



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday, February 23, 2011

Issue 2

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

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

Fourth Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 23, 2011

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Welcome back.

Let us pray. From our forests and parklands to our prairies and mountains comes the call of our land. From our farmsteads, towns, and cities comes the call of our people that as legislators of this province we act with responsibility and sensitivity. Grant us the wisdom to meet such challenges. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we begin the Routine of the day, just a few brief comments with respect to three housekeeping matters. First of all, I'd like to bring to everyone's attention a few slight modifications in the rotation of questions and members' statements. The agreement reached amongst House leaders on the rotation of questions in October of 2010 continues, with the only change being that the Official Opposition is entitled to the 19th question on day 4, which means that they have that position, should we reach it, on days 2 and 4 of our rotation.

Secondly, the Member for Calgary-Currie, who was identified as an independent last session, is now the sole member of the Alberta caucus, but his entitlement to questions and members' statements remains the same. As this is day 1 in our rotation, he will be entitled to the sixth question today.

With respect to members' statements, House leaders agreed to assign the second member's statement each day to opposition members but did not specify the rotation. Attached to the Speaker's procedural letter to members of the Fourth Session of the 27th Legislature, dated February 18, 2011, was a projected sitting days calendar, which contains in highlighted yellow the caucus that is entitled to the second member's statement each day. Anyone wishing a copy of this calendar can contact my office or the bills and *Journals* clerk. No one has contacted the Speaker's office to suggest an alternative rotation, so the one provided will be followed.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour and a privilege for me to introduce a number of students and parents and teachers from the Iron Ridge junior campus in Blackfalds. Today we have a total of 63 visitors: 59 students and their teachers Mrs. Ashley Kovitch, Mr. Bill Carter, Miss Sara Duncombe, who is a student teacher, and a parent helper, Mrs. Mary Dawn Eggleton. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you a group of students from my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie from Meyonohk elementary school. The students are participating here in the School at the Legislature, and I had the opportunity to

meet them yesterday afternoon in the rotunda. I wish them a very informative week. At this time I would like to ask the students; their teacher, Ms Allison Sylvester; Alishia Michalenko, who is a student teacher; and all of the volunteers to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions today. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 43 of Alberta's brightest and best students from l'école J.E. Lapointe school in the beautiful community of Beaumont in my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont-Devon. These 43 bright young leaders of tomorrow are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Brigitte Marshall and Mrs. Danielle McCallion. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly several special guests joining us today from the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta. They are seated in the members' gallery. With us today we have Dr. Fred Otto, P.Eng., a former dean of the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Alberta and past president of APEGGA; Dr. Gordon Williams, P.Geol., past president of APEGGA; Mr. David Rumbold, P.Eng., who served as the chair of APEGGA's Act, Regulations and By-laws Committee for a number of years; and Ms Pat Lobregt, APEGGA's manager of executive and external liaison. I would also like to introduce a senior member of the Employment and Immigration department staff, Mr. Adrian Pritchard, who is also joining our guests. He is the director of professions and occupations. I would ask that our guests, seated in the members' gallery, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Legislature my very supportive wife, Sherry Drysdale, and a very close friend, Terri Head. It gives me great confidence in the future of our province when I see young people such as Terri showing leadership in our community. Some of her involvements are as campaign director for United Way, a board member for the Grande Prairie ski hill, involvement in the Grande Prairie Stompede Association, and she has been a member of the winning team of the ladies provincial hockey championship for the last two years in a row. I'd like to think she learned all these skills by being involved in 4-H while she grew up. I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members a delegation of concerned parents from the town of Morinville. I will ask my guests to please rise as I say their names: Mrs. Donna Hunter, Mrs. Marjorie Kirsop, Mrs. Jessica Logan, and Mr. David Redman. My guests have come here today in support of a secular public education option in Morinville. Please offer them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Members' Statements

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

### Heritage Classic Hockey Game

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like millions of kids clear across the country I have my dad to thank for my love of hockey. When I was a toddler, he built a rink in our backyard for everyone in the neighbourhood, and through my youth he coached our teams. We went from pond hockey to international tournaments to charity events on NHL ice. My wife, Jen, and I are now proud to pass on these traditions to our beautiful boys, Dawson and Evan.

Similar stories are told across the province. I'd like to just share a few examples. Malcolm Sills, Colin Patterson, and Perry Berezan orchestrated the Flames alumni charity three-on-three event for an entire decade. Pat Grogan and his crew organized the third annual outdoor tournament last month, with proceeds going to the Millarville community school. It was 37 below on the first night, and the first time the puck hit the post, it shattered, so the pieces now have a permanent place on the trophy.

This past weekend the Calgary Flames' president, Ken King, and his entire organization hosted the extremely successful Heritage Classic. Ken appreciates that the league chose Alberta as the host of the only two outdoor NHL games ever played in Canada. He's been quick to honour Edmonton for their efforts eight years ago and is eager to thank Calgary's hockey fans and the McMahon Stadium Society as well as the Calgary Stampeders.

The game was played outdoors but telecast in 3-D TV, and the entire hockey world focused on Calgary and Alberta. The immediate economic boost was huge, and the tourism benefit will be enjoyed long into the future. Over 41,000 fans braved the cold as the Flames shut out the Canadiens 4 to nothing. Over the course of a week hockey was celebrated at all levels, from current pros to alumni to junior to the general public. Most of all, Mr. Speaker, Albertans had fun, and I thank all who continue to build invaluable community spirit through the great game of hockey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### 1:40 Workers' Compensation Exemptions

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The foundation of the modern workers' compensation system is the Meredith principle, which basically holds that all workers are entitled to compensation in the case of workplace injuries. In exchange, workers lose the right to seek redress through the courts. What many Albertans may not realize, however, is just how many workers are excluded from the protections of the workmen's compensation system in Alberta.

According to Employment and Immigration's annual report on occupational diseases and injuries the provincial Workers' Compensation Board extends coverage to 80 per cent of Alberta's workforce, a figure that is consistent going back a number of years. That means that 20 per cent, or one-fifth, of the province's workforce, approximately 40,000 Albertans, are not covered by WCB.

The workmen's compensation regulation provides a list of exemptions as schedule A. The list of exempted industries goes on for five and a half pages. Two hundred occupations and industries fall outside of our workers' compensation system. Everything from operating a golf course, running a laboratory, offering tutoring services makes the list. Insurance adjusters, optometrists, secretaries, bankers, charity employees: all and more are excluded. Of course, paid farm workers in this province continue to be excluded not only from Alberta's workmen's compensation laws but occupational health and safety laws as well. Alberta is alone in

this country when it comes to excluding paid farm workers from these laws.

Mr. Speaker, while there are certainly valid reasons for exemptions for certain occupations, the principles that workmen's compensation is founded on and should be founded on are inclusiveness and comprehensiveness for as many employed Albertans as is reasonably possible. This, unfortunately, is not the case today in Alberta. Neither should the 80 per cent of employees supposedly covered assume that they will be fairly compensated in the event of an injury. Severely reduced or denied WCB claims account for a significantly large portion of constituency casework. Alberta's hard-working men, women, and their families deserve better.

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

### Roots & Connections Online Resource

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month I had the privilege of speaking at the launch of the Roots & Connections online resource at NorQuest College in Edmonton. Roots & Connections is a new and innovative guide for teachers and volunteers teaching English in rural Alberta communities. Based on the existing English-language curriculum, this resource also includes materials to help teachers reach out to new immigrants as they try to settle into their new homes. The teacher becomes a cultural link between the learner and the new community.

The Roots & Connections resource has been piloted in four rural communities across Alberta with great success. One of the pilot community teachers said that the resource is easy to use and is a great way to introduce rural communities to new Albertans. Learners were able to ask for community services directly, talk to community members, and described gaining a sense of confidence over time.

Roots & Connections also has the potential to contribute to the development of stronger communities by increasing everyone's awareness about the cultural, social, and linguistic adjustments that newcomers need to make. Strong and diverse communities are an important part of the fabric of our province. I'm very glad to see that a resource such as this one is being built as it will strengthen our communities. The government of Alberta is a proud supporter of this innovative project to support new immigrants as they build roots in our beautiful province. Roots & Connections materials are available online at [www.norquest.ca](http://www.norquest.ca).

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Inner-city Community Renewal

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the city of Edmonton for their decision to form the recently announced Community Sustainability Task Force. The task force, which includes the hon. Minister of Education, will recommend solutions pursuant to the long-term sustainability and vitality of Edmonton's mature inner-city communities.

Mr. Speaker, the unique challenges faced by older inner-city communities are not that different in Edmonton than they are in Calgary. Many of these communities are located in my constituency of Calgary-North Hill. These communities have seen significant transformations as they have matured, including changing demographics and an aging built environment. The services and supports they require are in many cases different from those of newer communities as well as those of communities in smaller cities.

Managing these pressures and, likewise, embracing the opportunity to create a sustainable future for these communities must have the support of all levels of government but, most importantly, must engage community members in the process of reinvigorating their own communities. Too often the different levels of government and their various departments operate in silos without the necessary collaboration amongst themselves and with communities. Mr. Speaker, this tends to stifle innovative ideas developed by communities and discourage engagement. In the end these communities don't care what level of government is delivering services. They just want to be supported in transforming their community into the best that it can be for them and their families.

For mature, inner-city communities within my constituency these challenges are unique, and the solutions are not always obvious. The standard policy approach does not always work. Sometimes we have to reassess current practices and think creatively. Recognizing this fact is the first step to charting a course for the future of our inner-city communities. It is my hope, and I would encourage that the city council in Calgary keep a close eye on the task force findings and perhaps consider forming a similar task force to work in conjunction with Edmonton's initiative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### World's Longest Hockey Game

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and recognize and congratulate the participants in the world's longest hockey game, which finished on Monday. The game, organized by Dr. Brent Saik, took place continuously over a period of 10 days in Strathcona county. Dr. Saik lost both his father, Terry, and his wife, Susan, to cancer and has hosted this event in order to support the Alberta Cancer Foundation.

I'm sure many members are familiar with the game, which first took place back in 2003, and it's been held four times now. For 240 hours straight 40 players battled the elements in this outdoor game. This year, the longest game yet, the final score totalled 2,067 for Team White and 2,005 for Team Blue. The fundraising goal was set at \$1 million, and the proceeds from the game are going to a new linear accelerator, which is used in radiation treatment at the Cross Cancer Institute here in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the players, referees, and over 1,000 volunteers for their determination and selflessness. Many of them fought injuries, frostbite, and fatigue over the course of this game. The exemplary efforts by these individuals remind us of the outstanding citizens that reside throughout our province. Thanks again to the participants in the world's longest hockey game, and I hope it continues to be held in future years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Property Rights

**Mr. Hinman:** Thomas Hobbes is an early political theorist who shifted away from medieval thinking by asserting that to be legitimate, the government had to recognize individuals' rights and obtain the consent of the population. He feared disorder, though, to such a degree that he wanted the government to be all-powerful as long as they kept the people safe.

John Locke disagreed with Hobbes on one important point. He believed that we form government not only to keep us safe but to protect our property. In fact, he went so far as to say: "Govern-

ment has no other end, but the preservation of property." For John Locke, then, when a government is confiscating property, citizens have a right of revolution.

Frédéric Bastiat eloquently stated: "Life, liberty, and property do not exist because men have made laws. On the contrary, it was the fact that life, liberty, and property existed beforehand that caused men to make laws in the first place."

This check on the Crown's right to confiscate land started with the Magna Carta in 1215. It was established across society in Britain's glorious revolution of 1688. John Locke's political writings established that our inalienable rights, including the right to property, are considered by many as the philosophical foundation of constitutional democracy and were very influential in the French and American revolutions. In all these cases there was a political fight against the ruling class for thinking it didn't have to respect the property rights of individuals.

The government cannot extinguish property rights for the sake of pursuing some executive notion for good order. This truth was established 800 years ago in England, but this government still hasn't learned the lesson, which it clearly demonstrated in bills 19, 24, 36, and 50. Only a simmering revolution across the prairies this winter finally caught this government's attention, but like for James II in 1688 it's too late for this tired old dynasty to keep its hold on power. Albertans need not worry, though. A government that understands and will protect their rights is ready to take over.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Health Care Services

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is clearly out of touch with the priorities of Albertans. They're concerned about health care, yet the throne speech offered only fine sentiments and yesterday's news. Health care is continuing to crumble around this government's incompetence, yet their flagship bill is to establish an advisory council to expand Asian markets. To the Premier: how can the Premier say he's representing the interests of Albertans when the legislative priorities are so far removed from what Albertans need?

1:50

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to once again offer my sincerest appreciation to the hon. member as Leader of the Official Opposition. I know that he'll be stepping down at the end of this session as leader. I know that he brought a lot of passion to the Assembly on a daily basis, and I want to thank him for that.

**Dr. Swann:** This is question period. Let's try that again, Mr. Speaker. Let's try that again.

Can the Premier say he's representing the interests of Albertans when the legislative priorities are so far removed from the current crisis in health care that most Albertans care about?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, our priorities are correct. With respect to this premise, which I definitely disagree with, that the opposition keeps talking about, that there's a crisis in health care, there isn't. Clearly, 62 per cent of Albertans are very satisfied with the health care they're receiving. This is supported both by the Environics poll and also by the Health Quality Council. On the other part, in terms of the Asia council, ladies and gentlemen, we have to find a way of paying for future expenses and social ser-

vices and health care, and that's why we have to grow our economic pie.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, to the contrary, Mr. Speaker, the Environics poll did show that two-thirds of Albertans feel the health care system is in crisis, and management is the problem. We would like to see some acknowledgement of that by this government. Is the government so out of ideas that instead of fixing the crisis, the Premier is creating yet another council with plum political appointments in overseas offices?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to health, as I said again, it's not in crisis. I think 36 per cent or so of Albertans had concern about health. You know, that is a very small percentage given that constantly, every day in every doggone paper there is something negative about health care delivery in this province, yet thousands – thousands – receive health care in this province on a daily basis. At least 360 babies are born, cardiac surgery, the most recent innovative cancer treatment in the province of Alberta. You don't see one – one – of those stories in the newspaper.

