil recovery. That process helps loosen the tough-to-reach oil from conventional reservoirs. Already, Mr. Speaker, oil companies are out there relooking at fields that have been closed up for a while to look at new and creative opportunities to help fuel the Canada of the future.

I would like to reiterate the point that CCS-related, enhanced oil recovery activities have the potential to create up to \$25 billion in added royalties for our province, not to mention the jobs, the income tax, and all of the other benefits that come from that activity. That figure does not come from the government of Alberta; it comes from the Carbon Capture and Storage Development Council's future report, and I believe they're right. It is that consortium of experts who developed the blueprint for how Alberta could best implement CCS. Bill 24 is the embodiment of recommendations from that council. This bill ensures government assumes the long-term liability for carbon capture and storage, and it provides clarity to industry with respect to the issue surrounding access to underground CO₂ storage.

Mr. Speaker, to move forward with CCS, our government needs to assume long-term liability for the injection of carbon dioxide. We are talking about permanent storage. Not long-term storage; we are talking about permanent storage. Accepting liability for the injected CO₂ will be contingent upon strict conditions related to the issuance of a closure certificate.

In my role as parliamentary assistant in Advanced Education and Technology I have visited with the researchers at the University of Alberta and Calgary. I have been to their labs and met with the research scientists, with the postdoctoral and graduate students that are working in this very exciting area. We have talked about the monitoring programs that they are testing as we speak today, testing to make sure that they can gauge the effectiveness of the storage of our carbon dioxide. Mr. Speaker, these are some of the brightest and best people in the world. They are out there today in our universities, in our colleges teaching our young people, working with them, and generating real opportunities not for investment just in the future but today.

Our young people, Alberta's young people are working today in labs, testing and studying the rock structures, the impacts that CO₂ has on different formations and different rocks. They're looking at how it can be stored underground. Mr. Speaker, this is state-of-the-art work being done right here in Alberta. Some of the finest research is being done, and we're doing it. We're helping to invest in it through these funds so that we can create the environment, the economic development of the future. This is a wonderful opportunity for our province.

Bill 24 indicates that companies would be required to comply with all closure criteria and site monitoring prior to receiving a certificate. The bill also ensures a postclosure stewardship fund will be developed and financed by industry. This fund will ensure that any postclosure issues for a given project will be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this bill address what steps government needs to take very clearly, I believe this technology is one of the keys to securing Alberta's place as a global energy leader, and I support this legislation and would ask every member of this House to support it as well. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: We have 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do have a question for the hon. member. First, I find it interesting that when this program was first announced, the government talked about how it was going to be used for emissions coming from oil sands production. Only when we tabled a document later on, after the program had already been announced and \$2 billion committed to it, did they finally realize that the intensity of emissions from oil sands production wasn't sufficient to make it effective, and it could be used, perhaps, for coal. That's the kind of foresight that went into this thing.

Does the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West really expect us to accept his characterization of this investment in carbon capture and storage as the equivalent of the Leduc discovery in 1947? Does he really expect us to see them as equivalent? Before he answers, Mr. Speaker, I will point out that, you know, it was oil companies that found oil that was already there. It wasn't something that was created by the government. I know that some believe that God created the oil for Social Credit and put it in the ground to help Social Credit. I think that was the prevailing view. Maybe the current view is that we're creating the CO₂ for the Progressive Conservatives. I don't know.

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

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate those questions from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I think it shows that even the NDP were thinking about this and looking at ways that we could reduce carbon. The member mentioned that they had thought about using it on coal-fired electricity plants, and that's not a new idea. In fact, right now the carbon from coal-fired energy plants in North Dakota is being harnessed and has been for many, many years. It's piped to southern Saskatchewan, and it's utilized for enhanced oil recovery. So the idea that he had has been used for many, many years, and it's been unique.

You know, I do liken this to those other things in the past: the finding of oil in Leduc, the government's investment in natural gas infrastructure when people said they shouldn't do it – it has been one of the largest income sources for this province and our citizens – as well as the investment in the oil sands. What a wonderful opportunity that's created for Alberta. We're heading towards 3 million barrels a day on something that folks like this would have said we should never do. Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderful opportunity for our province.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great interest not only to the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West but also to the WRA members. I listened intently to their differing opinions on climate change and their differing opinions on how things should happen from an economic perspective. I was also very interested in the Member for Lethbridge-West, who talked about the fact that the oil sands wouldn't have been there had it not been for government intervention in many ways in terms of the investment. It was also in terms of direct investment, hon. member, in research and development. [interjection] You should learn your history. [interjection] Hon. member, you should learn your history before you spout off. You should really learn a little more about it.

8:50

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, through the chair.

Mr. Horner: The other thing that I would like to ask the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West to expand upon is a little bit around the – he comes from a community that has two academic institutions in it that are very involved in alternative energies. There is a relationship between what we're doing in CCS and alternative energies that we're investing in. As the hon. member mentioned, the Helmholtz institutes from the universities in Germany are actively engaged here.

Mr. Boutilier: Is there a question in there?

Mr. Horner: It can be question or comment, hon. member. Learn the rules; read the book. It can be both, hon. member. Learn the rules.

The Deputy Speaker: Through the chair.

Mr. Horner: Through the chair. Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

I think what I'd like the hon. member to talk about is: is that an area of research that is being intently followed, both in the applied and the basic, at the universities in Lethbridge?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, the minister makes a very good point: that we also are investing in alternative energies, which are so critically important to this government. I am privileged to come from Lethbridge, where Lethbridge College has the only program of its type in North America where they train wind energy technicians. They train them for companies around the world. These young men and women are being trained and sent to Germany, to Finland, to the United States, and across Canada to help generate green energy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I have on my list here the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Boutilier: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise, and I thank the Member for Lethbridge-West. As much as some of his comments are open for interpretation, I would say that at least I appreciate his energy on such an important topic, specifically talking about my home, the oil sands capital of the world. Having had the honour of serving as its mayor and a city councillor and now as an MLA for four terms, indeed, I feel quite compelled to speak on such an important topic as Bill 24.

The reason I say that, as I look around the room at the hon. members, is that I find it interesting that as I stand here tonight, I stand as the only former Minister of Environment, who, in fact, in 2005 attended the IPCC in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and addressed on behalf of the people of Alberta the topic of oil sands, not only the topic of oil sands and how it contributes to our economic well-being but also the environmental commitment that Albertans have. I can only say, Mr. Speaker, that the idea that was presented at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change back in 2005 about CCS and technologies was more importantly about energy solutions, and energy solutions are more than just about CCS. That's where I believe the idea that was launched back in 2005 has gone so wrong.

That's why tonight I will be speaking relative to the weaknesses of Bill 24. Specifically, we have an opportunity, and it's an opportunity when it comes to: what are the energy solutions? It is perceived that CCS, carbon capture and storage, is one. But I recall

speaking to the over 150 nations in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2005, and it was clear that there is a multitude of solutions in terms of how we deal with climate change and global warming.

I do believe the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere rightfully pointed out that it's all a sense of contextualizing the issue of climate change because presently the idea of investing in technology with \$2 billion, as much as that was an idea, it was never \$2 billion, and it was never the idea of picking winners and losers. I believe that 53 companies showed an interest in sustainability and environmental protection, who participated in applying for carbon capture and storage – 53 of them – and it's my understanding that only four were selected.

Mr. Anderson: Three? Four?

Mr. Boutilier: Three or four. I stand to be corrected perhaps.

Mr. Speaker, that's where this has gone wrong. What about the other 49 companies that expressed an interest, that would have loved to have been able to participate but were not because it was only the government who chose the winners and the losers? This is the problem, the fundamental flaw, that goes on relative to how we expand our wings in terms of each and every one of us and the responsibility and the role we play.

It is wrong for the government to pick winners and losers. Bill 24 is about exactly that. They picked four, not 53. What about the other 49? I ask each and every one of you. Hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, what about the other 49? Hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, what about the other 49? They were left out. They were left out. That creates uncertainty. That creates no sense of focus and fairness, not a level playing field. If you're a big company – and I will not mention any of the four that were selected because some of them are advancing. But what about the other 49 that you turned a blind eye to? That is what is unfortunate.

There was reference made to the Alberta Research Council, and as the Minister of Environment I visited on numerous occasions. I might add, Mr. Speaker, AOSTRA, the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority, was a fine example of technology 30-some years ago that ultimately – and I see the Member for Livingstone-Macleod is shaking his head in acknowledgement, recognizing the history.

Mr. Speaker, clearly, in my view if we are to achieve the future, there are a few things we need to focus on. Right now China is behind us in technology. China is right now. But I want to ensure that my son and this man's four children and each of you with children, that our sons and daughters are going to be working at the University of Alberta or the University of Calgary as opposed to what may take place if we do not advance the future by ensuring all of those other 49 companies participate in the technologies of the future.

Way back when, when the technology of the oil sands was advanced, everyone was allowed to play in the sandbox. Now the government has chosen four. Why would you not participate with the other 49 that have been left out? You've picked a winner and a loser, and that is fundamentally wrong. In fact, I believe that the wings of expanding the sustainability file have been lost based on what this bill is not doing.

As we look, China 10 years from now will be ahead of us because one thing about their system: their system doesn't do a lot of consultation; they just move ahead. Ultimately, we need to ensure those other 49 companies are participating in the technology that will advance a greater cause than just the four that this government picked. That is fundamentally wrong. We in the Wildrose believe, Mr. Speaker, that all of those 49 companies should be participating

as well, and the reason why is that we have a greater commitment to the environment and sustainability in dealing with the important issue of climate change and global warming.

I find it really interesting that as we look at picking winners and losers, that this government has done, it is a fundamental flaw in what is taking place under Bill 24. In fact, the Wildrose are not only down the road, like the government; we're around the corner. We're way around the corner because we are forward thinkers. We are future thinkers because we're thinking about our three-year-old children and your children. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Livingstone-Macleod is shaking his head. He has somewhat of a stunned look on his face, but I'm sure he is absorbing the technology and wisdom.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that, in my judgment, we as Albertans want a centre of excellence, a centre of excellence that we can export to the rest of the world. We can do that, but we cannot do it by just picking four companies. What about the 49 companies you all left out? That's what you've done, and that is fundamentally wrong. Rather than picking and choosing winners and losers, you've acted – it's almost like you've created an unlevel playing field that has been very unfortunate and I believe will delay the progress in dealing with the issue of climate change.

In the meantime, it's the issue of choices. Two billion dollars. What about our schools? What about our emergency rooms? It's an issue of leadership. True leadership is about making decisions and making the right decisions based on the values that Albertans have, and right now the decision you're making on the \$2 billion is fundamentally wrong. We could have included all of those other 49 companies, but unfortunately you chose only four. So it is obviously more than just carbon capture and storage. It's also about the alternative energies that can be used in terms of advancing.