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

#### Health Care Services Centralization

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, we have low expectations from the government for this session. While health care remains in crisis, the government has no plan to fix it, and the Premier has demonstrated his lack of understanding today. Health care is the Alberta Liberals' primary focus, and again two out of three Albertans believe the health care system is in a state of crisis. Better management is needed. Again to the Premier: how can Albertans believe that they will not have to wait 20 hours for the emergency room or fight to get a family physician when you have failed Alberta so far in the health care system?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, once again, you'll find that in some of the comments people are looking to the management. They are satisfied that with the five-year funding commitment that this government has made, Alberta Health Services can plan and can plan very well in terms of increasing the number of doctors, increasing the number of nurses. They already have opened up a considerable number of beds. Even our emergency docs said there is improvement in the emergency service, and it came from the original doctor, who said that we needed to improve. Now he said: there is improvement, and it's measured.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that just shows what you can accomplish in the short term by throwing money at problems. The centralization of health delivery does not work, and it's putting patients at risk. When will the Premier return to local control of the system so that the patients can get better care?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, this government is not going back to 200 hospital boards like we had in the past, annual conventions of 1,200 people getting together. Those were expenses that did not go to front-line services. Every dollar that was saved in terms of elimination of the health boards went to front-line services. Just go out and talk to the physicians. I visited the Maz centre. I was over at the diabetes centre. Every physician that I talked to said that there was improved health care delivery because of one health care board.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, I can't miss the opportunity to say, Mr. Speaker, that we overspent by over a billion dollars in the transition, Mr. Premier, and you well know that.

In addition, the government exploded the Cancer Board, the Mental Health Board, and AADAC two years ago and are only now putting forward an addictions, mental health, and cancer strategy. How can the Premier defend this mismanagement?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the \$1.3 billion that the member is referring to is simply the money that was given to Alberta Health Services after sitting down with them and talking and saying: what is the amount of money that will clearly reflect the needs and the population? We did that, and then we added 6 per cent to that amount plus paid off all of the deficits. That \$1.3 billion came from the operations of government reallocated to health care, which is the number one priority.

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

#### Secular Public Education in Greater St. Albert

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents in Morinville have no option but to send their children to Roman Catholic schools, where religion informs every aspect of what they learn. A group of concerned parents want a public secular education option in their town. To the Minister of Education: does the minister think it's acceptable that there is no option for secular public education for parents and students in an entire town?

**Mr. Hancock:** No, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that parents in Morinville filed an appeal with your office some four weeks ago, what is the status of this appeal, and will you be responding to the St. Albert school board in this regard?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, we have in the Greater St. Albert Catholic public board a bit of an anomaly in the province. It's the one area of the province where the minority faith board is actually the Protestant board and the public board is stated to be a Catholic board. But there's no question that as the public board they have an obligation to provide educational opportunities in all ranges to all students in that area. So while it is stated to be a Catholic board, it is, in fact, the overarching board for that area, and it has the responsibility to deal with the issues and concerns that have been raised.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regardless of the fact that this anomaly is only happening in one jurisdiction in Alberta, will your new education act contain a solution for these residents of Alberta?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, this isn't a situation for the education act. It's pretty clear in the School Act as it is now and will be clear in the education act going forward that local boards have roles and responsibilities and have to operate within and fulfill those roles and responsibilities. They have a responsibility in this area. As I understand it, they're engaged in discussion with the individuals involved. I've been apprised of those discussions. I've talked to the parties involved as well as the school board, and they will have



to come to an appropriate resolution to provide the appropriate schooling opportunities for those children.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

### Property Rights

**Mr. Hinman:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a long-standing debate over whether property rights exist apart from anything government might do or whether they are granted by a government that has to balance many considerations. Personally I agree with Frédéric Bastiat, who said: "Life, liberty, and property do not exist because men have made laws. On the contrary, it was the fact that life, liberty, and property existed beforehand that caused men to make laws in the first place." To the Minister of SRD: which perspective is driving the revisions that we've been promised to the existing land-use act?

**Mr. Knight:** No. Categorically, no. What's driving our decision to look at some change with respect to the legislation that we have in place, quite frankly, is listening to Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** Well, thank you. If the government agreed with Mr. Bastiat, as I do, the property rights are natural and could not be extinguished by any government act. Bills 19, 24, 36, and 50 would never have crossed their minds in the first place. To the Minister of SRD: do you and your caucus still believe, as you obviously did when you passed these laws, that property is something to be arbitrarily granted and revoked without legal recourse but at the discretion of cabinet and its political judgment?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, nothing in that dissertation has anything at all to do with the legislation that we're working with on behalf of Albertans. [interjections]

**Mr. Hinman:** Yeah, total disbelief in the problem.

This government is trying to have it both ways. They're trying to earn political points by fixing an unjust law without admitting that it's unjust laws. We've heard the SRD minister scold radio show callers for daring to suggest that these laws threaten property rights, but the government is now scrambling to present smoke-screen amendments. Alberta landowners deserve better than a half-hearted political fix-up. They deserve an apology. To the Minister of SRD: will he apologize on his government's behalf for forcing these iron-fisted laws on landowners and admit that the reason he is changing . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister. [interjection] The hon. minister.

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that Albertans would expect any kind of an apology from any government member or from the government itself for looking forward the next 30, 40, 50 years in order to put a proper plan in place to have a conservation effort, to have the plans that we need to build a stronger Alberta for Albertans' future.

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

2:00

### Health Care Services (continued)

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Without taking

away from my question, I would like to express my appreciation to the Premier for his service. [some applause]

**The Speaker:** You started 35 seconds ago. You've got about five seconds.

**Mr. Mason:** Nice try, you guys. Okay.

A poll last week showed that almost two-thirds of Albertans feel that our health care system is in a state of crisis. Albertans know they cannot trust this Tory government with their health care system. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that after nearly 40 years in power the PC Party has failed to meet the health care needs and expectations of Albertans?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the opposition leader – oh, and thank you for the kind remarks. I don't know if you mean them or not, but thank you.

With respect to health care in this province as I talked to other health ministers, talked to other Premiers, so many are looking to what we have already accomplished in the province of Alberta in terms of making a five-year commitment to health care and the dollars that we've approved.

Secondly, a five-year plan was put forward, that's already showing very positive results. The minister can explain further what's included in the five-year plan, both in cancer treatment and also in mental health.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, 60 per cent of those surveyed believed that it is mismanagement, not a lack of funding, that has created this crisis in our health care system. This government has let Albertans down. I'd like to ask the Premier if he thinks that after nearly 40 years in power starting a five-year plan four months ago is an adequate response to the crisis that Albertans are seeing in the health care system.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, you know, we can make all kinds of jokes about health care, especially about what you've seen lately in the papers, obviously: if it doesn't bleed, it doesn't lead. But I'm very confident that we have one of the best health care systems in Canada. It'll continue to improve: new technology, new medication, more people working in the system delivering health care. The new technology that has been introduced in Alberta is simply outstanding, having world-class researchers here doing research in virology, all of those things.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, the first mechanical heart was installed here at the Maz just a couple of weeks ago.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, that's wonderful, Mr. Speaker, but tell that to people in emergency rooms that are waiting there for 24 hours and not getting care.

I want to ask the Premier if he thinks that it's an adequate response to start now or start, rather, a few months ago to fix health care in this province when this government has been in power for nearly 40 years?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, this party has not been in power. You know, I don't know where he gets "power." We're here as the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party, that has had the trust and confidence of Albertans for it will be 40 years this year. But it's not power; it's a privilege and a responsibility that's given to us by the power of the vote of Albertans.

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

### Southwest Calgary Ring Road

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a very special natural area in southwest Calgary called the Weaselhead. While it's not in my constituency, it and the adjoining Glenmore park are close by, and many of my constituents enjoy both green spaces. You know, a city of more than a million people needs to hang onto all the green space it can, yet Alberta Transportation held an open house yesterday at which it proposed as one of several options to push the southwest ring road right through that green space. To the Minister of Transportation: will the minister assure us that this very, very bad option will be taken off the table?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have got to tell you that that open house last night was great. It was great to have a lot of people there. We don't usually get that many people out at open houses.

We're doing a study right now about where would be best for our provincial highway to run through the southwest side of Calgary. Mr. Speaker, we need that consultation, and we need the input of all those people, and I thank them very much for showing up. But there are absolutely no decisions being made yet at this time. It's all in a study situation.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: since my constituency is in the firing line for a lot of additional commuter traffic anticipated on that southwest ring road, that will cut through our communities to get to and from the downtown core, why does the functional planning study ignore that impact?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think we're ignoring any of the impacts. Right now we're open to all suggestions that are possible. I want to be clear. Again, there are no decisions that have been made yet on where it's going to go. It's very, very important for us to try to find a place for a provincial highway, but it's not our job to get rid of all of Calgary's congestion. That's a municipal responsibility, to plan their roads internally.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that was the sound of a buck being passed.

Here's a suggestion. Again to the minister: given the Lakeview Community Association's comment that "the sole conclusion that can be drawn from the [functional planning study] is that there are no good routes for a new eight lane expressway through south west Calgary" – I'll be glad to table that letter at the appropriate time – will the minister take all the options off the table for a thorough and proper rethink?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, we haven't got through the thinking we're doing now to go do a rethink. What we want to do is get all of our open houses done. We want to get all of the public input in there, and we have professionals looking after that.

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

### Oil Tanker Transportation on the West Coast

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very concerned about Bill C-606, a private member's bill in front of the House of Commons. This bill could seriously restrict our ability to transport western Canadian crude to Asian markets. If Bill C-606

is passed, it would ban oil tanker traffic off the north coast of B.C. This could have disastrous consequences for Alberta's economy and, in fact, western Canada. My question is to the Premier. What are you and the other western Premiers doing about this issue?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I share the member's concern about this private member's bill that's before the House of Commons. It has serious implications for Alberta but also for B.C. and Saskatchewan, limiting the growth of our economy, which will limit dramatically the export of our natural resources, oil and natural gas, to Asian markets. I have with Gordon Campbell and Brad Wall, three Premiers, signed letters to our Prime Minister and also to all of the leaders of the opposition. It is under Canada's New West Partnership logo, and we're all asking the Members of Parliament to not pass this bill because, once again, it will have serious implications for us. I'll table them at the most appropriate time.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental relations. This private member's bill unfairly targets western Canada. Meanwhile the eastern coast is not mentioned. What is our government doing to advance Alberta's interest to be able to export oil off the west coast of Canada and to make sure that western Canada is not unfairly treated while the eastern coast can carry on with its business as usual uninhibited and continue to receive shipments of oil from foreign countries like Venezuela?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right to be concerned about this, and our Premier has identified the first strategy that we have effected. Under the New West Partnership the three prairie provinces have 9 million people and \$550 billion in collective GDP. If this Bill C-606 was effective, we would cut ourselves off from markets of more than 4 billion people and several billion dollars of capacity.

First of all, the New West Partnership . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we have to proceed.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### PDD Administrative Review Report

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The administrative review of the persons with developmental disabilities program done by KPMG was delivered to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports in September. To the minister. It's been five months of hardship and anxiety that people on PDD have been holding their breath waiting for this report to be released. Will the minister table the report in the House before this week is through?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, the PDD administrative review was done by KPMG, and I have received the report. It's a very important report, but it is an administrative report. It will not affect the people who are receiving supports from PDD, but it will help to improve the system, to make it more efficient and to make it just a better system for delivering supports to our people on PDD. I do intend to release that report.

2:10

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, delivery will affect PDD people.

This report cost taxpayers \$185,000. What is the value to those vulnerable Albertans for those dollars if it's just going to be a paperweight on your desk? What is the progress of the review of this report within the ministry?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've said that I will release the report. It is a very important report. It's going through the process. We're studying the recommendations. We will have responses to the recommendations, and when it has gone through the process, I will be releasing that report.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. Well, I do believe that there probably should've been a time frame on when that report would be finished.

How can PDD-supported people believe that they're a priority for your ministry when this report has taken so long and they have no confidence that their budgets will not be cut?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, the PDD community is a very high priority. They're a very important community. It's a very sensitive community, and if we make changes to this community in the way we administer the program, not how the programs affect our PDD clients, then we want to make sure we do it right. So I don't think we should be rushing anything as important as this. And I will be releasing that report.

### Workplace Bullying and Harassment

**Mr. Benito:** Mr. Speaker, it would seem that we continue to hear more about workplace harassment and bullying. My question is to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. What options are available to a worker if he is being bullied or harassed by his employer or other co-workers?

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, bullying and/or harassment is not currently included in our employment standards and/or occupational health and safety legislation. However, that does not mean that this ministry would not get involved in a situation where such allegations occur. Any and all workers who perceive to have been harassed or bullied at the workplace are encouraged to work with their employers to resolve the issue but also are encouraged to call our employment standards office, where we can then advise the workers of the options that they may have to address that issue.