9:00

I want Alberta, not only my community and constituency, to be the oil sands capital of the world. It is my hope and prayer that in the future this province will be not only the oil sands capital of the world but the centre of excellence for technology in reducing CO₂ and in helping in a manner that we can share with the rest of the world to make it a better planet. That is true leadership.

Today selecting only four versus 49 that were left out of the game I believe is unfortunate. I don't know if it's intended or not, but that is the result. So an idea that was a good idea back in 2005 has been lost. You hear the A-Team. They say: I love when a plan comes together. This plan, unfortunately, has not come together because you left out 49 other companies, companies that wanted to participate, companies that wanted to contribute to sustainability in helping to reduce climate change and global warming.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that as we move forward, each of us has a responsibility. Those other 49 companies that applied, I can say I take my hat off to them because they have expressed tremendous interest in terms of wanting to advance. But the government said no to those other 49; they accepted only four. That's unfortunate. As I look around the room, I think all of us should be able to embrace that. Why wouldn't we use all of those 53 companies to be involved in this important initiative of technology, no different than AOSTRA was many, many years ago, that advanced the commitment of oil sands?

Mr. Speaker, in the oil sands capital of the world back when the generic fiscal regime was in fact put in place in 1997, when I had the honour of being mayor, we expected \$20 billion over 20 years. What happened was that it wasn't \$20 billion over 20 years. Ten years ahead of that it was actually \$120 billion over 10 years. The infrastructure that we faced, no different than other communities are facing, was a direct result of the oil sands.

But I believe now more than ever before that those 49 other companies that the government has left out of the CCS program should have been included. That's what is different between us and them. We have policy alternatives that believe everyone should be participating. We do not discriminate in picking winners and losers. We want every single Albertan to participate from a consumption perspective as well as the roles we play in our own backyards.

Consequently, with tax incentives, similar to the fiscal regime, similar to what the tremendous positive result of our generic fiscal regime was, we believe the same framework could have been used for dealing with this issue, rather than you folks picking just four as opposed to the other 49 that you left out. You have to examine what criteria are determined for the four to get in versus the 49 that don't. The Wildrose would have ensured that the 53 are in there, not forgetting the objective of helping and reducing the issue of global warming and climate change.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that it's interesting to put this into perspective. Did you know that in the United States of America, with over 300 million people, the Obama government has invested \$3 billion? This government, with 3.4 million people, has invested \$2 billion. Consequently, it is clear to me that the decisions that are being chosen for this versus the issue of schools, the issues of ER lineups – it's all about a decision of choices. I believe that the choices that you made by excluding 49 other companies are fundamentally wrong. Your framework of policies is wrong.

Not only that, I'm very proud to say as a former Minister of Environment that back at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change we talked about energy solutions, we talked about trilateral examples, and we talked about partnering. But we didn't talk about picking just one or two or three. We talked about everyone having a role to play. Unfortunately, that's where this bill has failed, and it has failed miserably. It has failed to embrace all Alberta companies and all Albertans, and my humble advice to this government is that, clearly, the idea that was launched in 2005 and 2006 has been lost.

Somehow you have strayed off the mark. For that I will only say that it is my hope and dream that my son and the children that we all have will be able to have a centre of excellence for climate change, for sequestration, for other alternative sources of energy when it comes to dealing with the issue of reducing CO₂.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo care deeply about the air that we breathe and the water we drink and the land we work. In fact, I remember often saying that we have a strong law. Well, I believe that excluding 49 companies has weakened the intent and the spirit of what the expectation of Albertans is when it comes to how we advance forward. I think each and every one of us may have different opinions on climate change and global warming, but I do believe that leaving out the other 49 companies that applied to participate is unfortunate.

That's why I will not support Bill 24, because of the fact that it is not inclusive. It appears to be picked by – I don't even know the criteria of how those four were selected, but unfortunately I believe . . .

An Hon. Member: I kind of have an idea.

Mr. Boutilier: Okay. I think we all may have ideas on how those four were selected. But, Mr. Speaker, I humbly believe that it's flawed, and it clearly should be all the other 49. Who knows? Maybe that 49 could go and be doubled, and maybe it could be 98. Who knows? It could be even tripled and so on and so forth. I believe that never was it intended – I can say that, speaking from my experience – that we would exclude anyone from wanting to participate in helping reduce CO₂ emissions. Everyone has a role

and responsibility for doing that and we should expect no less in terms of the action.

As much as the idea was planted back when I had the honour of serving as the Minister of Environment for then Premier Klein, I want to be able to say, Mr. Speaker, that the idea that was first cast clearly has been lost. That's unfortunate. I'm proud to say the oil sands capital of the world is my home. Actually, it's a resource that's owned by all Albertans, but we can do better than what is taking place. That in itself is so important.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great interest to the hon. member. [interjections] Pardon me, hon. member.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, the minister has the floor.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate they can't wait for the question.

I listened, Mr. Speaker, with great interest to the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo's comments on his time as the Minister of Environment. I can remember a lot of those discussions quite vividly and his support for things that would have included this investment. I also am curious that if all 53 projects, good or bad, were funded by the government of Alberta, wouldn't we then be accused of not doing our due diligence?

In fact, Mr. Speaker, these projects underwent a fairly rigid due diligence by not only industry and environmental experts but also some government folks as well on a committee. I'm curious, hon. member. Do you know any of those 49 companies that had a good enough proposal that could have made it through the RFP process? If so, why would they have not made it through the RFP process, which was open and accountable, as the hon. member knows because he was involved in some of that? That's the first question.

The second question is: the two companies that really were the founding companies in Fort McMurray and the oil sands development – I'm curious – is the hon. member suggesting that there was absolutely no government investment in or direction or control or ability to control those two that really developed the oil sands in Fort McMurray? I'm just curious about the hon. member's position in that respect.

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

Mr. Boutilier: Thanks very much. The comments are very liberal of the Deputy Premier, but that's okay because, fundamentally, it's clear to me what the question – and it's very important for him to hear intently. This is about not picking winners or losers. This is about a level playing field where all can play a role, all 53. The question was why. The answer is simple. All should have been included, okay? Unfortunately, the government has chosen.

The government does not understand the idea of tax incentives. Do you not understand how you create an environment of certainty, an environment that will create that investment? I think they realize now that they've made a mistake. I think they have clearly realized that, my goodness, we could have had 49 other companies participating in advancing the cause of reducing CO₂. Unfortunately, they didn't think that way. They thought that those four companies were the best, and unfortunately that is not the case. It's a flaw because you have created an unlevel playing field.

9:10

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much. [interjection] I have been quite patient. Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member. In the course of his discussions with the local bitumen and synthetic crude oil producers in Fort McMurray has there ever been a price, a firm price, talked about for the capture and compression of CO₂ emissions? Could he please enlighten the House?

Mr. Boutilier: It's actually a very good question. Obviously, at the time of the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, they made reference to between \$15 and \$30 that was actually being recommended. In fact, at the time companies like GCOS, now Suncor, that the Member for Lethbridge-West mentioned earlier, were trading on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange for \$15. It's really interesting.

I can say that when we deal with the issue of cap and trade, one of the fundamental flaws of cap and trade is that we want to ensure that the technologies are invested in Alberta as opposed to going to other parts of the world. We don't want to lose that so that, in fact, my son and yours can actually be learning at that centre of excellence, which would be right here in the capital or in Calgary or somewhere else – who knows? – maybe even a university in Fort McMurray, right next to and adjacent to the oil sands, or through Keyano College. To the minister of advanced ed, Keyano College university might be a good touch when it comes to the centre of excellence in capturing and storing CO₂ and exporting that type of thing to the rest of the world.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona on the bill.

Mr. Quest: On the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in support of this bill. There's been some interesting discussion. There have been a few points that I don't think have been raised up until now. When we talk about carbon capture and storage, now, many of us think about these four projects currently in the grant agreement stage. I have to say that I'm a little bit confused. Some members from the WRA talking about – I think Airdrie-Chestermere was talking about: we should never ever be in business, never, never, never, never, never.

The point has been raised a couple of times . . .

Mr. Anderson: Here it comes.

Mr. Quest: No. I don't think we would have an oil sands industry today. So there would be nothing to talk about. Without the vision of a previous Progressive Conservative government 40 years ago . . .

Ms Pastoor: Peter Lougheed.

Mr. Quest: Peter Lougheed. Exactly.

I'm a bit confused because we've got Airdrie-Chestermere telling us that we should never be in business, yet we've got the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo telling us that – what is it? – 53 companies we should be in partnership with. I guess I just don't understand. Of course, the hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology has mentioned that four companies were picked to get to the grant agreement stage through a very, very thorough process, RFPs and so on, to bring them to that position. [interjections]

But just to broaden out the focus a bit and speaking of education – and it sounds like we need some education in the room here – I'd like to address what seems to have been a bit of a math puzzle

brought forward by some of the members in recent days. I have heard, just from looking at *Hansard*, that perhaps some members have talked about the government subsidizing CCS to the tune of \$865 a tonne, which is a ridiculously inaccurate number. Alberta's commitment of the \$2 billion will see the four projects capturing and storing over 5 million tonnes per year beginning in 2015, Mr. Speaker. Five million tonnes a year for at least 10 years, so 50 million tonnes of CO₂; the scale of this is incredible. If you divide the \$2 billion by the 50 million tonnes that are going to be stored, it's about \$40 a tonne, clearly a figure nowhere near what some people have calculated. It's time to get some facts on the table.

On the topic of money let me just say that the assertion that the government is confiscating property now without compensation is also absolutely inaccurate, Mr. Speaker. Surface rights owners have never been able to lay claim to something that they can't practically use. The reality is that ownership of pore space has never been resolved by the courts or in Alberta legislation, but this bill makes it clear. That's why we need this bill. If landowners own the mineral rights under their land, this legislation does not change that. Landowners will still have the authority to those rights, and that will not change. Companies will still be required to negotiate with landowners for surface access to their land, and they'll be compensated fairly, so that has not changed. Before applicants are given access by the minister and again by the ERCB, they must demonstrate that the project will not impact resources such as oil, gas, or coal.

Another point that was brought up this week was about how the fund financed by CCS operators would work and what it would cover. Those details will be worked out at the beginning of spring 2011 with a review of the regulatory framework. It's expected there will be a fee per tonne of CO₂ injected and that it would cover a variety of costs, including reclaiming and remediating orphaned facilities.

Another question was about the long-term liability transfer and how it would work, and that's come up several times. This is another detail that will be reviewed in the spring, and it's expected that tremendous technical data will be required. Most importantly, this review will be completed long before the large-scale injection begins in 2015. Alberta has a great deal of experience regulating what comes out of and now goes into the ground. In fact, our province's oil and gas industry has been doing enhanced oil recovery for years, and we've touched on that, Mr. Speaker.