**Mr. Benito:** To the same minister: if the employee reports a complaint about bullying and harassment, what level of confidentiality will it have so that there will be no negative effect to the subject employee?

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All reports filed to this ministry and this government relative to complaints of employment standards are treated as confidential documents and fall under the purview of legislation in Alberta that protects the privacy of individuals who deal with the government of Alberta, the same as if such a report is filed further to any law enforcement agency. That information would be collected for the purposes of investigation and treated accordingly.

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

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: in the event workplace harassment leads to workplace violence, is that a point when occupational health and safety officials become involved?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, that would be. Yes. All employers in this province are required to do a risk assessment in their places of employment. If there are actions among employees that may lead to potential violence, that risk is to be assessed and treated accordingly. Also, there are provisions under the Criminal Code of Canada that would address any threats of violence or harm to one another. Lastly, if any of this harassment or bullying happens on the basis of prohibitive grounds under Alberta legislation, the Human Rights Commission can also look into the matter and investigate it accordingly.

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

### TALON Database

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Through FOIP this government has already given law enforcement expansive powers to collect investigative information, but the creation of TALON exceeds anything we've seen before. TALON allows law enforcement agencies to share speculation, gossip, and opinions as well as information on any citizen who's had contact with the police, including a witness. To the Solicitor General: what possible reason could the minister have for subjecting decent, law-abiding citizens to speculation and gossip by any user of the TALON system?

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I love it so much when the opposition reacts, outraged by rumours that they started in the first place. So let me get the story straight here. The collection of police information is already governed by the FOIP Act in this province and overseen by the Privacy Commissioner. This new database, which is not new, by the way, has been talked about since 2006, has been in budgets and capital plans ever since, and collects the same information we've always been collecting. The Privacy Commissioner has been involved in its development. We are now going to go through a privacy impact assessment.

**The Speaker:** We'll move to the hon. member now.

**Ms Blakeman:** An impact assessment which is not being released to the public, by the way. And these are combining a number of databases together. That is for the first time.

Back to the Solicitor General: will private security personnel have access to this TALON database?

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, reacting to another rumour that they started. The privacy impact assessment will, in fact, be released to the public, and we said that to the media already.

Back to the original reason. Any review of a serious criminal case – the Bernardo review, for example, recommended first that police agencies need to share information in order to protect public safety and do better police work. That's what we are reacting to for the safety of our communities in Alberta.

**Ms Blakeman:** Didn't answer the private security question.

Okay. Another question. Back to the Solicitor General. In the 1990s parents were encouraged to get their children fingerprinted as a safety measure. I'd like to know from the Solicitor General if those prints will be part of the TALON system.

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, the depths that this member is attempting to go to to garner fear in the population out there are quite astounding. The fact of the matter is that we're collecting the same information that we've always collected, governed, as it always was, by the FOIP legislation. The privacy impact assessment, the member knows very well, will identify who can and who can't access the database. All these questions will be answered and publicly released.

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

### Red Seal Certificates

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been brought to my attention by some of my constituents from Edmonton-Ellerslie that Albertans who have recently graduated to become journeypersons have not had their red seal certificate signed in spite of graduating back in December. My questions are to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. Have the red seal certificates fallen through the cracks because of recent changes in the department?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for asking me my first question. Truly, it is an important question, and I'd like to assure you that there has been no delay in getting out the red seal certificates. Our journeymen are extremely important to us in Alberta, and we work very, very hard – in fact, during the time between the former minister stepping down and my being sworn in, the minister for IIR signed off on over 600 of the red seal certificates.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second question to the same minister: what are you doing to help apprentices who might lose out on job opportunities or pay because of these delays?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Good question, and thank you. This is really an important issue, and we want to ensure that nobody in Alberta misses an opportunity for employment because of the red seal certificate. What we have is a phone line that's available, and the minute that all of the paperwork is in place and they're approved, the journeyman or his employer can call and get certification and verification so that they can go forward with their work.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: what is the typical timeline for approving these kinds of certificates?

**Mr. Weadick:** I'd like to thank the member for that question as well. We do approximately 10,000 of these red seal certificates each and every year. It takes approximately six to eight weeks to do this particular piece of work. We must verify the work records,

the schooling records, and everything for each employee to ensure that they have completed all of the requirements. Occasionally there is information that comes through that's incomplete, so it takes a little longer, but typically in six to eight weeks we'll get the red seal certificates completed.

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

### 2:20 Capital Infrastructure Planning

**Mr. Boutilier:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are questioning the government's priorities, for instance on infrastructure. Old schools overflow and our new hospitals stand empty. It was interesting that on Monday on *Alberta Primetime* the Minister of Education made a startling admission, that they actually have a priority list. My question to the minister is simply this: will he make this secret priority list public to all Albertans?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely no secret at all what the priorities of Albertans are with respect to schools. Every single school jurisdiction across the province puts in a three-year capital plan, which shows what they need for new schools and what they need for major modernizations. We take those plans and put together bundles based on health and safety needs, based on accommodation needs, based on charter requirements and other requirements. Those are put into the capital plan in process, and a priority list is established. Now, the priorities do change from time to time, so it's not that prudent to put out a list to say, "You're the next on the list for a school," because if a health or safety issue comes up, one would expect the government would adapt.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Speaker, given that the minister did not answer the question and given the fact that I don't know why it is so difficult for lawyers to say either yes or no, will you make public the list so that all Albertans can see the list? At this point it is not public. Will this government be open and transparent and make it public? Yes or no?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the hon. member was earlier in question period. There was a very appropriate and direct question asked, and there was a very appropriate and direct answer given. It was no. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo can verify it, and if he doesn't, they can certainly peruse the transcripts, the *Hansard*, to see that that's there. If it's an appropriate question for a yes or no answer, it gets a yes or a no from me. In this particular case it's very clear that there are a number of high priorities for schools across the province.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Well, Albertans just saw that answer, which is a nonanswer, so I'm going to give the minister one more time. On *Alberta Primetime* you said: we have a list. Will you make that list public to all Albertans: to Alberta families, to teachers, to everyone?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, it serves no purpose to put out a priority list that changes from time to time, because what it does is that it accomplishes exactly what the hon. member's seatmate has been trying to do. The hon. member's seatmate argues that we should balance the budget by stretching out the capital spending over a number of years, and then in the next breath asks for four or five schools for his constituency. And what does he want to do? He wants to take them from somebody else's constituency, from somebody else's community. What he wants to do is to create a priority for his community balanced against somebody else's pri-

ority. It is much more prudent for us to plan on a comprehensive basis and be able to adapt that plan as necessary as those priorities continue to change.

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

### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One year ago this month this government abruptly froze the minimum wage for thousands of workers in this province. The Minister of Employment and Immigration said that the minimum wage formula had to be reviewed, but a parliamentary committee reported in October that the process should be left the way it is. To the Minister of Employment and Immigration: how can this government claim in yesterday's Speech from the Throne that helping workers is a priority when the government has allowed another year-long minimum wage holiday at the expense of workers?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, judging by the preamble of the question, it is abundantly obvious that that particular member has never read the report because the committee, frankly, did not ask this minister to leave the minimum wage the way it is but made seven recommendations on how to change the minimum wage. I would encourage that member to read the report first before he asks the questions.

**Mr. Chase:** Well, having written an addendum to the report, talking about a living wage as well as a minimum wage, I think I'm more familiar with the report than you, having sat in that committee. We put forward recommendations which you have not yet acted upon. Will the minister implement the standing committee's recommendation and swiftly boost the minimum wage by a measly 25 cents?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, not only have I received the report, but I have read the report thoroughly, and I'm reviewing it. The report is not recommending a living wage. The report is recommending an increase of the minimum wage, and it has actually quantified exactly how much. I am reviewing this right now. The report will be going through government process, and I will be responding to that report accordingly as I do realize the importance of this matter.

**Mr. Chase:** It's been two years since \$8.80 was first established.

Will the minister commit also, as the committee recommended, to introducing legislation in this session to write the minimum wage formula into law so that it's free from his or any other minister's tinkering?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, again I'm led to conclude that the member never read the report. The report was just drafted and handed to my office some three months ago, not two years ago, so I'm not sure what this member is referring to.

Going back to my initial response, I have just received the report. I am reviewing the report, and I will be responding to this Legislature accordingly as I do realize that this is a very important and serious matter to people who actually earn a minimum wage.

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

### Temporary Foreign Workers

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the province of Alberta is aiming to seek new markets for our products and to strengthen trade relations with Asia and while we are expecting to be about 77,000 workers short in the next 10 years, as clearly stated in the Speech from the Throne yesterday, the federal government is reducing the skilled worker stream by 20 per cent. What is the Minister of Employment and Immigration doing to make sure that his federal counterparts understand the negative impact on the province of Alberta?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, let me try to address this, Mr. Speaker, by highlighting the severity of this problem. This year is the first year that baby boomers will start retiring. Our national population growth in this province and in this country is slightly above zero. Our economy is showing significant signs of recovery, with oil over a hundred dollars a barrel and new upgraders being announced, and our appetite for services is insatiable. What does that mean? That means that Canada and particularly Alberta will be short on skilled workers and unskilled workers, as a matter of fact, for many years to come. It is incumbent upon us as government to address this issue with policies that are reflective of the problem.

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last 10 years temporary foreign workers have done a great job for the economy of this province. As of April 1 of this year the new federal immigration regulations would require these workers, after being in Canada for four years, to leave and return to Canada after four years. What is the Minister of Employment and Immigration doing to make sure that these workers remain in their jobs now that they are trained and they can speak the language?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, I've asked my parliamentary assistant, the Member for Calgary-Mackay, to look at that federal temporary foreign worker program. It's becoming abundantly obvious that what Canada needs is not temporary foreign workers who are becoming permanently temporary foreign workers, but we need a permanent workforce for many years to come. As minister of employment for this province it is my role to negotiate with Ottawa to make sure that we don't end up with permanently temporary workers but have the workforce needed to grow the economy not only in this province but in the rest of Canada.

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the same minister. What is the social and economic impact on our province caused by this transient workforce?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, that's a really good question. Well, transient communities would be one answer, individuals who do not purchase houses, cars, who don't invest in our economy but send remittances back home. There is a social impact on families over here, but just having come back from the Philippines, I had the opportunity to see the other, those families who are left behind by temporary foreign workers. The impact is economic and moral, and it's immense. It's our job to address it while we're addressing our priority, the Canadian economy.

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

### Calgary Airport Trail Tunnel

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday this government spoke about the importance of Asian markets. The Speech from the Throne highlighted the necessity of improved direct air services to these markets. However, this government has failed to support essential infrastructure that will greatly improve access to the Calgary airport. My questions are to the Premier. Will the Premier agree with the Liberal policy that access to the airport is vital to improve air services?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think just a little while ago we explained that there are provincial highways, and there are municipal roads. I think the airport tunnel, if Calgary decides that that's what it should be – it's about local elected officials and local priorities. Those elected officials have got to make the decision about where their priorities are. They've received \$1.5 billion from this government since 2005. I believe that if they want to move ahead with that, then we've already supplied a lot of money that they could put towards that tunnel.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's not answering my question. I'm asking for a commitment from the provincial government toward the airport trail tunnel.

To the Premier again: given that with the proposed airport expansion the maximum number of flights will increase by 40 per cent, why has the Premier failed to throw his support behind the Calgary airport tunnel?

2:30

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I've heard the Premier mention that his support is behind the tunnel. We support these municipalities greatly. But I want to add one more thing. We have two international airports in Alberta, and they pay over \$20 million in rent. When there's that kind of money going to our federal government, shouldn't they be looking towards the federal government to maybe help fix up an airport?

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm talking about the provincial share of the cost of the airport tunnel. To the Premier again: will this Premier support the future of Alberta's economy and build this tunnel, leaving a legacy that will be remembered by Albertans forever?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely don't understand what doesn't go through this hon. member's head. Our Premier does support all the infrastructure across this province in all municipalities. Calgary alone, as I said, got \$1.5 billion, \$163 million this year alone. Let me tell you that we are there to support all of the infrastructure across all municipalities in Alberta, and I hope they get their project done.

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

### Affordable Housing

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs. This minister has stated publicly that projects approved on his watch must consult with the local community. This minister has also said publicly that he respects the privacy of those living in the units funded by

his department. So how can this minister explain this obvious contradiction, and would he admit that this confusion has fuelled the concerns Albertans have with his programs?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be very tough to top the last answer, but I'll do my best.

It's very important to our ministry that we actually work with local management bodies. We work with municipalities, local councillors, local community groups. At the same time, it's also important that we respect the privacy of individuals who are accessing our services either through affordable housing or through our homelessness programs. It's not a crime to be homeless or to be in affordable housing, and we want to make sure it stays that way so people can transition from not being housed to being housed.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This minister has also been quick to criticize homeless policies in other cities by labelling them as ghettos. Now, our city does not want to be blighted with ghettos, and our fellow Albertans who hit hard times do not want to raise their families in ghettos. I ask the minister: what alternatives is his department offering?