Again, discussions come up many times about the money and how it can be used elsewhere. I believe the Member for Livingstone-Macleod brought up a little earlier that the province's revenues through royalties and taxation will be at least 10 times what our initial investment is. I think most of us in this room can do the math. Ten times: how often do you get an opportunity to get 10 times the return on your investment, Mr. Speaker? Why we're quibbling about this, I really don't know. I'm sure the WRA probably also understands the concept of investment and return. Again, I just can't imagine a better opportunity than what we have in front of us here.

There have been many similar smaller scale projects, so we're just doing this in a bigger way. I think many would be familiar with the project at Joffre. It was a pilot project in 1984, and then it was commercialized in 1991. It's the only commercial CO₂ enhanced oil recovery project in Canada, using industrial emissions coming from the NOVA plant. The captured CO₂ has helped give new production life to what once was an abandoned oil field. This has come up many times. It has helped to recover an additional 12 to 25 per cent of the original oil.

Well, with that said, I can't imagine why anybody wouldn't

support Bill 24, Mr. Speaker. We know it's a technology that's being developed in other countries, we know that we'll be world leaders in developing this technology, we know it's great for our environment, and we know that our geology can fully support permanent storage. We know that we can become world leaders offering CCS education at our postsecondary institutions, and we know that we can become leaders in implementing these large-scale projects.

I second the comments made by my colleague the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, regarding the body of expertise around CCS that's being built at Alberta's very fine postsecondary institutions. This has come up, and I would add to her impressive list the new centre for clean coal at the U of A and the development of geospatial expertise at the University of Calgary. In essence, we have graduate students studying at our universities who will have unique knowledge and experience that they can take into the workforce so that industry has the skilled workers they will need to put these technologies into action. We know that industry fully supports the technology as it is putting in hundreds of millions of its own dollars. I know this has come up before. I'm talking about industry doing it on its own. This is a partnership, Mr. Speaker. This is for everybody. Industry is heavily involved in this, very committed and hugely supportive of carbon capture and storage.

9:20

What we do know is that climate change is real, so we'll be assured that our \$2 billion financial investment in CCS is being made with the future in mind. We want to be leaders in the technology and to then share our knowledge with the world. That will result in tremendous economic spinoffs like highly skilled jobs for generations to come. The time to act is now. Mr. Speaker, the time for CCS is now. I fully support this bill and encourage all members to fully support it as we do need to move ahead with this game-changing technology.

Again, I remember when I was a child, Mr. Speaker, in the early 1970s, and just reading even then about this new and emerging technology . . .

Mr. MacDonald: Are you ever young.

Mr. Quest: Well, thank you, I think.

. . . and the vision that this government had even then to develop what a lot of people really thought couldn't be done. Industry, as we know, moves around. Industry has many, many opportunities. I would think that exploring the option of . . . [Mr. Quest's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Strathcona. Pursuant to Government Motion 25, agreed to on December 1, 2010, the time for debate has expired. I must now put the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:22 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Berger	Fawcett	McFarland
Bhardwaj	Fritz	McQueen
Bhullar	Goudreau	Olson
Campbell	Griffiths	Quest
Dallas	Groeneveld	Renner
Danyluk	Hancock	Tarchuk
DeLong	Horner	Vandermeer
Denis	Jablonski	Weadick
Doerksen	Leskiw	Woo-Paw
Elniski	Lukaszuk	

Against the motion:

Anderson	Hinman	Mason
Boutilier	MacDonald	Pastoor
Chase		

Totals: For – 29 Against – 7

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a third time]

Bill 28 Electoral Divisions Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

Mrs. Jablonski: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today on this bill, which is Bill 28, the Electoral Divisions Act. As was mentioned previously, this bill sets out the names and boundaries of Alberta's electoral divisions. Alberta is changing, and it's necessary to ensure the electoral map continues to properly reflect our evolving and growing province.

As I begin, I'd like to first thank the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission for its work to date. By name they are the Hon. Judge Ernest J.M. Walter, the chair of the commission; Keith Archer; Brian Evans; Peter Dobbie; and Allyson Jeffs. Mr. Speaker, I have met Judge Walter, and I want to express my further appreciation for him as a man of the people.

I will tell you a true story about Judge Walter that proves to you that he is indeed a man of the people. Judge Walter would travel to different jurisdictions to preside over the courts in his circuit. Each time, usually once every two weeks, he visited the constituency of Lac La Biche-St. Paul, there would be a group of seniors in the front row, who listened very intently to the evidence. Judge Walter would carefully make his ruling, and just after he announced his verdict, he would look over to the group of seniors. Judge Walter would then know whether he had made the right ruling or not because this group of seniors would either nod their heads up and down to show him they were in agreement or they would shake their heads back and forth from side to side to indicate they did not agree. Mr. Speaker, any judge who looked to a group of seniors to see if they agreed or disagreed with a decision that he made can indeed be considered a man of the people.

The commission's review of the existing electoral map and subsequent recommendations on the areas, boundaries, and names for Alberta's electoral divisions will help ensure that Albertans have effective representation in the Legislative Assembly. The work was extensive, beginning with the commission holding a series of public hearings across the province in September and October 2009. The commission received some very thoughtful comments from all corners of our province. We do indeed have a lot of people in this great province who are passionate about their communities and passionate about government representation.

I know all members greatly appreciated the input of Albertans who participated in the consultation process, and I, too, thank them for providing their feedback. I especially would like to thank the people of Red Deer; my own constituency association president, Duane Smethurst; and our board members who took the time to make a presentation on behalf of the city of Red Deer.

In May of last year the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act was amended to establish an Electoral Boundaries Commission. The act directed the commission, an independent body, to divide the province into 87 electoral divisions with a population within 25 per cent of the provincial average in a way that will ensure effective representation for Albertans. This is a critical point, Mr. Speaker, because Alberta's changing population distribution and densities, community interests, and other factors require us to periodically review and update our electoral boundaries.

Over the course of a year the commission travelled around the province and consulted with Albertans about this mandate. The commission reviewed the existing electoral map and made recommendations on the areas, boundaries, and names for 87 electoral divisions based on the latest census and population information, input they received from Albertans, and of course the applicable legal principles.

9:40

As I mentioned, the commission was mandated to divide Alberta into 87 proposed electoral divisions by taking the following factors into consideration: the requirement for effective representation as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; sparsity and density of population; common community interests and community organizations, including those of Indian reserves and Métis settlements; wherever possible the existing community boundaries within the cities of Edmonton and Calgary; wherever possible the existing municipal boundaries, which is what they did for the city of Red Deer. Although I lost two polls that were rural and highly supportive, I've also gained some other wonderful, thoughtful constituents from the neighbourhood of Deer Park in Red Deer.

Mr. Speaker, the last time the number of electoral divisions was changed was in 1986, and since that time Alberta's population has grown by approximately 1 million people. As our population increases, we must revisit the number of officials we elect to this Assembly. According to the official population list the population of Alberta has increased by 258,945 since the adjusted 2006 census. As a result, the total population that was considered by the commission was 3,556,583.

I'd like to address some of the concerns raised in this Assembly regarding the number of electoral divisions. The Electoral Boundaries Commission reviewed the existing electoral map of Alberta and made recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on the areas, boundaries, and names for 87 electoral divisions, four more than at present, based on the latest census and population information. Some members of this Assembly have indicated that Albertans are adequately represented by 83 electoral divisions and that the addition of another four would represent an additional burden. Mr. Speaker, the commission was indeed mandated to divide Alberta into 87 divisions but with a population within 25 per cent of the provincial average, and I emphasize this point: 25 per cent of the provincial average. Due to increases in population, it has been determined that four more divisions are necessary to reflect our population growth. We must ensure Albertans are effectively represented in our Legislative Assembly, hence the additional divisions.

In fact, population growth was identified in the commission's report as a future consideration.

If the population growth pattern of the past two decades continues in the future, by far the most significant issue for future Electoral Boundaries Commissions will be the effect of the concentration of population in the Calgary/Edmonton corridor and in the Grande Prairie and Wood Buffalo areas on the distribution of electoral divisions in the rest of the province.

The constituency that I represent is within the Calgary-Edmonton corridor, and it's identified as the economic tiger. It's important to my constituents that there is equitable and fair representation for all Albertans. I think it was the mantra of the original Boston Harbor Tea Party that claimed: no taxation without representation. Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that all Albertans are fairly and equitably represented.

The commission received well over 500 written comments on the interim report, and 117 persons addressed the commission in the April and May public hearings. Thirty-seven per cent of the written submissions were related to the interim proposed boundaries in the area of the county of Newell and the county of Wheatland.

Another 13 per cent were related to including the name Notley in a revised name for the Dunvegan-Central Peace electoral division. Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of this Assembly that they were able to set aside partisan politics and rightfully recognize one of our most beloved and dedicated politicians, Grant Notley. We heard a beautiful thank you and tribute by Grant Notley's own daughter, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, a daughter anyone could be proud of.

Sixteen per cent of the written submissions were related to the interim proposed boundaries in south-central Alberta, 10 per cent of the submissions related to the Grande Prairie area, 8 per cent related to Calgary proposals, and, finally, 4 per cent related to Edmonton proposals. The remaining 12 per cent addressed other issues throughout Alberta.

Lastly, I address the concerns over the electoral name changes. I remind members that the commission's report was approved by this Assembly as were the majority of names of the electoral divisions. There were, however, changes to the suggested names of four electoral divisions. Mr. Speaker, those suggestions were made in order to better reflect the history and character of those divisions as well as the desires of their constituents. Specifically, the Assembly approved the following name changes. The proposed electoral division referred to by the commission as Okotoks-High River will retain its existing name of Highwood, the electoral division of Strathcona will now be named Strathcona-Sherwood Park, the electoral division of Calgary-Montrose will now be named Calgary-Greenway, and the electoral division of Calgary-North Hill will now be named Calgary-Klein.

I'd like to elaborate, if I may. As an hon. member pointed out, we have a long-standing tradition of naming some ridings for leaders of different political parties. Edmonton-Manning and Calgary-Lougheed were given as examples. To add my voice to the mix, I'm pleased the amendment was made to rename Dunvegan-Central Peace to Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley. Renaming Calgary-North Hill and Dunvegan-Central Peace clearly signals our deepest appreciation for the work of past leaders.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 28 will repeal and replace the existing act of the same name, and the new electoral boundaries will come into effect when the next general election is called in Alberta. Bill 28 will bring Alberta's electoral boundaries and divisions up to date with its population and current needs. We must keep pace with the growth of this province. We must adequately represent the geography and the interests of our citizens.

The decisions made by the Electoral Boundaries Commission were not easy ones and involved a very labour-intensive process.

The commission had to take into account a lot of different factors when rendering their decisions, factors that may be lost on some members of this House. But this isn't about numbers, Mr. Speaker. This is about representing the needs of all Albertans. The right to be heard is quintessential in this province and in Canada. Rural or urban, let's ensure that our people have a voice in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, today many of us met members of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, who have faced life-and-death decisions in Afghanistan and have committed their lives to the freedom and quality of life that we have as Canadians. Just as it is their duty and responsibility to protect our country and our freedoms, it is our duty and responsibility to live up to the gift of freedom that they protect by ensuring that all Albertans have fair representation and the right to be heard in this great province in this great country of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this Assembly to support this bill. Thank you.