**Mr. Denis:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm actually very proud of our record the last few years. We have our affordable housing unit and homeless unit construction at under \$100,000 per door. We are also talking to the city of Calgary, who wants a new policy regarding secondary suites. I believe this should be decided at the local level. We will continue to work with Mayor Nenshi on this because what works for Calgary may not also work in other areas of the province, so the local input is very important.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nonprofits serving the homeless have been squeezed in this recession as these agencies are tasked with doing more with less over a larger geographic area. How does this minister justify his policy decision for spreading the homeless population around a city as a better deal for those assisting with the most vulnerable?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this member was talking about communities and about community involvement as well, and that's very important. She also mentioned ghettos. The first way you can create a ghetto is by the overconcentration of homelessness and affordable housing in a particular neighbourhood. Homelessness isn't just the responsibility of one neighbourhood; it is the responsibility of the entire province. That is the difference between managing the problem and ending the problem, like we will.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

### Syncrude Joint Venture Royalties

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the latest annual report from the provincial government it indicates on page 45 that "certain producers," including the Syncrude joint venture and Suncor, "have disputed the basis of royalty calcula-

tion for bitumen royalties.” My first question is to the minister of finance, and congratulations on your new appointment, sir. Could you give us an update on how those negotiations are going and if we have given any money back to Suncor and the Syncrude joint venture, please?

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

**Mr. Liepert:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Maybe if I could, I would try to answer the question, although I can't probably answer it to the extent that the member would like me to. All I can say is that negotiations are continuing with both companies, and I'm hopeful that we're in a position, I would say, in a matter of weeks, certainly not many months, to have a resolution to that issue.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that. My question is again to the minister of finance. Why, then, did this provincial government, if we're to believe this minister, rebate \$104 million just before Christmas to Suncor on a royalty dispute that relates to this item on page 45 of your annual report at the same time that we have a billion-dollar budget deficit in this province?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, it's about a question of fairness. There are projections that are made. There are royalties collected. At the end of the day we want no more than our fair share, and if companies have oversubmitted, then that would be returned. It would be exactly the same as the hon. member filing his taxes. If there are changes to it, they're fixed, and it's exactly done in a fair and transparent way.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister of finance. It's not an issue of fairness. Given that the Conservative Premier of Newfoundland, at the time when prices were similar for oil products in both Alberta and Newfoundland, negotiated a \$28-a-barrel royalty, is it fair to Albertans that this government has negotiated a \$7 royalty for the same crude joint venture in Fort McMurray? How is that fairness?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** It's really unfair that they've pulled numbers out of the air to satisfy their argument. The simple fact is, Mr. Speaker, that the royalty regime in Alberta has put Albertans back to work. It has attracted investment from all over the world to come and develop responsibly one of the biggest collections of hydrocarbons in the world. I know the hon. member wants his constituents to have jobs. That's what we want, too.

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

### Wi-Fi in Schools

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some residents of my constituency have raised concerns about the safety of Wi-Fi in schools. To the Minister of Education: has your department investigated the safety of the use of Wi-Fi networks in the school environment?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, it certainly has been brought to my attention that a number of citizens are concerned about Wi-Fi in schools. Even in my own constituency there's been an issue with one of our schools. Staff in our department have liaised with the Alberta chief medical officer to make sure the most recent avail-

able information is available to school authorities. Heath Canada has indicated that the amount of radio frequency radiation from wireless Internet devices is thousands of times below the limits for public exposure, and the specified limits for public exposure apply to everyone, including children, allowing for continuous exposure. So, yes, we are continuing to monitor the recommendations made by a number of health organizations on wireless use. In addition, we've prepared a fact sheet for school boards relative to this particular topic.

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

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. Given that there are additional concerns with Wi-Fi in schools and the fact that young children are allegedly the most vulnerable to harm from Wi-Fi frequencies, does the minister's research confirm an additional risk to school-aged children?

**Mr. Hancock:** No, Mr. Speaker. The facts would be, as I know them, that 20 minutes on a mobile phone call is equivalent to a year in a Wi-Fi enabled classroom. Twenty minutes. Everyone is exposed to similar frequency from cellphone towers and cordless phones. Everyone is also exposed to lower frequencies from FM radio and television, and those lower frequencies, apparently, are absorbed up to five times more by the body than frequencies from Wi-Fi antennas. Signals from Wi-Fi antennas are very low power at both the computer and the access points, about a hundred milliwatts, thousands of times below international standards. The World Health Organization has concluded that there is no convincing scientific evidence that weak radio frequency signals from base stations and wireless networks cause adverse health effects.

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

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is again to the same minister. Do individual school authorities have the jurisdiction to allow or disallow the use of Wi-Fi in schools, or is this purely a departmental matter, which I understand you're not prepared to take any action on?

2:40

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, everything to do with what happens in schools is in the purview of the school boards and schools themselves, including whether or not they install Wi-Fi or other computer technology. Clearly, this is a matter for each school board to deal with if there's anything to deal with at all.

I understand citizens' concerns that have been raised. The CBC had a program on this issue, and it has a lot of parents concerned. I hear from parents all the time, and my response is always consistent. There is no credible evidence that our department has become aware of, talking with appropriate health officials, that Wi-Fi affects or is a problem for children or for anyone, for that matter. However, it is up to the school boards to deal with what happens in their schools.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the question period for today. Eighteen different members were recognized for participation. There were 106 questions and responses.

The only thing noteworthy that the chair shall make comment on is bringing members' attention once again to the document that was agreed to by House leaders and signed and sent to me on March 4, 2010, and then followed up with a statement by me in the House on Wednesday, March 10, 2010, that there are no preambles to supplementary questions. Those who signed this document should bring it to the attention of all the members of

their caucuses. Today there were some very, very clear and obvious violations of that, which will not be the norm for the course. If individuals want to sign documents, their signatures must mean something.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 30 and having provided to your office the appropriate notice, I wish to inform you and the Assembly that upon the completion of the daily Routine, I'll move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to hold an emergency debate on a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the immediate need for legislation regarding financial reporting by individuals who are seeking the leadership of a registered political party.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 2

#### Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move first reading of Bill 2, Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011.

The proposed amendments to this important legislation will provide for the protection of those affected by family violence by adding offence and penalty provisions for breaching protection orders. The change will hold accountable those who violate protection orders and make Alberta's penalties for such violations among the strongest in Canada. The proposed amendments will also clarify processes and streamline administration of the act by the courts.

I urge all hon. members to support speedy passage of the bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 2 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

#### Bill 3

#### Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 2011

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 3, the Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 2011.

Mr. Speaker, this bill, if passed, would replace the current practice of geology and the practice of geophysics with a new consolidated practice of geoscience. Reflecting this proposed consolidation, Bill 3 would rename the act to the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act and rename the association which administers these professions to the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta, or APEGA, with one G.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon has moved first reading of Bill 3. At this point in time, hon. member, the wording that I have for the name of this bill differs from what your wording is. You said Bill 3 would be called the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act?

**Mr. Rogers:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. It would be called the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 3 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

#### Bill 4

#### Securities Amendment Act, 2011

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I request leave to introduce Bill 4, the Securities Amendment Act, 2011.

This bill will fill regulatory gaps and further harmonize and streamline Alberta's securities laws. They will improve investor protection for Alberta investors and help maintain investor confidence in Alberta's capital markets. Bill 4 gives the Alberta Securities Commission the ability to respond more quickly to changing market conditions like financial crises and adjust things like minimum rating investment requirements.

Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 4, the Securities Amendment Act, 2011, and I urge all members to support its passage.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 4 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

#### Bill 5

#### Notice to the Attorney General Act

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce first reading of Bill 5, the Notice to the Attorney General Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Notice to the Attorney General Act will consolidate and update notice requirements, which ensure parties notify the Attorney General about certain matters. This new legislation consolidates notice requirements from other pieces of legislation to ensure that the Attorney General is informed about matters brought before Alberta courts and tribunals that may require the Attorney General's involvement to protect the interests of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 5 also will clarify the requirements for adequate and timely notice to be given to the Attorney General and include regulation-making powers to ensure that this legislation stays up to date with evolving litigation trends. It will also include



a new provision to ensure the Attorney General is notified about allegations of inadequate consultation with aboriginal peoples.

Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 5 and encourage all members to support its passage.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 5 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

### Bill 6

#### Rules of Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2011

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce first reading of Bill 6, the Rules of Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2011.

The Alberta *Rules of Court*, which govern practice and procedure in the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta, went through a major revision which was completed in 2008. Those new rules came into effect November 1, 2010. The new rules are easier to understand and help Albertans involved in civil matters to better navigate the court system. Bill 6, the Rules of Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2011, will amend provisions in various acts to make them consistent with the new language and updated procedures used in the new rules. These changes will help streamline court-related processes and make court proceedings clearer and easier to understand for Albertans involved in civil litigation.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** Before we move on, Mr. Clerk, verification that the table officers have the correct title for Bill 3 as requested by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

2:50

**The Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, Bill 3 is, I believe, the Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 2011.

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, I don't have the bill in front of me, but I think the confusion may be that it's an amendment to the existing act, which is in the name that the Clerk has mentioned. Within the act it will change, I believe, the name of it to the other name. I think that's the explanation for it.

**The Speaker:** Well, we understand the intent. We understand the motive. We'll make sure that everything is appropriate.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table six copies of a letter written by an Alberta woman telling her story about her and her mother, Jane and Janet Doe, victims of an extreme domestic violence, which outlines their horrific experience with vital statistics publishing their name in the *Alberta Gazette* after an unpublished secure name change order was issued from the Alberta courts. Sadly, Jane and Janet Doe live every day in fear because of the mistake that the government has made, and they

have done nothing to resolve it. I'd like to encourage all the hon. members in this Assembly to read this horrific case.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from the Lakeview Community Association and its president, Duncan Kent, to the hon. Minister of Transportation and others, copied to all Calgary area MLAs, regarding the Calgary southwest ring road.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of an Environics poll on Albertans' attitude towards health care in Alberta, which is dated February 18. The poll shows that 63 per cent of Albertans believe that health care is in crisis, and 60 per cent of them believe that it is inefficient management as opposed to funding that is the cause of this crisis.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a discussion paper that I've developed in consultation with members of my community. A lot of the discussions for this discussion paper took place last spring during the Calgary cabinet tour, where the Minister of Municipal Affairs met with a number of my community leaders. As well, we hosted a round table with the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs. It's a discussion paper on the topic that I mentioned earlier in my member's statement on inner-city community renewal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to a question earlier today the hon. the Premier referenced a letter that was sent by himself and the Premiers of Saskatchewan and British Columbia under the letterhead of Canada's New West Partnership to the Prime Minister, which he indicated would be circulated to others. He indicated at the time that he'd be prepared to table a copy of the letter, and on behalf of the Premier I'm now tabling a copy of that letter, which raises concerns that this government has with Bill C-606, a private member's bill in the House of Commons which seeks to ban tanker traffic on the west coast but which would have deleterious effects to Alberta's economy and the western Canadian economy and, in fact, is prejudicial in that it doesn't ban tankers from any other coasts, just the coast that most affects us.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the chair is pleased to provide the appropriate number of copies of a brochure entitled Page Biographies: Legislative Assembly of Alberta, 27th Legislature, Fourth Session, Spring 2011.

I'm also tabling with the House copies of four letters relating to a request by the Ombudsman, Mr. G.B. (Gord) Button, to revise his resignation date from May 31, 2011, to August 31, 2011. Hon. members will recall that the House dealt with this matter and set in process an opportunity for all citizens everywhere to participate in the selection process of a new Ombudsman. First of all, there's a letter dated December 30, 2010, from Mr. Button to the Speaker requesting a resignation extension. Second is a letter dated January 12, 2011, from the Speaker acknowledging the letter and referring the request to the Standing Committee on Legislative

Offices for review. Thirdly, a letter dated February 7, 2011, from the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to the Speaker advising that the committee was recommending acceptance of the revised resignation date and that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices accepted the revised date, and then the fourth letter, dated February 10, 2011, from the Speaker advising Mr. Button that his request had been accepted. It's totally transparent.

### Request for Emergency Debate

**The Speaker:** We have one item of business, and that is a notice of motion submitted by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Standing Order 30(2) provides that "the Member may briefly state the arguments in favour of the request for leave and the Speaker may allow such debate as he or she considers relevant to the question of urgency," and it is the role of the chair to rule on whether or not the request for leave is in order. What is not defined, of course, in our standing orders is the word "briefly," but let's assume it should equate roughly to the length of time provided for a member's statement.

Please proceed, hon. member.

### Financial Disclosure by Leadership Candidates

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much for that guidance, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 30(2)

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent and public importance; namely, the immediate need for legislation regarding financial reporting by individuals who are seeking the leadership of a registered political party.

I'll briefly speak to the urgency and saliency of this motion. Three political parties, registered in Alberta and represented in this House, are now at the initial stages of leadership campaigns. The person selected as the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party will be, for a brief time at least, the Premier of this province, and two other leaders are also potentially future Premiers. It's a matter of very urgent public importance because the person who is successful is going to be the Premier, and one of the others may in fact become the Premier at a future date, so I believe that it's vital to the public interest that the financial supporters of the leadership campaigns be publicly reported. Millions of dollars will be spent in the coming months by people who want to become the leaders of these political parties, and potentially the Premier.

The public, in my view, has a right to know the size of donations each candidate receives and from whom. While Alberta has legislation requiring that candidates and parties participating in elections for seats in the House disclose their financial contributions, we do not have the same requirement for individuals who campaign for the leadership of a political party. Mr. Speaker, this is an enormous loophole since, as I've already mentioned, the successful candidates go on to campaign for the office of Premier of Alberta. I think that this threatens the integrity of our reporting legislation, and I believe that Alberta is behind other jurisdictions in not having the legislation to require this. I know that three provinces and the government of Canada have legislation that does require disclosure of leadership campaign donations.