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

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the very thoughtful words of the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. She's always been a very thoughtful individual, and I thought her words were very appropriate.

I do have a couple of concerns, though, and I'd like to get her input and her feelings on them. As the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere we, of course, have a very large population right now, about 65,000 people in our riding, so we needed some boundary redraw. We had dozens and dozens and dozens of people make presentations. We had our mayor of Airdrie, aldermen in Airdrie, mayor of Chestermere, aldermen in Chestermere, our county. We had our trustees. We had many, many different chambers of commerce, et cetera, make presentations, and almost every presentation given – in particular the area residents around Chestermere and Langdon and Balzac, where you have the big CrossIron Mills mall, Beiseker, Irricana, and so forth – said the same thing: we don't want to get lumped in with the Calgary riding, of course, but we think that it would be appropriate for us to be part of an east Calgary rural area.

9:50

Generally speaking, it was going to be Chestermere-Strathmore. In fact, in the first report that was put out, Chestermere-Strathmore was actually the proposed riding. Unfortunately, what happened after that was that a document was put forward between the first report and the final report where the Deputy Premier put forward on his government letterhead a set of recommendations from caucus, things that caucus members had requested the ridings be changed to, and sent it to the boundaries commission. We've gone over that in question period; we don't need to rehash it here. But the result of that, whether it was that or something else, I found very interesting in that the boundaries in my area – even though the MLA and all the different individuals living in the area had made clear statements as to how they thought the boundaries should go and the first report reflected those statements, all of a sudden we got the final report, and it had changed. All of a sudden Chestermere was this weird, funky horseshoe around north Calgary. It kind of goes in between Airdrie and Calgary. There's a small little flick there for Balzac that's included, and it takes in west Rocky View, and then it goes down and takes in Chestermere and Langdon.

It was very confusing for the people in my community as to why that happened because there was really no reason for it other than it seemed clear to me that the submissions that were made, in particu-

lar by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks as well as others in the government that we saw, are the ones that seemed to get implemented in the final report.

Now, for myself anyway, I found that quite offensive. I found that it was a complete interference in a nonpartisan, nonpolitical process by the government. Even if it wasn't, the perception was pretty damning. I understand that you're happy with the boundary redraws, and I understand that most of the government members are happy with the boundary redraws. But you know what? The people of Airdrie-Chestermere feel that there was political interference, and I would like you to ease my mind and ease constituents about that situation.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I haven't looked closely at the boundaries of Airdrie-Chestermere, but I would say to you that this funky horseshoe thing that the member is referring to also happened in my riding as it is today. The funky horseshoe that goes around Red Deer-North is now going to be Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, so people who live one block from the city of Red Deer will have to now vote in the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake poll. So I would say to the member: please don't think that there was anything specifically against your riding of Airdrie-Chestermere because I suffer the same thing.

I would have to say that I don't want to second-guess the wisdom and whatever criteria our commission used because I think that our commission was made up of excellent members. Although some of us may not be entirely happy about what our boundaries are, I still feel that having the four extra electoral divisions is important to the people of Alberta since we've grown by 1 million people since 1986, which was the last time that the number of electoral divisions was changed.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I recognize, as did the hon. seniors' minister, that the members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission did exactly what they were asked to do. They toured the province. They had representation from all parties in terms of the selection of the members, and they did the best job they could given the rationale that they were presented with. There's no doubt about their qualifications. The hon. member mentioned her fondness for the judge. We had great respect for the selection of Keith Archer, a well-known professor and environmentalist, who had both a rural, in terms of living in the Banff-Canmore area, and an urban perspective, having taught in Calgary.

My concern, Mr. Speaker, is the representation by population aspect of things. The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, I believe, mentioned the incident at the Boston Tea Party. No taxation without representation was the cry made when English bundles of tea were tossed into the harbour. My concern, however, is representation by population. The fact is that 80 per cent plus of Alberta's population lives in urban centres, urban constituencies. The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere pointed out the disproportionate representation. He's in charge of an area that has 65,000 constituents, an extremely large constituency, yet in some rural areas the size of the constituency is almost one-third of what he is expected to represent. That suggests that some rural members are more worthy of representation, in other words a 3 to 1 representation for their population, than urban members are.

Regardless of that lack of representation I don't believe the answer, Mr. Speaker, is in expanding what I see as a dysfunctional democratic arrangement that we currently have. With regard to that dysfunction, it doesn't matter if you have 87 members or 83

members; it matters how you represent your members. What we have seen over the last two weeks in particular is a series of debates rushed through this House through the evening hours, the early morning hours, and there's not going to be an improvement in that process until there is a change either in government or a change in government attitude. My particular hope is that whenever the next election occurs, we will do a better job in Alberta with a minority coalition government than is currently the case with the federal government.

The electoral boundaries process expands the size of government. The expansion, Mr. Speaker, I believe is unwarranted. We have representation in our cities, whether it be Red Deer or Medicine Hat, our smaller cities, Lethbridge, and so on, Leduc being one of our newest cities, that have considerably fewer Reeves or councillors or alderpeople to do the democratic job, and they seem to do it well. Somewhere between the number of representatives in terms of MPs and the representation of alderpeople I think would be the right amount.

In Calgary-Varsity the population that I represent is in the area of about 45,000 to 50,000. That's the sort of average. Then the Electoral Boundaries Commission was tasked with looking at a certain percentage above, a certain percentage below. Just adding more people to a process that I am feeling is currently dysfunctional is not going to provide Albertans with an improved democratic experience. There will be people that are not necessarily as stretched as they were, as currently is the case for the representative from Airdrie-Chestermere, but will that mean an improvement in the democratic turnout when it comes to vote?

10:00

I would hope that that was part of the wisdom of the government in moving from 83 to 87, but in terms of government wisdom or lack thereof, we've seen various new Premiers come in and first decrease the size of cabinet and then increase it so that everybody had a job or everybody was the parliamentary assistant or the associate to or was on a committee, et cetera, et cetera.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission did what it was tasked to do, to find four more centres of population that the government felt were underrepresented. As I say, it's not the number of individuals represented; it's the quality of the representation they receive. Mr. Speaker, I believe the proportion in this House will change dramatically after the next election, and I am hoping that the coalition that forms the next government can create greater efficiency than what we have seen since Peter Lougheed left office.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A twofold question. I'm wondering whether this member would clarify his comments because he's insinuating that members of this Legislature that are not in cabinet or are not parliamentary assistants have no job, have no work. Is he implying that he actually, not being in cabinet and not being a parliamentary assistant, has idle hands and is not working? [interjections] The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood obviously has no work because he's taking time heckling me right now.

Is he also insinuating that the opposition in this Legislature, being the WRA, the NDs, and Liberals, are about to form a coalition to take over the government, which would be very similar to what happened in Ottawa not too long ago and didn't work very well? I

would like to hear about this coalition conspiracy that's going on in the opposition.

Mr. Chase: I would love to enlighten the hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration. Mind you, I only have about three minutes left to do so, and it's a rather impossible task, but I will start. I will start.

Mr. MacDonald: Are you saying that he's a slow student?

Mr. Chase: No. He's a teacher. I respect all teachers.

With regard to the representation, I hope the hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration recognizes the difference in the workload of an opposition member. Whether it be a member of the NDP caucus, which has to divide up their portfolio responsibilities by two, or the Wildrose by four, or the Liberals by eight, the amount of effort that is required given our very limited caucus budgets is tremendous. To suggest that a Conservative backbencher has any type of the workload within the parliament – I'm not saying within their constituencies. Within our constituencies we all have a tremendous, important responsibility.

As to the coalition that you asked me to talk about, I said that I didn't want to see the types of coalitions of opportunism that had been formed in the federal government. If it was convenient, on one occasion the NDP and the Liberals would work together. Maybe the Bloc would join. At other times the Conservatives depended on the Bloc to push through a particular desire they had. Now, that was a coalition of opportunism.

My belief is that if you have a type of proportional representation, if you use the best thoughts from all parties – and, hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration, I did not suggest that the coalition could not include Conservative members. I didn't say what the coalition would look like. I just said that there would be a coalition. Whether it's the health care crisis, whether it's the crisis in education, whether it's the crisis that we're experiencing with over 78,000 children living below the poverty line, Albertans have lost their patience with this government's inaction, particularly since 1994, so I believe we're going to see a wider representation from a variety of parties than the Conservative majority, that has dominated this province's governments for over 40 years.

Now, I am a big fan of Peter Lougheed. Peter Lougheed was a builder. He built schools. He built hospitals. He recognized the importance of investing in the oil sands, part of what we talked about in Bill 24 tonight. Unfortunately, we have not had that calibre since Peter Lougheed.

We have seen Getty do his best in a very troubled economic time. We've seen Premier Klein bring stable institutions of public support to their knees from 1994 to 1998. We have this particular Premier, who has yet to get a handle on education even though he had wonderful surpluses to begin his leadership. There is simply no kind of a handle on health care.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Mr. Dallas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly pleased to rise this evening and join in third reading debate on Bill 28, the Electoral Divisions Act. Members may want to take a moment and fasten their seatbelts here because I'm going to race through some material that I think is important to discuss tonight.

It's a person's basic right to be able to vote in this country, and this bill, I believe, will help ensure that all Albertans have a voice that is heard and a voice that matters, Mr. Speaker. Five generations

of my family voted in Alberta, one of the most cherished privileges that we have in this great province. I'd submit to you that in those earlier years that was about all my family had, that right to participate in our parliamentary democracy, to have representation, and beyond that, to have representation that they could meet with, that they could greet personally, that they could interact with, that they could explore ideas and their vision for Alberta with, not only what we'd become but where we would go forward.

Essentially, this bill will ensure that the electoral map continues to properly reflect the province's ever-changing population. As Alberta's population grows, so does the requirement to represent and accommodate this growth in the Assembly. This is why Bill 28 will divide the province into 87 electoral divisions, which, of course, is four more than currently in place in Alberta. The four additional electoral boundaries will include Calgary-Hawkwood, Calgary-South East, Edmonton-South West, and Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Mr. Speaker, the last time the number of electoral divisions was updated was back in 1986, 24 years ago. Since then, Alberta's population has grown by approximately 1 million people. These extra 1 million people deserve equitable representation.

10:10

Mr. Speaker, as members in this Assembly know, we are here to work for and represent our constituents. We work for them, and we are accountable to them. Alberta is a large province with a diverse landscape, population, and demographics. This diverse province and population means that many different opinions and concerns need to be represented through elected representation right here in this Assembly. A person's address should not affect their right to be heard. This is why more electoral boundaries are needed. More seats are required in order to give all Albertans a voice in this Assembly.

Furthermore, Bill 28 is consistent with the Electoral Boundaries Commission's report and reflects what Albertans said that they wanted. As a reminder to all members in this Assembly, the Legislature accepted the recommendations of the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission. Over the course of a year this commission travelled around the province. Twice, I know, Mr. Speaker, they visited Red Deer, once early in the process and later to discuss an interim report that was filed. They stuck to their mandate of reviewing all of the electoral boundaries throughout our great province. The commission received well over 500 written comments on the interim report, and 117 people addressed the commission in the April and May public hearings.

Bill 28 ensures that the commission's recommendations are adopted. I guess a question to members who oppose this bill is: why would we ignore the recommendations of an independent commission who consulted with Albertans for over a year?

Mr. Speaker, Albertans know too well what it is like to fight for a voice in Canada. As most know, the heavily populated provinces of Ontario and Quebec can often determine the outcome of a federal election even before the votes from the west are tallied. This has resulted in a scenario where people from the west have felt disenfranchised from the rest of the country. I probably could go on for hours on this matter, but that is a discussion for another time.

My point is that this same argument can be used here today with Bill 28. Mr. Speaker, I do not understand how someone cannot support giving a voice and meaningful representation to Albertans. Bill 28 will provide more equitable representation for Albertans. It's plain, and it's simple.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition members' argument against Bill 28 is very shortsighted in the grand scheme of things. Opposition members argue that Bill 28 will increase costs as four more MLAs

are required. Essentially, this argument comes down to not thinking that equitable representation is worth the small additional cost.

One of the things that has been ingrained in me, Mr. Speaker, over the years is that while we appreciate the value and the privilege of having a parliamentary democracy in Alberta, it's never been described as cheap. I believe that all Albertans would support the idea of investing a few dollars per Albertan per year to make sure that the integrity of the great sense of representation, the model that we've developed, is maintained going forward and never compromised by the ability to feel that Albertans are not provided with adequate representation. The benefits will definitely outweigh the cost in the short term and, without a doubt, in the long term.

Opposition members also sometimes argue that four new seats are not needed because new technology allows us to communicate with our constituents quicker and over longer distances. Technology has evolved, Mr. Speaker, over the years. In fact, in driving up and down many of the gravel roads in Alberta and the highways in Alberta, I can remember the days of communicating via pay phone. Yes, they had pay phones when I first started doing that.

An Hon. Member: How much was it for a call?

Mr. Dallas: I think it was probably a dime, hon. member.

I remember later on having a Bag Phone in my car – that probably weighed about 20 pounds; it only really worked when you were driving or parked in the median or at the side of a major primary highway, to be honest about it – and then the evolution of cellphones and that type of thing. Technology has evolved now, and certainly one of the things that as a representative I'm trying to do is minimize the amount of time that I'm spending talking on a phone while I'm driving even though I've had hands-free devices for a number of years.

You know, when I think about constituents and what their expectations are in terms of communicating with me, yes, we receive some inquiries where the constituent really is trying to secure some information, and providing them with a link to a website or being able to provide them with a document through the office or potentially receiving through the mail a letter or that type of thing is satisfactory. But far more often, Mr. Speaker, what the constituent wants to do is meet personally. They want to gain context on the kinds of policies and decisions that are being made, the legislation that's being enacted through this Legislature, and they want to interact in a very direct way. They want to meet.

Mr. Speaker, even though my constituency of Red Deer-South is entirely urban and I have the ability to do that, to attend small gatherings, to meet one-on-one with constituents, I know that the challenges in many parts of Alberta are significantly greater in terms of that ability. The distance to travel, the time that's involved to move around to the various parts of the province provide some very unique and distinct challenges to provide representation. I would suggest that contrary arguments to providing the additional representation are not particularly well thought out. We're able to communicate over longer distances with the phone and Internet, but really nothing replaces the expectation that a constituent has to provide face-to-face interaction.

Just imagine some scenarios that might evolve in the future going forward, perhaps a high school graduation where in expectation of their elected representative, their MLA, they receive their greetings by some type of a BlackBerry message or a voice recording or, you know, sending them a video on an iPhone. I don't think that replaces the kind of interaction that constituents are expecting. I fear that sometimes the movement towards technology like this will maybe serve to further disenfranchise voters and ultimately weaken

our political system and the way that we do representation. Occasionally there is new technology that evolves that helps us communicate, but it also always comes with some challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe that Albertans would like to have a say in how their tax dollars are being spent. They can do that through this type of enhanced representation, and this government is not going to deny any Albertan that right. Bill 28 will bring Alberta's electoral boundaries and divisions up to date with its population and reflect Alberta's and Albertans' current needs.

The most important point is that this bill will add four more electoral divisions, which means equitable representation for all Albertans. This is a step that has not been taken in over 20 years and is one that is needed now. Bill 28 reflects the Electoral Boundaries Commission report as amended in the Assembly. The consultation and thought that went into this document are admirable, and I would like to take this time to thank the commission for their hard work.

With that, I'll conclude my comments, Mr. Speaker, and I urge all members of the Assembly to support this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of comments or questions. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

10:20

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Member for Red Deer-South I have this question. I heard a speaker from the government caucus on the previous bill, on CO₂ sequestration, complaining about the \$5 billion deficit that we have in this province and expressing a great deal of worry about having this \$5 billion deficit. If that is the case, how can this government member now turn around half an hour later and say that we can afford to expand the size of this Assembly from 83 seats to 87 seats? Shouldn't we be saving money and reducing the size of this bloated Executive Council?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Dallas: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker, and thanks, hon. member, for the observation and the question. I need to be a little careful with my math here, but I think that about 0.01 per cent of budget expenditures are involved in support of this entire Assembly. I know that there are some expenditures that are incremental that would perhaps be added to the Assembly in terms of the addition of four members, but I think the question is not: how much is the expenditure, and, you know, is it appropriate or not? I think we simply need to ask Albertans: what's the price of having a democracy that provides them with the representation that they're looking for?

Mr. Speaker, I think the answer to that would be that Albertans would resoundingly tell us that they have an expectation that that expenditure, however small, however large it is, is the price of having an effective democracy in Alberta, and it would be a priority for Albertans.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you. In terms of fairness of representation do you think it's fair that there are some rural constituencies under 30,000 and that we have Airdrie-Chestermere with 65,000? How is that fair?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Dallas: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That's a great question, actually, from the Member for Calgary-Varsity, and I'd be happy to address that. I guess one needs to distinguish between the terms "fair" and "equal." I would suggest to you that Red Deer-South, while it's not quite the size in terms of the number of constituents of Airdrie-Chestermere, it is, in fact, prior to the adjustments that are proposed, one of the largest constituencies in Alberta. Even though I will deeply miss the loss of some constituents that are proposed to move to Red Deer-North, it will still be one of the largest constituencies. What I heard after the interim report was filed and the commission came back to Red Deer: throughout our community was a desire to make sure that the constituency was aligned such that representation was distinctly urban and was provided from the city as opposed to some of the opportunities to move the boundaries here and there.

As I alluded to earlier, Mr. Speaker, I know that some of these constituencies require virtually half a dozen hours to drive from one end to the other. There are some constituencies in our great province, in fact, where it's not even possible to drive to all of the constituents, and air travel and other modes of getting into remote communities are necessary. But that said, those Albertans are afforded and have every right to exactly the same privileges of meeting and interacting with and addressing their elected representative as any Albertan that happens to live in an urban area that has high population density.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, we have 35 seconds. The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Danyluk: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to dwell on that for just a second longer. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, when he was speaking, had talked about: it's how you represent your constituents. I just need to know from yourself, when you talk about representation, if you're taking into account access and opportunity for those individuals being able to see their representative?

The Deputy Speaker: The next hon. member to speak on the bill is the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we've spoken a lot on this bill, obviously, or on a few amendments on it, anyway, over the last little while. I'd like to sum up my arguments for why I cannot support this bill. We talked a little bit earlier about what I think is some clear political interference that went into the report, from the first to the final report, of the Electoral Boundaries Commission in certain ridings, so I can't support it for that reason.

I can't support it for the reason that I do not feel that this province needs four additional MLAs. I do not feel it's justified to have four additional MLAs. I think you could redraw the boundaries appropriately, even out the constituency populations as much as possible, and that would have been fine going forward. You know, I would have had more of a stomach for four additional seats had I felt that the role of an MLA as it pertains to his role as a voting member in this House was legitimate.

The Member for Red Deer-South talked about a meaningful role for MLAs, having more meaningful representation, I believe his words were. That's right; we do need more meaningful representation. When I sit here and I look at the other side – let's just take four bills and use them as an example. Bill 43 from last year, the agriculture marketing act I think it was, something like that, essentially the check-off bill, where we talked about whether the check-off was mandatory or not, that you have to allow choice: that

bill was passed. Now, however you feel about that bill, for or against it – I was in the caucus still, and I was for the choice. I supported the agriculture minister on that. That was my choice, and I voted that way in caucus and in this Legislature, and I stand by that choice.

I know for a fact that there were many, many, many members of that caucus, who I won't name because that's not fair to them, who clearly did not agree with that bill, and if they had had the freedom to vote on that bill, they would have voted against it. If you add up the people on this side of the House at that time and the opposition that were against it . . .

Some Hon. Members: Relevance. Relevance.

Mr. Anderson: How is this not relevant?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, please sit down. I just want to read something here. Standing Order 23(c) says: "persists in needless repetition or raises matters that have been decided during the current session." Just pay attention. Things have been decided already.

Mr. Anderson: We're cutting off democracy in this House. You know, I hope I can represent my constituency here. I hope I can do that. Maybe I can't even do that.

I'll talk about it again: meaningful MLAs, meaningful representation. If we're going to have four more MLAs, you need to have MLAs that are able to freely vote, not act like trained seals. I know for a fact that there are people on the other side of the House that continually vote for bills in this House that they vote against in caucus, or maybe they don't even vote in caucus. It depends if we have a vote, like with the human rights tribunal. You remember that vote that never occurred.

The point is that they vote against these things in one area, and then they vote for them in another area. That shows me, Mr. Speaker, that it is not meaningful to be an MLA in this House, and that is wrong. It is absolutely wrong. If we want to have meaningful representation in this House, we need to have free votes, period, on every piece of legislation.

When you go into this House, you are the people's representative. Each and every one of us is the people's representative. We're not loyal to parties, or we sure shouldn't be. We're not loyal to donors or special interests or lobbyists. We're not loyal to the Premier. The reason we're not loyal to those people – we can be loyal to them, but they're not the ones that we are most loyal to. The people that we are most loyal to, most accountable to in this House should be the people that we represent, first and foremost. Now, if that loyalty lines up with loyalty to the Premier and loyalty to the party, great, but if it conflicts, our duty as members is to vote for what is in the best interests of our constituents, plain and simple. That principle has been entirely lost by this PC government. Look at the lack of democracy and bullying . . .

10:30

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Point of order. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, please address the chair.