I'm making this motion because I see no other opportunity for the House to address this issue. There is nothing on the Order Paper related to financial disclosure of campaign donations for leadership races, and the indications that we have had from the government, including yesterday's throne speech, gave no indication of any legislation in the area of political contributions for

leadership campaigns. In fact, in a public statement the Premier has ruled out bringing this forward in terms of legislation although he said that it's his personal mission to ensure that there are some rules with respect to this for at least the Progressive Conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to point out that the House unanimously passed a motion, which I sponsored in 2007, calling for legislation that would make donations to leadership campaigns subject to the same disclosure rules as any other political donation. At the time of that motion the 2006 contest for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party was very recent. The experience of that contest raised awareness among the public of the importance of having legislation which would require all leadership candidates to meet the same standard for financial disclosure. It did become an issue because millions were spent by the various leadership candidates on the various level of details which each candidate provided. For example, the Premier released information on the \$967,000 he raised for his campaign, but \$163,000 of that was raised . . .

3:00

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please. I don't mean to interrupt, but I think you're giving your speech. What we're doing now is talking about the reason why we should have a discussion, not your speech.

**Mr. Mason:** I actually had a much better speech, but I will take your point. I simply want to say that this is important because, given the lack of legislation, we have political leaders in this Assembly and, in the case of the Wildrose Alliance leader, outside of the Assembly who have won or participated in leadership races and have not fully disclosed their campaign donations, and I think that is a serious problem.

Mr. Speaker, I did want to point out that the motion that I presented in 2007 was unanimously passed by this House, yet nothing has happened. I'm hopeful that a consensus will still exist on this and that we can continue to go forward with this debate in hopes of triggering some legislation from the government that we can all agree upon in time or before the completion of these leadership races so that there is uniform disclosure and legally required rules for the disclosure of the very substantial amounts of money that are normally collected by leadership campaigns.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader, then the hon. Official Opposition House Leader, and then I think we'll put a wrap to it and make a decision.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would agree that the topic of financial disclosure for leadership contestants is certainly a topical one, an interesting one, and a current one but not one which would beg for the adjourning of the natural order of the House to discuss on an emergent basis for a number of reasons.

First of all, the question is: what is the most important business that we can do today? We had the speech from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor yesterday, and it is parliamentary protocol and tradition that we hear a response at the earliest possible date from the opposition. That opportunity is this afternoon. It would be highly inappropriate to hijack that opportunity in order to have another debate on something unless it was absolutely critical to have that emergency debate.

Secondly, the report from the Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services on the review of financial disclosure for our leadership contestants was tabled in this House, I believe, on October 7, 2010. This question in its entirety was referred to the

policy field committee last year by the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General, as is provided for in our standing orders. The policy field committee had a thorough discussion on it. They heard from, I believe, all of the registered political parties or at least a good number of the registered political parties, and they made some recommendations, which are in the hands of the minister now. Pursuant to the standing orders the minister will have to respond to that report within the 180-day time frame of the report having been tabled in the House. I would point out to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands that that date is coming up, so there will be an opportunity in this House to have that response and to deal with it.

So it's not urgent. It's certainly not more urgent than discussion of the agenda of this government for the coming year as outlined by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor and the opportunity for members of the opposition to respond. Not that I usually would be standing up championing that on their behalf, but it is an important part of the parliamentary tradition and process that we have a Speech from the Throne and that we have an opportunity for responses to the Speech from the Throne. That is the more important business of the day.

With respect to the ongoing leadership processes I can certainly say in this House that our Premier has made it clear and the president of our party has made it clear that the Progressive Conservative Party will have an open and transparent process relative to all aspects of the process, as is the norm, but particularly with respect to financial disclosure. The public is not going to have to worry about that from the government side of the House or from whomever the new Premier is.

I do need to respond to a misapprehension that was raised by the hon. member when he indicated that there was nondisclosure by the Premier and some other candidates in the last leadership process. That's one of the things that has bothered me ever since that came up at the time and has been mentioned time and time again in the media and now by the hon. member.

It should be very, very clear from the disclosures that were made by the Premier, by this hon. member, and by at least one other candidate that those amounts that were raised for that leadership that were not publicly disclosed were not publicly disclosed because they were funds that were raised at fundraising events with low ticket prices, which wouldn't have been covered by the disclosure requirements in any event. That's been something that has been really quite problematic every time this has been raised.

The important part, Mr. Speaker, is that parties can, if they want to impress the public with their openness and transparency, have the rules in place. The Progressive Conservative Party will have those rules in place. The House has had an opportunity to deal with this issue and will have an opportunity again to deal with this issue, and most importantly it's got important business before it in terms of the response to the Speech from the Throne, which His Honour the Lieutenant Governor eloquently delivered yesterday.

**The Speaker:** Okay. I'm going to encourage members once again to stick to the reason why I'm recognizing, and that is for a brief argument about urgency, not the subject. The subject could be anything.

The hon. member.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak to the urgency of this debate in that a number of leadership debates have already commenced, and the organizing for them has already commenced. I'm not privy to individual races, but I'm sure bank accounts have been opened and that donations may well have already been accepted without the consistency that

is being sought through this discussion. So the urgency in this debate is that we are seeking consistency for all members who wish to pursue a leadership race, for whichever party that might be. Failure to provide that consistency means that we will have differing rules come into place at differing times for different groups.

The Official Opposition caucus has agreed that this particular issue and its urgency is important enough to have us agree to delay our leader's response to the throne speech. It is the opinion of this Official Opposition caucus that, in fact, this topic should be part of the government agenda and therefore should be included as part of the discussion around the throne speech, the urgency being that failure to have this discussion to urge the government to move on legislation as quickly as possible means that we will have differing rules put in place and that people will be subject to differing rules as they come into the race, and I'm sure some races have already started.

There's a public confidence issue here. There is a consistency and predictability issue for those members who wish to enter a leadership race but also for those that are considering it and for the people that support them. Based on that, I would argue there is urgency for this. It is not clear to us, based on what the Government House Leader has said, from the rules that the government caucus is putting into place, what exactly that is. Do they mean they will admit any donation over \$375, which is the Elections Alberta rule, or all donations? How will they clarify the controversy around the event ticket price, that the Government House Leader has highlighted?

You begin to understand how complex and how up in the air all of these issues are. The urgency behind it is that they need to be clarified so that everyone moves forward from here with a consistent idea of what is expected of them and what the public expects of them, and that's who we really answer to, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for listening to me.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I indicated a little earlier that under Standing Order 30(2) the member was recognized to provide brief arguments in favour of the request for leave, and the Speaker then may allow such debate as he considers relevant to the question of urgency. It is the role of the chair to rule on whether or not the request for leave is in order. The chair has listened attentively not only today but on previous occasions. On today's application and after hearing argument and postulating alternatives, the chair is prepared to rule on whether the request for leave for this motion is in order.

First, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has met the requirement of providing at least two hours' notice to the Speaker's office. Notice was received this morning at 8:19. The Speaker also had an opportunity to read a news article about it, so he got it two ways.

Secondly, before the question as to whether this motion should proceed can be put to the Assembly, the chair must rule on whether the motion meets the requirements of Standing Order 30(7), which requires that "the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration." The relevant parliamentary authorities for this subject are pages 689 to 696 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the second edition, and *Beauchesne's* paragraphs 387 to 390.

**3:10**

The motion reads as follows, and I repeat:

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public im-

portance; namely, the immediate need for legislation regarding financial reporting by individuals who are seeking the leadership of a registered political party.

In the chair's view, this matter in no way constitutes a genuine emergency. At page 694 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the second edition, the authors note that emergency debate provisions cannot be used for items that may – underline “may” – come before the House in a regular legislative program. The subject of leadership funding disclosure was considered by a policy field committee last year, a number of months ago. Then it was referred back to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, who could presumably propose legislation. At the very least, the minister must report to the House, and that will give an opportunity for discussion and debate.

The issue of financing a party leadership contest is not a new one, not a new one at all. Party leadership contests have appeared before, and they will appear again. The chair notes that the criterion of urgency in Standing Order 30 does not mean urgency of the matter but urgency of debate. Although this issue might be considered by some to be topical, very topical, it's certainly not one requiring a debate that would postpone the business of the Assembly this afternoon.

Part of the business of the Assembly this afternoon, in fact, is discussion of the Speech from the Throne, which provides any speaker a wide range of latitude. Presumably, every speech in response to the Speech from the Throne could be: why doesn't the Speech from the Throne point out the need for legislation with respect to election financing? There could be your speech. You have an opportunity, starting very shortly.

Accordingly the chair does not find that the request for leave is in order under the Assembly's rules, and the question will not be put.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Motions

2. Mr. Hancock moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve into Committee of the Whole, when called, to consider certain bills on the Order Paper.

[Government Motion 2 carried]

3. Mr. Hancock moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

[Government Motion 3 carried]

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

### Evening Sitting on February 28, 2011

4. Mr. Hancock moved:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) the Legislative Assembly shall meet in Committee of Supply for consideration of the 2010-11 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund on the evening of Monday, February 28, 2011, commencing at 7:30 p.m.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In anticipation of the tabling of interim supply tomorrow, I would propose Government Motion 4. I think I said earlier “interim supply,” and I meant supplementary supply.

[Government Motion 4 carried]

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

### Consideration of Main Estimates

5. Mr. Hancock moved:  
Be it resolved that this motion apply for the consideration of the 2011-12 main estimates.
- (1) When they are laid before the Assembly, the main estimates of the government and the offices of the Legislative Assembly stand referred to Committee of Supply and the policy field committees according to the schedule included with this motion.
  - (2) The estimates of each department shall be considered by Committee of Supply or a policy field committee for three hours unless there are no members who wish to speak before the expiration of the three hours, in which case the respective committee's consideration of the estimates of the particular department is deemed to have been completed.
  - (3) When a department's estimates are considered by Committee of Supply on a Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon, the committee's consideration shall continue until it is complete notwithstanding standing orders 3(1) and 4, so proceedings may conclude later than the normal adjournment hour of 6 p.m.
  - (4) A policy field committee shall commence its consideration of a department's estimates in the Chamber at 6:30 p.m. or, if Committee of Supply has met that afternoon and the Assembly has adjourned later than 6 p.m., one half-hour after Committee of Supply has concluded its consideration of a department's estimates for that day.
  - (5) At the end of three hours' consideration of a department's estimates or at the conclusion if there are no members who wish to speak, the Committee of Supply rises and reports progress without question put. If a policy field committee is considering the main estimates, it stands adjourned at the completion of its consideration that evening without question put.
  - (6) The allotment of time in Committee of Supply or a policy field committee for the consideration of the main estimates shall be as follows:
    - (a) the minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes;
    - (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may speak;
    - (c) for the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, if any, and the minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may speak;
    - (d) for the next 20 minutes the members of the fourth party, if any, and the minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may speak;
    - (e) for the next 20 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly, any independent members, and the minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may speak; and
    - (f) any member may speak thereafter.

- (7) When an amendment to a department's estimates is moved in Committee of Supply or in a policy field committee, the vote on the amendment stands deferred until the vote on the main estimates occurs.
- (8) All votes on a department's estimates in Committee of Supply or in a policy field committee stand deferred until the evening of April 20, 2011.
- (9) On the evening of April 20, 2011, Committee of Supply shall meet at either 7:30 p.m. or one half-hour after the committee has completed its consideration of the main estimates for that afternoon, whichever is later, and commence voting on the main estimates.
- (10) There shall be one vote on the main estimates on the evening of April 20, 2011, unless
  - (a) additional votes are required on amendments previously moved in Committee of Supply or in a policy field committee prior to calling the vote on the main estimates; or
  - (b) on at least one day's notice a member has provided written notification to the chair and the Clerk of his or her desire that the estimates of a particular department be voted on separately, in which case that department's estimates shall be voted on separately, and the final vote for the main estimates shall consist of the estimates of any departments not yet voted upon.
- (11) All votes on the main estimates in Committee of Supply, including votes on amendments, shall be taken without debate or further amendment.
- (12) For greater clarity, Standing Order 32(3.1) applies to divisions in Committee of Supply during any votes on the main estimates.
- (13) When a policy field committee has completed its consideration of the main estimates of the departments indicated in the schedule, the chair shall so report to Committee of Supply on the date scheduled for the vote on the main estimates without question put.
- (14) Prior to the vote on the main estimates the chair shall put the question to approve the estimates of the Legislative Assembly, as approved by the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services, and the estimates of the officers of the Legislature, which shall be decided without debate or amendment.

And be it further resolved that standing orders 59.01, 59.03, 60(1), and 63 shall not apply to the consideration of the 2011-12 main estimates of the government of Alberta and the offices of the Legislative Assembly.

#### **Schedule, 2011-2012 Main Estimates**

February 24: Budget Address.

March 1, evening: International and Intergovernmental Relations, Resources and Environment PFC.

March 2, afternoon: Finance and Enterprise, Committee of Supply.

March 2, evening: Aboriginal Relations, Public Safety and Services PFC.

March 7, evening: Service Alberta, Public Safety and Services PFC.

March 8, evening: Seniors and Community Supports, Health PFC.

March 9, afternoon: Energy, Committee of Supply.

March 9, evening: Housing and Urban Affairs, Community Services PFC.

March 14, evening: Employment and Immigration, Economy PFC.

March 15, evening: Tourism, Parks and Recreation, Community Services PFC.

March 16, evening: Children and Youth Services, Health PFC.

March 21, evening: Treasury Board, Public Safety and Services PFC.

March 22, afternoon: Environment, Committee of Supply.

March 22, evening: Justice, Public Safety and Services PFC.

March 23, afternoon: Culture and Community Spirit, Committee of Supply.

March 23, evening: Transportation, Economy PFC.

April 11, evening: Solicitor General and Public Security, Public Safety and Services PFC.

April 12, afternoon: Executive Council, Committee of Supply.

April 12, evening: Advanced Education and Technology, Economy PFC.

April 13, afternoon: Health and Wellness, Committee of Supply.

April 13, evening: Sustainable Resource Development, Resources and Environment PFC.

April 18, evening: Municipal Affairs, Community Services PFC.

April 19, afternoon: Education, Committee of Supply.

April 19, evening: Agriculture and Rural Development, Resources and Environment PFC.

April 20, afternoon: Infrastructure, Committee of Supply.

April 20, evening: main estimates votes, Committee of Supply.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Government Motion 5 is very long and covers just about five pages in the Order Paper. I would move Government Motion 5 as printed in the Order Paper.

**The Speaker:** Okay. This motion is debatable. Any participants?

Then I'll call on the hon. Government House Leader to close the debate or to call the question.

**Mr. Hancock:** I'll call the question.

[Government Motion 5 carried]

**The Speaker:** I would like to advise hon. members that following this decision with respect to this motion, all members will receive a letter from the chair covering additional information on procedural matters that will affect consideration of participation during these estimates. It follows through with what we've done in the past, just for clarification.

#### **Committee Membership Changes**

9. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that the following changes to

- (a) the Standing Committee on Private Bills be approved: that Ms Redford replace hon. Mr. Olson, that Dr. Morton replace Mr. Bhardwaj, that Mr. Horner replace Mr. Amery;
- (b) the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved: that Mr. Allred replace hon. Mr. Olson;
- (c) the Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved: that Mr. Amery replace hon. Mr. Weadick, that Mr. Bhullar replace hon. Mr. Oberle;
- (d) the Standing Committee on Health be approved: that Mr. Griffiths replace hon. Mr. Olson, that Dr. Swann replace Dr. Taft;

- (e) the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment be approved: that Mr. Marz replace Mr. Dallas;
- (f) the Standing Committee on the Economy be approved: that Mr. Dallas replace Mr. Griffiths, that Ms Tarchuk replace Mr. Marz, that Mr. Johnson replace hon. Mr. Weadick;
- (g) the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund be approved: that Dr. Taft replace Ms Blakeman.

**The Speaker:** Shall I call the question? This is a debatable motion. No further speakers?

[Government Motion 9 carried]

### **Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Mr. Drysdale moved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour Colonel (Retired) the Honourable Donald S. Ethell, OC, OMM, AOE, MSC, CD, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the procedure, then, for participation here of the next number of speakers will be, first of all, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, followed by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, and then we'll do a rotation for participation.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm truly honoured to rise today and move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne given by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. It is an honour to do this on behalf of my constituents in Grande Prairie-Wapiti. I would like to begin by thanking the Lieutenant Governor for both his eloquent words and his commitment to this great province. I would also like to thank him for formally beginning this, the Fourth Session of the 27th Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, His Honour's career should be looked upon with utmost respect for his service to this country. I applaud his conviction as he continues to selflessly serve the people of Alberta. The Lieutenant Governor stated that his experiences in war-torn countries have reaffirmed the values that many Albertans hold true, those of citizenship, service to others, democracy, and the rule of law. It is with these values and convictions that we can create a better Alberta.

I would also like to extend thanks and gratitude to our hon. Premier. Under his leadership Alberta has emerged from the economic downturn better than any other jurisdiction in Canada and has also taken steps to be stronger than ever. It is a well-known fact that Alberta has done more than just weather the economic storm. Alberta was able to meet the challenges of the downturn without raising taxes, without making massive cutbacks to priority programs, and without leaving our children and grandchildren with massive debt.

This government recognizes that generations of Albertans have worked hard to create the many advantages we enjoy today. Mr. Speaker, making choices that will benefit the province in the long term is not easy. It requires confidence, dedication, and a strong

vision for the future. Together this government will continue to make the choices that will create a better future for our province.

Mr. Speaker, I note that the Speech from the Throne highlights many key initiatives that this government will embark on this year and in the years to come. These initiatives will build upon the success that this government and previous governments have attained. I am pleased that we will focus on initiatives such as economic diversity, which will create a more prosperous province. Economic diversity is a theme that is often heard across Alberta, including my constituency.

I am encouraged to see that this government will continue to expand our economy with Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act. In particular, this act has the potential to have an immense impact on my constituency, especially with our close proximity to the expanding northern ports in British Columbia. These expanding ports offer gateways to trade and investment. They will strengthen our economy, which will mean economic prosperity for all Albertans.

3:20

The recent economic downturn highlighted that we cannot rely solely on one export country. Alberta is heavily reliant on only one market, the United States, with 85 per cent of our exports going there. Reliance on the United States has at times put us in a vulnerable position, and the message that has been taken from the recent economic downturn is that Alberta and Canada as a whole are far too dependent on the United States to sustain the kind of incomes and social programs we have come to expect. As such, this government has taken the initiative to diversify the markets in Asia. Bill 1 will ensure that a wise and thoughtful market diversification strategy is developed.

Mr. Speaker, Grande Prairie-Wapiti is rich in the energy, agriculture, and forest industries, three industries that are coveted by growing eastern markets. Grande Prairie-Wapiti is a gateway to the north and can and will serve as a major hub in the trade corridor to these new markets. These new markets will open up a whole new level of economic prosperity for northern Alberta. Albertans are known to be entrepreneurial, and our government will foster this ambition by creating economic opportunity.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, my constituency relies heavily on the energy sector, and the confidence in the energy sector has strengthened as a result of the initiative that this government has taken over the past year. This province has shown that it is competitive, and it's attracting new investment as a result. This government's work in the energy sector is enabling Albertans to prosper. Furthermore, this province is committed to a clean and ethical energy sector, which will only ensure a healthy and robust economy. This government's renewed commitment to ensuring value-added bitumen right here in Alberta will be a welcome step in my constituency.

Agriculture is an industry that also will benefit from the diversification of our markets. Mr. Speaker, agriculture is synonymous with the Grande Prairie region. With some of the best quality of wheat produced there, the access to Asian markets will allow farmers to market their product beyond Canadian borders.

Not only do wheat and other grain products populate this region, but the beef industry is thriving as well. The attention to quality by our ranchers has ensured that beef produced in the Grande Prairie region is top-notch and, therefore, will be well received overseas.

Mr. Speaker, the forestry industry has also been impacted by the economic downturn, having a significant impact on the northern regions of this province, in particular my constituency of Grande

Prairie-Wapiti. The major cause for this downturn was the United States housing market. This leads back to my earlier point about diversifying our markets. There are many other countries that have a thirst for our forest products. We would be remiss if we did not explore these markets.

There is not only a need to diversify access to markets but a need to diversify products as well. Development of new technology allows for new products and new usage of forest products. We can no longer rely on the conventional forest products to keep the forest industry relevant and healthy. I am pleased to see this government work with the forest industry to ensure that forestry will remain a sector that is integral to Alberta. Furthermore, doing so will build a more sustainable future for this renewable resource that is so vital to many northern communities.

Not only has the economic downturn affected the forest industry; it has also been threatened by wildfires, insects, and disease. We must continue to work aggressively to combat these ever-present and natural threats. The mountain pine beetle is one of the most invasive and destructive pests that this province has been faced with. I applaud this government's effective monitoring and control of this pest, and I am pleased that there is a continued pledge to fight the invasion of the mountain pine beetle. Much like the Norwegian rat once devastated the agrifood industry, I would one day like to see the mountain pine beetle likened to the rat in Alberta: eradicated.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to touch on an industry that does not get much attention in Grande Prairie, that of tourism. As the Lieutenant Governor stated, one of the foundations of this province is tourism, yet Grande Prairie has not fully benefited from this industry.

Many groups, including this government, have partnered together to build a dinosaur museum, the Pipestone Creek River of Death and Discovery Dinosaur centre. For those of you who may not be aware of this area, the Pipestone Creek fossil site is an extensive bonebed of scientific significance, and it is one of the most northern discoveries of dinosaurs in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I am confident that this government will implement its plan for the upcoming year. The new investment and prosperity in my constituency will help this project come to fruition.

This government will work to ensure that the energy, agriculture, forestry, and tourism industries continue to prosper. In order to do so, we must make key investments in Alberta's infrastructure. Alberta's government has in place a 20-year capital plan, and a continued renewal of this plan will ensure that priority infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, roads, and long-term care facilities is built. This will lead to a province that has the most advanced infrastructure in North America.

Of interest is the investment in major economic corridors, including highway 63 and highway 43, which leads to Grande Prairie. These investments are ensuring that the northern and Grande Prairie areas are poised to take full advantage of a growing economy. My constituents will also be pleased with the pledge to build new hospitals and renovate other health facilities. Grande Prairie's population has exploded in the past few years, and a new hospital ensures the health of our current and future citizens.

Not only will Grande Prairie benefit from an investment in health infrastructure, but so will Beaverlodge and its surrounding communities. The Premier has committed to ensuring that this facility is rebuilt to today's standard so that it can continue to manage the approximately 28,000 visits per year.

The investment in infrastructure throughout the province is a needed improvement. As an example I note that investment is being made in southern regions of this province with the building of a state-of-the-art public safety and law enforcement training

centre in Fort Macleod. Not only are we catching up, but we are being mindful of the growth ahead.

Mr. Speaker, with this investment we'll build a better Alberta. As the Lieutenant Governor so emphatically stated:

of all Alberta's natural resources, none is more valuable than our people. It is our ethical citizenship, engaged thinking, and entrepreneurial spirit that have made Alberta prosperous today, and which are the foundation of tomorrow's promise.

Mr. Speaker, I echo this sentiment. That is why I applaud this government's investment in education, health, employment, and our safety. These investments will ensure a brighter future for all Albertans as we work to build a more sustainable province. A prime example of this investment is the Grande Prairie Regional College. The GPRC is training the youth of our region, focusing on health professionals. This, in turn, will ensure that the Grande Prairie region has the skilled labour force to support a growing economic region.

In closing, I would again like to thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for his inspiring words and dedicated public service and again thank our hon. Premier for his leadership and vision. I believe that under the guidance of these two men and with the dedication and spirit of the Alberta people we can make a future to truly be proud of.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, now the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed an honour to speak and to second the Speech from the Throne. I would also like to thank the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor for his service to this country in many capacities. I think there is no greater honour and no greater testament to the love of a citizen than being willing to put one's life on the line to serve one's country. For that, I am forever thankful to our Lieutenant Governor and to all those who serve today all across the world, those willing to put themselves and their lives on the line for our great nation.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, actually, I'd like to take a moment here very quickly and just remember something I said at a eulogy for a soldier, somebody that served in the British Indian army. This was just about a month ago, and his name was Major Jawanda. This man served in the British Indian army and in the Indian Army after that, and he was engaged in, I believe, three different wars. Subsequent to his service in the army he moved to Canada, and at that time he really found this spirit of engaging in Canadian society.

I was delivering this eulogy at his service, and I must say that I was absolutely taken by the fact that at one end of the spectrum this man had the courage to pick up arms to defend his nation and that at the other end of the spectrum this man had the great gentleness to teach ESL students at the elementary level of English, how he was willing to give his life and everything he had on one end of the spectrum, in the battlefield, and how he was willing to devote time with vulnerable families, people going through very difficult moments, especially new Canadians.

I found that to be the most brilliant example of the greatest of humans, where they're willing to give of themselves in every different capacity. For that, once again, Mr. Speaker, I salute all those who serve our great nation today, who have in the past, and all those wonderful young people, I know, that are stepping up to serve in the forces in the future. I salute you.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd also like to take a moment to thank our great Premier for his service. Very recently I was asked the

question of what I look for in a leader. The answer, I think, in its simplest form is that I wish for a leader that I can trust humanity with. When I say that, when I say a leader I can trust humanity with, what I'm referring to is the fact that a leader's responsibility is to make sure the most gifted and talented in a society are able to capitalize on their every potential, that they're able to uplift society in many different ways, to pull us forward.

A leader also has the responsibility of looking after the most vulnerable in our society, Mr. Speaker, those that may at times not have a voice, those that may not have a big and powerful champion that they can call upon in their most dire hours, those that very often have lost their own voice. I'm proud to say that our current Premier is a man that I believe we all can and have been able to trust humanity with, and in my eyes, in my humble opinion, I think that is one of the greatest compliments to a human being. So I, too, would like to thank him for his honourable service to our province.

Mr. Speaker, when I was elected in 2008, the world seemed to be a different place than it is today in many respects. We had tremendous growth, prices increasing in every different field you could look at. You had employers complaining about not being able to find employees, and you had employees dealing with issues of not being able to find housing within reasonable financial circumstances.

Shortly after we got elected, Mr. Speaker, as you know, the world was hit with this massive recession, the likes of which we have not seen or that I have not seen in my lifetime and that I think most of the world has not seen since the Great Depression. Although the needs of our province in the short term may have changed, in the long term they are still the same.

Now, with respect to the short term, Mr. Speaker, we are so fortunate to be in a province where this government over the last number of years saved approximately \$25 billion. Of that, \$17 billion was in the sustainability fund. The recession hits, and many jurisdictions around the globe are spending. They're increasing their debt. We in Alberta have the good fortune of having savings, cash in the bank that was put in the bank for a day like today. A recession hits. You don't need to make absolutely irrational choices overnight. We've been able to do that. We've been able to cushion the effects of the recession. We are the only jurisdiction that can still say that we're completely, on an overall picture, in the black.