Also, hon. Government House Leader, you have something to say?

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I rise on a point of order with respect to relevance, *Beauchesne's* 459. The point on relevance is very clear. The question before the House right now is Bill 28, and Bill 28 has a very succinct purpose.

Mr. Anderson: Why do we need more MLAs? That's the question I'm asking.

Mr. Hancock: The hon. member shouts out: why do we need more MLAs? I would point out to him that that was decided when the bill was passed setting up the Electoral Boundaries Commission. The boundaries commission was established under a different act of the Legislature, and that act directed them to use 87 seats. So they had no choice. They came back with their report with 87 seats.

The effect of the Electoral Divisions Act that's before us today has nothing to do with whether there are 83 or 87 seats. It has nothing to do with what the hon. member is talking about. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader has the floor.

Mr. Hancock: It has nothing to do with any of the things that he was talking about. That's a very interesting topic, and I would love to debate that hon. member on his topic about his particular relevancy in the process, how he can make a difference in the process, what advocacy inside a caucus and outside the caucus looks like. All of those things are very important things. How parliamentary democracy works is a very important topic, and I'd love to discuss that with him.

But what we're discussing tonight and the rules of the House relating to what we're doing tonight is the Electoral Divisions Act, an act which puts in place the report, the effect of the report, which was adopted by this House in a motion. All this act really is about is what the boundaries are for those 87 seats.

The hon. member may want to stray a little bit and talk about 83 to 87 seats. Nobody objected when he did that before in committee or anywhere else. Nobody objected to that. But when he talks about caucus and being part of a caucus, when he starts to make insinuations about what happened and what didn't happen when he was in caucus . . . [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader has the floor.

Mr. Hancock: . . . forgetting any of the morals and ethics that he might have had as a member of a caucus in terms of what gets discussed, knowing and understanding that when he makes insinuations about what happened in a caucus, other members of the caucus will not respond to those because they have honour and integrity and understand that being involved in a caucus means that sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. In fact, in this business if you bat .360 consistently, you ought to go to the hall of fame. He should understand that, but he doesn't seem to understand that, and he wants to drag it into debate on bills in the House on issues that have no relevance to what he's talking about. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that you call him on the point of order with respect to relevance.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, you have something to say about this point of order? Go ahead.

Mr. Anderson: It is so absolutely amazing to me that we're sitting here after all of the bullying, after shutting down debate – shutting down debate – in this Legislature with time allocation, shutting it down, the undemocratic nature of this, and this member continues to call points of order saying, “Oh, you know, relevancy, relevancy” when we just allowed the Member for Red Deer-South, the Member for Red Deer-North to talk on this exact same subject. You know what? Great. That's great. I support that. That's democracy. That's debate. I've enjoyed the speeches.

I get up, and I make the government leader a little bit uncomfortable because he knows full well that I'm telling the truth, so he gets up, and he calls another point of order. Now, he can disagree with me, and I ask him to stand up and disagree with me when it's his turn to talk and tell me how parliamentary democracy works in his world. But in my world an MLA represents his constituents first. I wanted to make that clear as a justification for having four additional MLAs under this bill. I think that is not only relevant; it is pertinent to everything that has happened in this session during the last three weeks.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, the chair heard both sides of the point of order. What I have just read before regarding Standing Order 23(c): “needless repetition or raises matters that have been decided during the current session.” I would like to call on the hon. member to focus on Bill 28. Of course, you are free to represent your constituents' views and any other views of your constituents, but tonight we're talking about Bill 28. You still have time, so stay on Bill 28.

Mr. Chase: With regard to the point of order, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I already ruled on it. Please sit down. Thanks.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Debate Continued

Mr. Anderson: Maybe we should have another point of order. Let's do it. This government has once again shown that they are absolutely unwilling to allow free votes in this Legislature. They do it on every single bill, Mr. Speaker, every single one. They do it again and again and again. Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, please sit down. Okay. Let's take a second to calm down and think. We are here to debate on Bill 28, and we have a limit of two hours to debate.

All right. I would like to remind the hon. member to stay on Bill 28. That's the subject matter today.

An Hon. Member: Let's hear about Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. Anderson: Chestermere-Rocky View: let's hear about that, then.

You know what? I had a much higher level of respect for the House leader over there until this session. I thought he was a democrat. He is not.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, Bill 28.

Mr. Anderson: Chestermere-Rocky View. On the debate on Bill 28. One of the most ridiculous examples of not only the gerrymandering but of government interference that was put into this bill and put into the final report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission

was, as I said earlier, the way that Airdrie-Chestermere was split up into many different constituencies. Now, electorally that did not hurt me, and it won't hurt me in any way, shape, or form, but I know very much that the people in my riding, especially in Chestermere, were very, very displeased. They put their input in there, as did Airdrie, as did many other stakeholders, and then the first report came out. That first report reflected the input of what the folks in my riding had said. Then afterwards, after the Deputy Premier sent his political, interfering letter . . .

Mr. Horner: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: There's a point of order to be addressed right now.

Point of Order

Allegations against Members

Mr. Horner: Standing Orders 23(h), (i), and (j). The hon. member has referred to allegations of gerrymandering. He has referred to political interference in a report which we've already decided on in this House. It's pretty obvious that his vision of democracy is only if it agrees with what his vision is, and it's pretty obvious that if the vote doesn't go his way, it's not democratic. We saw that when he was in our caucus, and it's obvious that he's got a revisionist view of history, as well.

10:40

Certainly, we're here talking about Bill 28. He's obviously taunting the chair. He's obviously trying to upset the proceedings of this House this evening. He's doing a good job of it. But, Mr. Speaker, he's not on the topic of the bill at hand, which is the democratic process and the parliamentary process in this Legislature. In his area of life, wherever he is, perhaps it isn't, but in this House, Mr. Speaker, he should be on the bill, on topic.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, stay on the bill. Rather than talking about individuals, let's discuss the bill which is on the table.

Mr. Anderson: You know, Mr. Speaker, democracy in this Legislature is dead for the time being. Dead. These folks over here are bullies. They are fearmongers. They hate dissent. They hate debate. They don't like people telling them what they . . . [interjections] No. This is on the point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I want to repeat again. Talk about the bill. Don't talk about this guy or these people and so on. Talk about the bill, please.

Debate Continued

Mr. Anderson: I do not support Bill 28 because it stems out of a corrupted process, and I will not support a bill that stems out of a corrupted process. It is corrupt in every single way, and I will not in any way support a bill that has come about because of an interfered-with process. I'm not even going to say who interfered with it. We'll just let the public make the connection. But I would say that it was interfered with by some unknown force, and I don't think that that was proper. I know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore feels the same way about how his riding was effectively, in my view, gerrymandered. Is that also subject to a point of order? No? Good.

Again, it's amazing that the only people in this House that don't understand how ridiculous, how undemocratic, how pathetic they look are the people over there. I know that Albertans are ashamed

of them and disappointed in them. I can only say, Mr. Speaker, that in 12 months this will be resolved, and there will be a lot of people not on that side and a lot of disappointed faces over on that side.

I will conclude debate since I cannot speak on anything actually relevant to this bill because I have been silenced by that group, who doesn't want to hear dissent, who doesn't want to hear anything but their own voices because they care only about themselves and clinging to power and will do so with everything they have left in their hands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks on 29(2)(a).

Mr. Doerksen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is on 29(2)(a), and I do have some questions for the hon. member. I hope that you will allow me enough time to frame those questions because I have more than one. I have heard, as have other members in the House, some rather pompous comments about political interference, lack of democracy, and also statements about loyalty. I would ask the hon. member across the way, first of all, if the mandate and the carrying out of the Electoral Boundaries Commission did not in fact highlight the work of democracy in consultation with Albertans.

There were some comments made earlier with regard to potential political interference with regard to some rural ridings and some of the ways that they were divided up. If I look at the mandate that the commission was to work under, I believe that they actually responded very well to some of the comments of Albertans. In fact, in the Strathmore-Brooks constituency there was not an initial public consultation as there was in many other parts of the province. When you look at what the interim report spelled out, it actually divided that particular riding into more diverse disconnections than most other ridings in the province. In fact, when Albertans heard the interim report, 37 per cent of responses to the interim report came from the Strathmore-Brooks constituency. [interjections] Do I have the floor, Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks has the floor. [interjection] Hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks has the floor.

Mr. Doerksen: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I would ask the member across the way if he's actually read some of the comments that were put to the commission following the interim report and the response particularly from residents of Strathmore-Brooks, who made up 37 per cent of the responses to the interim report. My estimate of that – and I would ask the member if he wouldn't agree to some extent – is that maybe this is actually a triumph of democracy and consultation with Albertans. I would suggest – and it's reflected in the comments of residents of several constituencies and particularly the constituents of Strathmore-Brooks – that, in fact, they didn't respond to the initial invitation for responses because the riding that they resided in actually met the mandate that the commission had been given with regard to how they were to divide up the province.

To me, when I look at what the commission actually did, I would suggest that it is a triumph for democracy and consultation because if you look at what happened with regard to the whole mandate that they had, we know that the most rapid growth and the biggest population variances were either in or around our two largest cities of Calgary and Edmonton. There's no question that when constituencies are changed or altered, that creates some concern for residents, but it would just be logical, to my estimate – and I would ask the member if he wouldn't agree with that – that that's where

some of the most significant shifts would take place and that in the more rural and diverse areas of the province that, in fact, are divided by natural boundaries like rivers and that kind of thing, similar to what happens in Strathmore-Brooks, we would try and it would be a logical effort to listen to what Albertans had to say and maybe adjust plans as a result of that.

I can say as a representative of members of my constituency that they felt the response to the interim report that came out as part of the final report actually left them feeling that democracy worked in this province and that there was a consultative process that could change, that when the interim report came out, it wasn't fixed in stone, that there was a process for that to be changed and that that process actually worked. One of my questions to the member across the way is: does he not agree that that's a plausible situation?

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I've used up the time.

The Deputy Speaker: The five minutes for Standing Order 29(2)(a) is up.

The next hon. member to speak is the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, you wish to speak after, right?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, please.

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

Ms Woo-Paw: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to be able to rise and speak today on Bill 28, the Electoral Divisions Act. I'm well aware of the purpose of this bill, as I'm sure all members of this Legislature are after our previous discussion and debate over its content and purposes. Bill 28, of course, sets out the names and boundaries of Alberta's electoral divisions.

I want to take this opportunity to commend the commission on its very fine work. As most, if not all, of us here already know, the commission was established in July 2009. It submitted its interim report as required on February 24, 2010. The commission then held an additional series of public hearings and considered well over 500 written submissions commenting on the interim report. The commission was required to submit its final report within five months of submitting the interim report. The commission completed its mandate basically in full when it submitted its final report.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to recognize here the importance of the input of many Albertans who took part in the commission's process. Commissions such as the Electoral Boundaries Commission that have a mandate to hear from Albertans in some respects are only as effective as the people they hear from and the submissions they make. In this case I think most members of this Assembly would agree that the commission did a credible and thorough job in this report, and I think that speaks well to the quality of the submissions Albertans made.