Then, Mr. Speaker, one must ask: well, what about the long-term prospects of our province? It's no secret that we were attracting, essentially, a new city of Red Deer, a hundred thousand people, to our province every single year before the recession hit. We know those days will come again, and we know that we're still playing catch-up in some respect on infrastructure. When prices are lower for building and you have cash in the bank, I think the only wise thing to do is to build. I think it's absolutely prudent to ensure that the Alberta of tomorrow can be lived up to because we put the infrastructure in place today.

Mr. Speaker, I'm incredibly proud of the fact that the ring road in Calgary per se is moving forth, that we've got a new Calgary south health campus, that will have nearly 300 new beds. I'm very, very pleased that we've created 35 new schools and are looking to build 14 more by next year. We expanded the Peter Lougheed hospital in northeast Calgary. I am very, very pleased that we are preparing for what we know is coming – and that is the retirement of a great deal of our citizens – by creating more continuing care beds. Sir, I'm not referring to you retiring. I'm referring to a great deal of people. You gave me a little look, and I thought: no, sir. You have the spirit of, let's say, our youngest members, that is timeless.

Mr. Speaker, we've built 502 continuing care beds throughout Alberta since April of 2010. We're well on our way towards our target of 2,300 continuing care beds by 2012 and 5,300 by 2015. I think this is absolutely essential, and I think the time to build this is now because prices are down.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on top of that, I'll tell you that in 2008 one of the things I heard at the doors very often was the need for more police officers. At that time we committed to 300 more police officers in this province, and I'm incredibly proud of the fact that we have 300 new police officers on the streets of Alberta today as a result of our government's actions. In addition, I represent parts of the city that have a lot of young families – a lot of young families – and it's absolutely engaging and invigorating to spend time with them. Their energy and their passion and the excitement with which they raise their children is absolutely brilliant. I was very committed to championing the case for child care spaces. The government promised 14,000. Incredibly proud to say that we have over 18,000 new child care spaces. I think that is, again, showing the sort of hope that we need for the Alberta of the future.

3:40

Now, Mr. Speaker, we went into the recession knowing the sort of economic makeup of our world. We knew where the U.S. sat. I mean, they were still the big powerhouse. But I don't think we knew exactly how we would come out of the recession, what the makeup of the economic world would look like. I think today it's becoming incredibly clear that Asia cannot be ignored, that Asia must be engaged. For us to capitalize on everything we have in this province, we must engage with developing countries like India, China, Brazil, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, there are also a multitude of ways of engaging with these nations and multiple reasons for us paying attention to what's happening in these nations. One is just the fact that we have what they need. We have resources they need, we have expertise they need, so it makes sense for us to expand our markets and to service them. It makes sense for us to find ways to get our oil and gas or our expertise in various different fields to them. They have a hunger and a desire to progress, and that brings me to my second point.

I'll start this point with a very brief story, Mr. Speaker, of a family that I met within the last year. This family has relatives in India that employ domestic staff, so housekeepers and the like, at their home. Now, a condition of the staff, something the staff wanted when they were seeking this employment, was that their children, the staff's children, would be able to attend the same school as the homeowner's children. They said: "Pay us less. Deduct it from our wage if you want, but our kids need to attend the same school your kids attend." A family of four, five, six, or seven has to suffer incredibly if they're being paid that much less to put this one child through quality education, but they do, and they do this because this is their only route into those schools, into what I'd consider world-class education. This is their only route into world-class education, so they do this. They sacrifice, and they put their children in these schools.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what's happening, what's in the pipeline today, is that you have millions and millions of people who would otherwise never have the potential to learn English or to get an education that could give them a middle-class lifestyle – okay? – that are now getting these opportunities because their parents have found unique ways to get them that quality education. This first of all shows a hunger on the part of people in developing countries, quite frankly, that I think is absent in our country sometimes. I



would love to see this sort of passion and this sort of commitment to education on the part of our young people.

But what this also says, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that within a few years we will have people in these nations that have education as good as ours. My question is: what happens if India has 300 million people – 300 million people – who have an education equivalent to a North American postsecondary education? What are the effects of that on us in North America? What are the effects of that on Canada, on Alberta? I think the effect is that anything and everything that can be outsourced will be outsourced. We're seeing this today, but you're going to see this more and more and more. Engineering, accounting, law, medicine: all of that work is going to continue to move forth and be outsourced.

Legal work. I read a survey, Mr. Speaker, where many of the top New York law firms were questioned about whether or not they outsource legal work to India. The answer was overwhelmingly yes, and a few refused to answer the question. So one of the best legal markets in the world is admitting: yeah, we bill you 600 bucks an hour, and we send that work to India. That means that for the future of our province, for the future of our country and, quite frankly, the future of North America, yes, we have our natural resources – and they're absolutely important – but our natural resources are just one aspect of our future success.

What we must ensure for our future success is greater education within our nation. Quite frankly, postsecondary participation rates in this country being under 30 per cent is unacceptable. We must foster a culture of innovation in this country and in this province where every person who decides not to pursue a postsecondary education understands the impact that has on the rest of Canada's citizens. If we stall in our development and growth as individuals, we are not just affecting ourselves and our family and our immediate circle, but we are collectively having a negative effect on our province and our country as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken about this culture of innovation repeatedly, and I will continue to do so until we as a people really are committed to constant and never-ending growth. We have potential all around us that is not realized because people either don't have the ability to pursue education or because they just don't believe they can do it. I was one of those students who didn't think that I would pursue a postsecondary education, and quite frankly when I woke up to the fact that I was just as bright as anybody else, I loved it. I love education. I love learning. I love growing.

Mr. Speaker, this needs to be the rule. Never-ending learning and growth needs to be the rule and not the exception in our country. Without that, I'm incredibly, incredibly nervous of the effects these developing countries will have on our nation. Our people must rise up and understand that their abilities, their strengths, their skills are directly related to the strengths and the progress of all of us, of our society. When one of us, quite frankly, fails, we all do. We need a vibrant society where people love to learn and grow.

We also need a healthy society, Mr. Speaker, so I was incredibly proud to see that we're going to have a provincial cancer strategy. A week doesn't go by, I don't think, in anyone's life where we don't hear about someone having cancer. I visited a family on Sunday. The woman was diagnosed with cancer in December, and she passed away on Saturday night. I don't think there is a family out there that can say that they haven't been affected by cancer in some way or another.

Mr. Speaker, it's up to us to set some of these collective goals. I don't care if you're thinking that infrastructure needs to be spent in three years or five years or 10 years. You know, all of that stuff

is details. When it comes to this sort of stuff, the suffering of our population, we've really got to get together.

Mr. Speaker, that's something I'm . . . [Mr. Bhullar's speaking time expired] That's 20 minutes. Wow.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

We'll now proceed in the following order. The third speaker is the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition under our rules has up to 90 minutes to participate, and following his speech there is an opportunity for members to participate in a five-minute question and comment period as will be the rule now with subsequent speakers as well. I will invite the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, then the hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre in that order.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As Leader of the Official Opposition it is my duty and privilege to respond to the Speech from the Throne. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was kind enough to begin his speech by sharing some of his experience with Albertans. These were the only inspirational words in the speech. I'm grateful for their inclusion as I am of His Honour's distinguished service to this province and our nation. I'm grateful because inspiration is important. Alberta needs it, especially now, during this time of economic uncertainty and crisis in public health care.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, a house divided cannot stand, nor can it provide inspiration and direction needed to fuel our evolution as a province and a people. At this point I believe Albertans would be inspired by a government that could actually manage the province. Yes, concrete, pragmatic solutions would inspire a great deal more confidence in our leaders and in our province's future, yet here we are in the midst of a universally acknowledged crisis in health care and gross financial mismanagement with a government that is preoccupied with internal divisions. A government working to save its own skin is a government too distracted to deal with real problems. Stopgap solutions are a recurring theme for this Tory government. Albertans deserve better.

Liberals have always focused on pragmatic solutions that work for Albertans. Now and for the long term our solutions are based not on quick fixes and more spending but on thoughtful planning, scientific evidence, and expert advice. During this challenging time an Alberta Liberal government would protect people programs, including health care, education, continuing care, seniors' care, employment supports, and help for the most vulnerable, while scaling back on the extras.

There are ways to balance the budget without harming the average and the vulnerable Albertan. We'd establish an independent commission, for example, to establish MLA pay and benefits. We'd cut government communications and travel. We'd cut welfare to golf courses and horse racing. We'd reduce the size of government from 24 ministries to 17 and extend our capital plan from three years to five. We'd save a billion dollars by scaling back public investment in carbon capture and storage, a promising but unproven technology with a significant potential for public liability.

Our focus, though, isn't on cuts. It's on investing in the province and its people programs, the essential services that ensure Albertans are healthy and productive and the services that we all

value most. We'd start with health care, the primary service of government to the people. It's difficult to appreciate the scale of the problems in health care unless you're a patient with experience in the system or a front-line worker who has had to deal with the organizational nightmares caused by the creation of the Alberta Health Services Board and the elimination of the regional boards. Most Albertans don't care how health care is managed. They want a system that works. Quality, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness: these are the measures of a good system and of good governance.

Centralization of delivery does not work. That's why we would transition back to regional boards and reinstate the Alberta Cancer Board and the Alberta Mental Health Board. It's shocking to me that this government is finally introducing an addictions and mental health strategy and a cancer strategy two years after disbanding these boards. Talk about taking three steps back for a step forward. Professionals, colleagues, and friends, especially during the past couple of years, have expressed to me their deep frustration with a system and a government that has disregarded their career experience and made decisions that are simply wrong in terms of patient care and efficiency. Hundreds of patients have contacted the Official Opposition, outraged by delays in treatment and preventable loss of life. These delays and deaths came despite the best efforts of our front-line professionals, who have been performing above and beyond the call of duty, fighting against the tide of incompetent government leadership. The H1N1 debacle highlighted the folly of major disorganization of the health system and inconsistent direction between Alberta Health and Wellness and the Alberta Health Services Board, resulting in preventable loss of life.

Disbanding the critically flawed model of Alberta Health Services would just be a first step. We would also return democracy to health care. Our regional health boards would be half appointed, half elected. Local control is important because local health care professionals and citizens know the needs of their community and region best. What works in Edmonton doesn't necessarily work in Lethbridge or Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, or Picture Butte. Local control means better health outcomes for patients. The Alberta Health Services Board is a failed experiment, one that has contributed to the backlog in our emergency rooms today. Returning to more local control and delivery of health care will help clear up that backlog.

That's only the beginning, of course. The next step is to build enough home care and long-term care to provide seniors currently occupying hospital beds with more appropriate care settings. Not only would this provide elderly patients with better care; it will also get them out of our hospitals, freeing up the acute-care beds and moving people out of emergency rooms faster.

In the throne speech this government talked about creating a thousand continuing care beds. Once again, they didn't say how many of these beds would be truly long-term care beds, which is what many hospitalized seniors actually need, nor did they say how many of these beds will be private beds, which many seniors simply cannot afford. Long-term care should be publicly funded and publicly delivered. Our seniors have contributed too much to be shafted by government during what should be their golden years.

What this province needs most is basic services: more doctors, nurses, and other vital health care professionals. We're short thousands. Demand has long outstripped capacity, and in fact some 750,000 Albertans, about 20 per cent of us, don't have access to a family physician today.

Now it appears the minister of health, currently in negotiations with the Medical Association, will drop a renowned program that keeps physicians, residents, and students well if they don't sign

the contract for a new agreement next month. This sends the wrong message to a valued professional group.

The shortage of health care professionals has contributed to the long wait times for emergency care and surgery. It has compromised quality, and it has caused preventable deaths. It has driven overworked professionals into retirement or away from Alberta, and it has created undue levels of stress and anxiety within the health care profession, resulting in inevitable degradation of care.

In consultation with postsecondary institutions, the Alberta Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the United Nurses of Alberta, an Alberta Liberal government would increase training for the next generation of health care professionals. We'd open up more spaces in our postsecondary institutions. At the same time we would need to support creative programs such as flextime, child care, and alternate payment models to retain our current professionals and encourage a new crop of doctors and nurses to stay in Alberta after graduation.

A visionary government would also seriously invest in prevention in health. Most politicians don't pay much attention to prevention because its benefits often aren't noticeable for years or even decades, long after most of us can personally benefit from a good prevention policy. If previous governments had been more visionary, we wouldn't be in the health care crisis we are today, and I admonish all members to look beyond our own short-term partisan interests and invest in prevention.

What are the strongest determinants of health? Education and income. Compromising either contributes to more sickness, more injury, and premature death. This is why people programs are so important. They contribute to our overall happiness and prosperity. They also improve the bottom line of our health care budgets. Health education and measures to reduce accidents keep people healthy, and they save millions of dollars to the system.

An Alberta Liberal administration would restore and expand the prevention programs previous governments have allowed to stagnate. We would, for example, ban trans fats in Alberta to reduce chronic health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and liver disease. We'd outlaw smoking in vehicles carrying children, we'd pass legislation forcing all-terrain vehicle riders and cyclists of all ages to wear helmets, and we'd design education programs to reduce workplace injuries, car accidents, and domestic abuse. We would raise public awareness of the importance of these measures, including vaccination.