10:50

With that in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many Albertans who took the time and trouble to share their thoughts and opinions with the commission. Public contribution to work such as the commission's is vital to a successful, full result, and in this case Albertans have through their submissions demonstrated once again their commitment to this province.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to the individuals and organizations that have provided submissions and made presentations to the Electoral Boundaries

Commission. I know one of the constituents of Calgary-Mackay spent many, many, many hours studying the history of the riding, the demographic makeup, the changes over time as well as comparing our constituency with other ridings in preparation for a very comprehensive submission to the commission. I also want to thank the members of the Calgary-Mackay association for also preparing and submitting a report to the commission.

I want to thank all the fine citizens in the Calgary-Mackay constituency for their valuable participation in this important public process. This kind of active civic engagement is absolutely critical in helping to sustain a high level of democracy, of democratic life in our communities and society.

Mr. Speaker, the contribution of Albertans symbolizes the importance of the commission's work to ensure Alberta remains democratically representative and effective. Proper and appropriate representation on the electoral map is fundamental to the proper and effective functioning of any democracy. For that to be true in Alberta, as has been observed already in this Assembly, it is necessary to ensure the electoral map continues to properly reflect the province's changing population distribution.

As a result of the fine efforts of the commission, the following name changes are proposed: first, Dunvegan-Central Peace to Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley; Calgary-Acadia from Calgary-Egmont; Calgary-Greenway from Calgary-Montrose; Calgary-Hawkwood is added; Calgary-Klein from Calgary-North Hill; Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill from Calgary-Nose Hill; Calgary-Northern Hills from Calgary-Mackay; and Calgary-South East is also added.

The electoral map must also continue to reflect changing population densities as well as community interests and other factors, as the commission's report explains. Here I'm quoting directly from its final report.

The 2006 Canada Census resulted in an Alberta population of 3,290,350.

It was identified that three Indian reserves were incompletely enumerated, with the result that

the provincial population was adjusted by 7,288 persons, based on data provided by Alberta Aboriginal Relations. Therefore, the total Alberta population to be used by the Commission based on the Census in recommending the boundaries of electoral divisions is 3,297,638. The issue of net undercoverage in the 2006 Canada Census, in the view of the Commission, has been addressed by the use of the subsequent Alberta Municipal Affairs information and, in any event, could not accurately be allocated to electoral divisions.

This was the number used for the householder

distributed in September 2009 and subsequently adjusted with more recent sources of data.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's worth noting that the commission's report also confirms it considered more recent population information as follows:

Alberta Municipal Affairs annually publishes an Official Population List. When the Commission began its work preparing this Interim Report, the 2008 list was available and several of the larger urban municipalities had announced results of their 2009 municipal census. The Commission decided to use the additional population information to determine a "provincial quotient" and subsequently in recommending electoral division boundaries in municipalities where the additional population information was available in a format that permitted its use for these purposes.

The report goes on to say that

the Official Population List identifies that 142 municipalities and the 8 Metis Settlements, representing more than 85% of the total provincial population, have taken a census subsequent to the 2006 Canada Census.

Ultimately, the commission determined:

The population of Alberta has increased by 258,945 since the adjusted 2006 census of 3,297,638. The total population being considered by the commission is 3,556,583.

Using all of this information, the commission found that the average population per electoral division is 40,880.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear from the above that not only did the commission do a remarkable job in accurately assessing the population figures on which to base its work; I think it also shows that the commission performed its work with great attention to detail. I for one am pleased to stand today and thank them for that.

I want to stay with the subject of the commission's work around arriving at an accurate assessment of Alberta's population. To do that, I will again quote from the commission's final report.

The Commission opted to use updated information because the 2006 Canada Census data are more than three years old. The authoritative source for updated information is the Official Population List published by Alberta Municipal Affairs. This list is normally published in early November. There was broad-based support for using updated data.

In order to meet its legislated deadlines, the Commission held its initial round of public hearings in late September and early October. In order to inform the public and provide time to prepare submissions, the information Householder was distributed in September to all Alberta households. At that time, the only population information available was the 2006 census information. Many people making submissions invested a considerable amount of time in analyzing this data as part of preparing their submissions.

However, between the preparation of the Householder and the start of the public hearings, the Commission did receive 2009 municipal census information announced by the majority of the largest urban municipalities. The major effect of this was a significant increase in the quotient from that mentioned in the Householder, which consequently outdated the analyses in the submissions.

There were also considerable technical challenges in incorporating the updated population information into the electronic mapping program which is designed for use with census data that contains a greater level of geographic detail. This was a particular challenge where a municipality is located in more than one electoral division.

If future Commissions plan to use updated population information, it would assist persons wishing to make submissions if the Householder is published once the updated information has been incorporated into the population data so that there is a common data base.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think the above quotations indicate the scrupulosity with which the commission carried out its work. I think the quotations also speak to the commission's commitment to the accuracy of this work. Ultimately, I think both its scrupulosity and its commitment to accuracy demonstrate again why Albertans can be confident in the recommendations of the commission's final report.

Mr. Speaker, if I might add, the fact that the report can therefore be seen as so reliable is testimony to the integrity and commitment of the commission's members. I think it also speaks very well of the process Alberta uses to ensure balanced, effective, and fair representation on the commission. As we know, the commission was an independent body composed of five individuals. The task they took on was a huge one and one that must have seemed, or at least would have seemed to me, quite daunting. The fact that they fulfilled the commission's mandate and purpose within the allotted time frame is a credit to their efforts and abilities. I would once again like to offer my thanks to them officially on the record for the work they so ably accomplished.

11:00

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I feel obliged to address another

matter related to the commission's work, and it concerns remarks made recently by an hon. member of this Assembly. Some comments have been made that the amount of debate set aside for Bill 28 should be longer than six hours given its importance. Now, I want to make it very clear before continuing any further that I am a firm believer in sufficient and appropriate debate for any bill brought before this Assembly. I'm sure every hon. member who sits in this Legislature would agree with me that open debate and discussion in this Assembly is absolutely fundamental to the proper functioning of democracy.

Mr. Hinman: Mr. Speaker, a point of order. Relevance. I mean, really.

Ms Woo-Paw: I think it's safe to say that the people of Alberta expect no less from us.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, do you have a point of order?

Mr. Hinman: Yeah. There's no relevance here at all, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has the floor. Continue on Bill 28.

Ms Woo-Paw: Continue? Okay. I'll finish. Thank you.

Each of us here carries a responsibility to our constituents of being effective representatives on their behalf in the Legislature, and being effective representatives means allocating and using our available time wisely and to the best effect. I want to say, then, that the suggestion that Bill 28 requires longer than six hours of debate because of its nature suggests internal failure to understand the process that Bill 28 is the product of.

I already stated earlier how well I thought the commission did this work, how I was proud to thank the commission's members for their very thorough and meticulous work. I also thank Albertans for their contributions to the commission as it solicited comments and opinions and suggestions from around the province. In that regard, it's also worth noting that the commission did its work and heard from Albertans over the course of an entire year. The final report contains their recommendations based on their extensive work. As the members of the Assembly know, the process the commission went through to arrive at those recommendations as well as the very nature of the commission itself, at arm's length from government, and this Legislature's acceptance of those recommendations when they were presented means that, basically, the rationale for prolonged and protracted discussion and debate would be repetitive and redundant.

I have faith that the intentions of the hon. member who suggested longer than six hours for debate of Bill 28 are good and well meant. Nevertheless, I think it's also important that he recognizes that the wiser, most judicious course would be to have this Assembly debate Bill 28 using the current allotted time. That time is absolutely sufficient for a bill that is based on recommendations this Assembly has already accepted.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks for five minutes of comments or questions.

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize that in the last question I raised, I guess I took too much time.

I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Mackay for a very thoughtful contribution to the discussion around third reading of Bill

28. I would simply ask a question for clarification around the process that really makes up how the Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission carried out its mandate and the total aspect of what involves a changing of the electoral boundaries in this province. Part of that process involved work with the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and I think the member very adequately explained that work.

Part of that process is also consideration of the report here in the House. I think the member very adequately spelled out the length of time that this Legislature has taken to discuss the bill, to discuss the report, and to consider amendments to the bill. I think that's an integral part of what we've ended up with in the end and the bill that we will finally vote on. I just want a point of clarification from the member: if that was, in fact, her intention with regard to the extensive discussion that we've had with regard to this bill, please.

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

Ms Woo-Paw: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for this very, very excellent question. I wanted to profile the meticulous work that the commission had undertaken to not only hear from Albertans from all parts of the province, but they took the time also to look at the most updated data from the municipalities, which is critically important for a fast-growing, developing province like ours. The fact that they updated the data to ensure the ultimate distribution of the boundaries is important in ensuring that we have balanced and effective representation for our ridings.

So I want to thank the commission for their very thorough job and for taking the time to work it into the year-long process to ensure that they used the most updated data to ensure that the boundaries are designed and divided in a way that allows for the maximum effectiveness of representation.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening with great interest to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay as she was talking about the number of presentations that were made by her constituents in talking about the presentations that were made to the commission. I was wondering if she could expand on the piece about her constituents actually being a part of this very democratic process as we move through Bill 28.

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

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I was very pleased to see the kind of participation from the constituents of Calgary-Mackay. Not only did the Calgary-Mackay association participate, but we had individuals from the constituency who took a lot of personal time to do a lot of research. I think it's partly because in a riding like Calgary-Mackay, which is about 30 per cent above the average size of a constituency in this province and is growing at a very, very fast pace, people are very concerned about the level of representation for their interests, you know, in terms of having adequate representation to ensure that the educational needs, the health needs, the social services needs of the riding are adequately addressed. People felt very strongly that they needed to participate and have a voice in this process.

In fact, I'm also very pleased to say that what they recommended to the commission was the final recommendation from the commission in coming out with a new riding called Calgary-Northern Hills. So I'm sure that the constituents who participated in this process

appreciated the opportunity to have their voices heard and also to have their recommendations included in the final report.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the bill, followed by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to have an opportunity even though we're under the time restraints of closure on this bill. I can't imagine how democracy is served. I heard many people try to defend democracy and explain how precious it is in this province, yet we're under a closure motion twice with Bill 28.

Mr. Hancock: It's a time allocation motion.

Mr. MacDonald: No. It is a closure motion, hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, and you know it. You can call it what you want, but it's a closure motion.

We forget also that this process, Mr. Speaker, has been sped up by almost a complete year. If we were to look at the original legislation, it should be just a discussion on an evening like this on what the proposed commission should look into. But here we are because this is a government that wants the option of calling a quick election.

11:10

If we look at the 87 seats, we don't need that many, obviously. People are crying in here about the government deficit and, "What are we going to do about it?" and "Oh, my gosh; we have a \$5 billion deficit." Well, you start with small things like reducing expenditures for MLAs. We could have lots of use for that money, but that's not going to happen with this big majority. They want a bigger government.

Other jurisdictions work quite effectively. Their representatives work quite effectively with much larger constituencies – much larger constituencies – some with close to 100,000 constituents. They manage. They do well. I can't understand or accept the argument made, Mr. Speaker, that we need more and that more is better.

Now, Mr. Speaker, also, we have to recognize that there are other things with our election system that we should be discussing along with this idea of having 87 MLAs. Our own constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar has certainly been changed again. It's been changed radically each and every redistribution. It's odd how our strongest polls are chopped off, and we move on. But we do our best, and it has been a pleasure, I must say. I'm disappointed that if this bill becomes law, we are going to lose the fine communities of McCauley, Commonwealth, Riverdale. It was an honour and a privilege to represent those communities in this Legislative Assembly, and I will continue to do so. But that is an example of how our district was changed.

I went to one of the commission's meetings. I respectfully waited. There was a gentleman that was in a hurry, a Conservative from rural Alberta. He had commitments, so I let him make his presentation first over at the Edmonton inn. I listened with interest to his presentation.

I also listened with interest to His Worship Mayor Mandel, the mayor of Edmonton, make a very rational argument. He presented his case very well, as I thought several other individuals did, to ask respectfully that not only should the city of Edmonton get back what it lost in the last go-round with redistribution but that we get one additional seat. That was not considered by this boundaries commission, and of course Edmonton is underrepresented in this Assembly under the current mathematics. That's a fact. The mayor

made an argument. We made the same argument, but unfortunately the commission didn't see it that way. I know there's a delicate balance here, but this government discriminated against the city by taking the eraser to the electoral map in the last redistribution process and thinks that the city should be grateful for getting back what they took away in the first place.

Now, where should those seats be removed? Where there are significantly less people. We can put additional modest resources forward for those members, but there's no reason why urban voters and urban Albertans should be discriminated against. They're being discriminated against with this proposed legislation, that has been forced through this Assembly by closure.

We know this is not a democratic process. We know that on an occasion there was a member of this Assembly, a duly-elected member of this Assembly, who said twice that we were going to get four more seats. Four more seats. Guess what happened? The commission was struck. We get four more seats. That individual wasn't a member of this caucus, our caucus, or the New Democrat caucus. So figure it out. If people don't have confidence in this commission, you can see why. It was a predetermined outcome.

Mr. Hancock: The act was passed to make it 87. It wasn't predetermined. The Legislature determines that.

Mr. MacDonald: The Legislature. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, within an hour, by midnight, the law will be in effect. The process will have started that we're going to expand to 87 seats. In the precious time that I have, I'm not going to talk about the size of this government and the size of the Executive Council. We'll leave that for another time.

In our community of Edmonton-Gold Bar there are certainly reasons why the citizens are suspicious of this commission and this set-up in determining our boundaries. I'll go back to 2004. It wasn't the New Democratic Party, and it wasn't the Wildrose Party that had any trouble. It was the Conservative Party who had the unsavoury practice of asking homeless people to take out Conservative Party memberships for cigarettes and whiskey and get them to the nomination meeting. He laughs, but that's a historical fact. It's wrong, Mr. Speaker, but that's what happened.

What happened in the last election? The ballot box was taken from room to room in the Chinese Free Masons apartment complex, when it should have been placed at a table and people would come and vote if their names were on the list. If their names weren't on the list, then they would be sworn in. None of this happened.

Here we have two examples in the election of 2004 and again in 2008 of problems, major problems, major violations of the Election Act. This is what we should be talking about whenever we're talking about electoral reform and redrawing the map of this province. We should be talking about financial reform. Who gives what amount of money to whom? That's not: oh, we can't talk about that in this boundaries commission report. We can't talk about what the previous Chief Electoral Officer suggested to improve the voting process.

I would have to say, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, that we should not be accepting the recommendations of this commission. We should not be forced by the act of closure to restrict and limit debate on this redistribution of the seats. I think it's amusing that we would consider that six hours-plus is an adequate amount of time to publicly discuss this matter. I think we are incredibly disrespectful of the taxpayers and the citizens of this province. I have not had one person approach me in the last couple of years and say that we need more MLAs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: None like you.

Mr. MacDonald: No, hon. minister of labour. What they have said to me is: why doesn't the minister of labour ensure that we have enough nurses trained to work in our emergency rooms? Why does the advanced education minister not have enough seats in our medical schools to ensure that we have enough doctors for both urban and rural Alberta? We don't have enough doctors. How come we can't afford hospital beds but we can afford more MLAs? That's what the citizens have told me that they would like to see accomplished by this Legislative Assembly, not the creation of more seats for MLAs.

In fact, they're very confused by the direction that this government has taken on this matter, very, very confused and very, very disappointed. Some have even suggested at the coffee shop in the Capilano Mall that this is a government that's completely out of touch. What the citizens, what the voters want is more emergency room doctors, more nurses to provide compassionate care. They want more teachers. They certainly do not want, no one has expressed, I'm disappointed to say, an opinion that they want more politicians in this province. They want politicians to work harder and ensure that the money that they contribute through their taxes is wisely spent. I can say that I have the view, as they do, that our money that we are making in a contribution to the Treasury is not being spent wisely by this government.

Thank you.

11:20

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister for Employment and Immigration.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity. I've been listening, actually, quite attentively. I managed to squeeze a word or two in between the member's debate, but what really troubles me – and maybe the member can explain it to me – is that a lot of insinuations have been made over the last couple of hours by the member from the WRA and now this member. One says that this whole process is a sham or is a joke, I believe was the term being used.

Now, this member more directly indicates that he feels that this commission was biased and that there was a foregone conclusion. Is he insinuating that Judge Walter was actually influenced by this government? He made comments about money exchanges, who gives money to him. Why don't the member and the other members have the fortitude and, instead of implying in roundabout ways, stand up and say what you're really saying? That's what you're saying. There's no other way of interpreting what you're saying, that Judge Walter was actually influenced by one or all members of this government. He was told what to do, and he simply tabled a report that this government told him to table. Is that what you're saying?

Somehow no one seems to have the fortitude in this House to stand up and accuse Judge Walter. We all know Judge Walter. He is probably one of our most renowned judges on the provincial bench, and the entire bench would be supportive of him. I imagine the entire bar of this province would be supportive of him. No one would have the fortitude to accuse the judge of it, and no one would definitely say that outside of this House, yet you're standing up, members, and insinuating that this report is biased and influenced by this government.

Let's be honest. This report was written and signed by this particular judge. If you have a problem with the process, if you have a problem with the report, what you're really doing is accusing the

judge. Have the fortitude, have the honour to stand up in the House and say that. Or more, go outside of the House and say that. I don't hear you saying that, and you won't do it. You don't have what it takes to do that. You're just making insinuations, hoping to score some cheap political points, and you know that it's wrong. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has the floor.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, Mr. Speaker, speaking of cheap political points, that's a cheap political trick right over there. At one point in his political career he won his seat by three votes through judicial inquiry, and he had to go three times through the courts to hold onto the seat.

No one, Mr. Speaker, no one talked about the commission. What we said, if he had been listening and not chatting with his colleagues, was that one hon. member of this House who is not a member of that caucus, not a member of our caucus, nor is that individual a member of the New Democrat caucus, said publicly twice what the commission was going to decide before the commission even had one meeting. You figure it out, hon. member. If you want to go in the gutter and you want to have all these innuendoes and these speeches, you go right ahead. You go right ahead. [interjections]

Thank you.

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

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister has the floor.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I listened attentively to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I never agree with a lot of what he has to say, but I really take exception to one thing that he had to say, and that was his comment about homeless people being influenced. Homeless people are entitled to vote just like any one of us. We have a homeless identification program, but even with that, you don't actually need identification to vote. I really take exception to this member's comments that they can be easily influenced or somehow that people are inappropriately abusing homeless people. I think it's ridiculous. Maybe he'd like to retract these statements.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I have to give this member a history lesson. I don't know how much time I have left. It was the PC Party, when they were determining which candidate in 2004 they were going to nominate in Edmonton-Gold Bar. The PC Party had to overturn the decision that they made in a community hall because the party members did it wrong. You took people off the street, you promised them money, you promised them cigarettes, and you promised them liquor if they would take a PC card and go to a community hall and vote. It's you, sir, that should apologize and your party that should apologize to the homeless people. It had nothing to do with me. It's your party and how it's run, and it was run corruptly. Sorry.

Mr. Denis: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, you have the floor.

Mr. Denis: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm rising on a point of order here. This makes allegations against every member of the government caucus that are completely unfounded. This member is out of order.

Mr. MacDonald: There's no citation there. Mr. Speaker, again to the hon. member: before you rise in this House and bring this matter up again, please review the unsavoury history of your PC party in our constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, if there's any time left . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired] There's no time left.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, there's no time left. You are right, hon. member.

I hesitate to interrupt the hon. members here, but pursuant to Government Motion 27, agreed to on December 1, 2010, I must now put the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:27 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Berger	Fawcett	McFarland
Bhardwaj	Fritz	McQueen
Bhullar	Goudreau	Olson
Campbell	Griffiths	Quest
Dallas	Groeneveld	Renner
Danyluk	Hancock	Tarchuk
DeLong	Horner	Vandermeer
Denis	Jablonski	Weadick
Doerksen	Leskiw	Woo-Paw
Elniski	Lukaszuk	

Against the motion:

Anderson	Hinman	Pastoor
Chase	MacDonald	

Totals: For – 29 Against – 5

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

11:40 Recognition of Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services

Mr. Hancock moved that the Assembly recognize the work of Mrs. Louise Kamuchik, Clerk Assistant and director of House services, on her last evening sitting.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your indulgence, just prior to moving adjournment, I would like to beg the indulgence of

the House in a motion, if I may, because tonight is, I believe, the last night that we are to be served in this House by Louise Kamuchik. [Standing ovation]

Mr. Speaker, it is perhaps fitting that today, being her last day, we sit until 11:40. Louise has been in this House, I think, for four late, overnight session-type sittings and has put in years of service with a fair, impartial, and very friendly demeanour. She's been most helpful. I've developed an immense respect for her over the 13 years that I've been here. This House has been very, very well served, as have the people around her.

The Deputy Speaker: I think our Government House Leader just moved that motion about Louise.

Mr. Chase: Mr. Speaker, may I speak to the motion?

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you.

J'apprécie beaucoup tout ce que vous avez fait pendant vos années de travail dans cette Assemblée. Nous, nous allons vous manquer. Ma femme et moi, nous avons apprécié tout ce que vous avez accompli dans votre tour de la Ville de Québec. Merci beaucoup pour votre service pour tous les Albertains.

[Motion carried unanimously]

Mr. Hancock: With that, Mr. Speaker, I would move that this House do now adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:42 p.m. to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

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