**4:00**

Take a look at our document Pulling Through, a plan for reducing demands on the emergency room. Step 1, gather top-tier professionals to identify necessary short-term actions and monitor in concert with the Alberta Health Services Board the impacts of these actions in improving emergency care; step 2, mobilize all available health care professionals, including the retired and recent graduates who haven't yet found employment; step 3, help Albertans navigate the health care system more effectively and efficiently; step 4, immediately provide alternative long-term care settings, including lodges, assisted living spaces, and extended care beds, with supportive home-care service; step 5, extend the hours for diagnostic imaging and lab testing; step 6, as staffing comes online, open the mothballed acute-care beds in Edmonton and Calgary; and step 7, plan for the future, including the phasing out of the Alberta Health Services Board and a return to more regional health delivery.

Mr. Speaker, I am a physician of 30 years and former public health official. I wrote this plan. I consulted with other emergency physicians. It will work. I'd be delighted if this government would steal the plan because doing so would help resolve some of the

crisis that continues in our emergency departments today. We understand, as do two-thirds of Albertans, that health care is in crisis, and Albertans understand, as we do, that it's not a crisis of funding; it's a crisis of poor management. Yet there's barely any mention of health in this throne speech.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

Bill 1, the government's flagship bill, focuses on expanding Asian markets. Well, there's nothing inherently wrong with this idea. In fact, our oil and gas policy recommends expanding to Asian markets, but this bill doesn't even go that far. It's just a call to create a commission, just like last year's Bill 1. Last year we had the competitiveness committee, and we've yet to see a more competitive Alberta. This year we'll have an Asia committee, and it's not going to get one metre of pipeline or railway built. That's the opposite of inspiration, the opposite of progress. There's no innovation, no ambition, no inspiration here. The government is still hoping against hope that oil and gas revenues will save them from their blunders.

Health is the top issue of Albertans and, clearly, our most treasured people program, but there are other people programs that also need protection, protection sorely lacking in yesterday's throne speech. For example, last year the government's throne speech included a pledge to protect vulnerable Albertans, yet PDD funding remains static, leaving people impoverished at that. This year there's no mention at all about protection of services for people with disabilities. Should Albertans with disabilities be worried by this omission? They rely heavily on PDD and AISH.

An Alberta Liberal administration would index AISH payments to the cost of living, just like MLA salaries. We'd maintain last year's increase to the family support for children with disabilities, we would reverse last year's cuts to child intervention services, and we would increase the budget of family and community support services. Prevention pays.

Environment and health are closely related. While this government continues to put all its environmental eggs in one basket called carbon capture and storage, Alberta Liberals again take a sensible, pragmatic but ambitious approach to protecting our water, air, land, and wildlife. Our environment policy requires greater efficiency of water use across the board, particularly in the industrial and agricultural sectors. We'd clean up Alberta's tailings ponds, we'd implement a no-net-loss policy to protect wetlands, we'd complete a provincial groundwater inventory and establish a credible, comprehensive water-quality monitoring program, another idea this government has belatedly accepted. Thank you for doing so. We'd eliminate the use of fresh water for deep-well flooding.

An Alberta Liberal government would also make real reductions in our greenhouse gas emissions by rejecting intensity-based targets and moving to a hard cap on carbon by 2017. We'd grow Alberta's dependence on renewable energy, including wind, solar, and geothermal, and we'd invest heavily in public transit and walking and cycling infrastructure. We'd improve Alberta's air quality monitoring system and reduce Alberta's dreadful asthma and respiratory disease rates.

We'd limit clear-cutting and increase the amount of protected park space. Unlike this government, we'd protect species like the grizzly and caribou by properly designating them as endangered. We would do all this and more. What's more inspirational to Albertans than the sight of our mountains, the sight and sound of our wildlife, the taste of our fresh water? We must preserve this. It is not ours to use and destroy. It belongs to future generations as much as it does to us.

What about education? This is an investment in our greatest resource, Albertans, and the very foundation of our prosperity, health, and social progress. The government continues to make reassuring noises about infrastructure spending, but these promises ring hollow when communities like Airdrie, Beaumont, and others, places in desperate need of new schools, have been told not to hold their breath.

Alberta continues to embarrass the nation when it comes to high school dropout rates. Too few Albertans, as was said earlier, transition from high school to universities, technical schools, or colleges. You can't build a new-technology, a clean-technology economy without a solid base of highly educated citizens. This government broke its promise to freeze tuition rates. They've slashed grants and bursaries. This government's policies are going to keep even more students from pursuing postsecondary education. The negative impact on our productivity, our economy, and our progress will be huge.

An Alberta Liberal government would provide stable funding to school boards to reduce class sizes to those recommended by the Learning Commission and eliminate the need for parental fundraising for classroom essentials. We'd fund the negotiated teacher salary increases due in September so that school boards don't have to cut staff or increase class sizes. We would end the freeze on supports for special-needs students, and we'd maintain programs that help students at risk, including children in care, to earn their high school diplomas. We'd also stop slashing the scholarships and bursaries and restore training programs to help put unemployed Albertans back to work. We would also stabilize their income supports during that time.

Compare that approach to that of the throne speech, which acknowledges Alberta's unemployed citizens but does nothing to help them. In fact, this government cut their supports and funding for retraining just last year. Even Albertans fortunate enough to have jobs have to watch their backs under this government. Workplace fatality and injury rates are still far too high. Workplace fatality and injury rates and unsafe employment are still being rewarded with WCB rebates. If you want to reduce health care costs, how about doing something about unsafe workplaces?

A responsible government would expand the Employment Standards Code to include protection for farm workers. Two brave farm workers, Eric Musekamp and Darlene Dunlop, today continue their decade-long mission to bring equal rights, including occupational health and safety and WCB coverage, to paid farm workers. That farm workers remain unprotected in Alberta is a unique travesty of human rights.

A responsible government would also conduct a long overdue and thorough review of the Alberta labour code to ensure that our labour relations system properly protects collective bargaining rights. Our government should also be lobbying a lot harder with the feds on workers' behalf to rectify imbalances in the EI program that put out-of-work Albertans at a disadvantage compared to others in other provinces. A strong workforce means strong, healthy families, a strong economy, and a strong Alberta.

4:10

Now let's talk about savings. Alberta is one of the few jurisdictions in the world that rakes in billions of windfall dollars in petroleum revenues, yet we've blown through 90 per cent of the surplus, saving less than 10 per cent for the future. The Alberta Liberals are the only party talking about a long-term savings plan, and we've been doing it for years. A visionary and inspirational government would set aside a consistent percentage of oil and gas

revenues and invest those revenues to ensure Alberta's long-term prosperity, live off the interest, not the capital, of this nonrenewable resource. Oil and gas won't be around forever, but we can build sustainable prosperity if we start saving today. Another good Liberal idea, the sustainability fund, is helping Alberta get through this recession's budget crunch. It's time to take the next step and fund for Alberta's future.

This afternoon I've talked about the government programs that Albertans value. Albertans also value certain intangibles, character traits such as honesty and integrity. The actions of this government have not inspired Albertans with confidence with regard to these traits. During the past several months Tory cronyism and their entitlement mentality have become all too evident from the government's attempt to curtail the power of the Public Accounts Committee to perennial scandals regarding expenses, salaries, and bonuses. Our current leaders have become a little too comfortable with power when they're taking Albertans' goodwill for granted.

That's why several months ago the Official Opposition released our clean government initiative, our plan to build the nation's most accountable and transparent government. It begins with a pledge, a pledge signed by all members of the Official Opposition, to safeguard the public's money, to eliminate conflicts of interest, to strengthen checks and balances, and to invite Albertans back to the political process.

Of course, a pledge doesn't mean anything unless there's action to back it up. Here are some highlights. Albertans that vote deserve a tax cut. If our plan were enacted, any eligible voter who shows up at the polls would receive a \$50 tax credit for doing so. An Alberta Liberal administration would recognize citizens for exercising their democratic rights. An Alberta Liberal administration would establish an independent commission with binding powers to set MLA pay, benefits, and bonuses. Albertans were justifiably upset when the government gave themselves hefty raises. We would make that kind of situation impossible.

We would ban corporations and unions from donating to political parties. I don't believe that money should buy influence. Government should be accountable first and foremost to individual citizens, not to organizations with deep pockets.

I have a deep and abiding respect for concerned citizens who step forward at considerable personal risk to expose corporate and government wrongdoing. An Alberta Liberal administration would appoint an ombudsman with the power to certify genuine whistle-blowers, and we would protect these whistle-blowers from job loss and give them access to a legal fund to help defend them against malicious lawsuits.

A clean government initiative also includes actions to increase ministerial accountability, reform elections, and more. My greatest hope is that this plan will breathe new life into Alberta politics and restore some trust that politicians historically have squandered. Only 40 per cent of voters turned out at the last election. I hope this plan will give some segment of the remaining 60 per cent a reason to get involved in democracy again.

Mr. Speaker, not everyone comes into this world with the same opportunities. Not everyone has the support of family or the simple good luck to find a decent job or avoid hard times. The power of civilization and society is that it gives us the ability to take care of each other. That's why we support proper funding for people programs such as public health care, public education, social supports for the vulnerable, and environmental protection, all the institutions and ideas that allow a society to grow and thrive and maintain health.

Ask the average Albertan what she values, and she'll probably list what most of us have in common: decency, compassion, honesty, love, and family. Ask her what she values about government,

and she'll probably list these same institutions: public health care, public education, and supports for people going through hard times. The values are universal. Deep down the vast majority of Albertans share them because by our very nature human beings are communal. We take care of each other because we learned through hard experience that we must in order for our civilization to survive and thrive.

My parents inspired me with two powerful lessons: first, tell the truth; second, take care of each other. Today I've told the truth as I see it, that we all have a duty to take care of each other and the world we inhabit. During hard times there is a terrible temptation to solve short-term problems by slashing budgets and relaxing environmental protection standards while ignoring the human cost of such decisions over the longer term. You cannot assign monetary value to human health and happiness. They're priceless. Alberta is wealthy enough, our people smart enough, our economy strong enough to support the vulnerable and to ensure that all Albertans continue to benefit from the people programs we value so much.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, this is the third and final time I'll rise to respond to the Speech from the Throne as Leader of the Official Opposition, and it's long past time to embrace a new generation of leaders, Albertans with new ideas, new drive, new passion. Alberta Liberals are unified in our desire to form a moderate, pragmatic, common-sense government that speaks to the values of most Albertans.

We want to be the ones delivering the throne speech and listening to your criticism, not because we seek power but because we genuinely believe there's a better way. Albertans have sacrificed too much, worked too hard, invested too much faith to let them down with half measures and short-sightedness any longer. To quote Henry George, "There is danger in reckless change; but greater danger in blind conservatism."

It has been an honour to speak out on behalf of Albertans who share moderate, mainstream, small "l" liberal values. My thanks to them for their remarkable support and good wishes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for this one if anyone wishes to speak. Five minutes.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for those comments by the Leader of the Official Opposition. He has served this Legislature well. He's a gentleman and someone who obviously cares very deeply about our province and its people. It has been and will still continue to be an honour to serve with him.

I also want to extend my gratitude to Premier Stelmach and his wonderful companion, Marie. They are both great people. They've raised great children. Premier Stelmach has served with all his heart.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, names.

**Mr. Anderson:** The Premier – sorry – has served with all of his heart. He believes in many things that, of course, I believe in and many others that I do not. But one thing is clear, that he does what he does because he thinks that what he does is the best course for Alberta. So although I will continue to point out why his and his government's policies are wrong and why I feel they will hurt our province, I will never question this Premier's integrity and his commitment to the province that we both love.

It's with a sombre heart that I address the Speech from the Throne. You know, we live in a beautiful place, forgetting for a

second that it's minus 21 degrees outside. We live among great people. We live among strong families. We live in a plentiful land with an unmatched expanse of riches and resources that the world desperately needs. But, my fellow members, I think it's important, especially today and with the events of the last few weeks in mind, that we remember that there really is chaos right now all around the world. There are riots and protests and massacres and extremists that are threatening to destabilize what is already a very fragile and tenuous world economic recovery. There are multiple western European democracies teetering on the edge of financial ruin. The Middle East has reached a crossroads of monumental importance, with one road leading to stable and healthy democracy and the other to religious theocracy.

4:20

Our North American neighbours are in equally dire straits. Mexico is teetering on the edge of becoming a failed state as horrific cartel killing sprees of police and civilians continue to grow almost exponentially every day while a cash-starved nation fights back with its so limited resources. Then there are our dear friends and family in the United States, currently squarely on the path to financial collapse caused by unfathomable debt, that generations of children not even born will have to pay the price for. The future of our most important trading partner and ally has not been so uncertain since the darkest days of the Great Depression and of World War II.

My colleagues, we live on a ship that I see is sailing right now through the eye of a hurricane. How we steer ourselves from this moment on will determine the course of our future for decades and perhaps longer. We need to straighten that course and prepare for the entirely uncertain times ahead of us. We need to be better financial stewards so that we might not only have enough to survive a couple of years of world economic turmoil but so that we can survive and thrive, whatever the world throws at us. We need to be a beacon of hope and prosperity, a place of refuge from the storms ahead, where people from our nation and even from around the world can come and know that they can find work, prosperity, and opportunity. We can be that place. I'm sure of it. We must be that place.

We have to be better managers of our finances. We cannot continue to spend at the rate that we are currently spending. Our sustainability fund is due to expire by 2012-13 or thereabouts, give or take a year. Our heritage fund, when adjusted for inflation, is worth as much today as it was in 1981. Think about that. Although most institutional debt was paid off by 2005, long-term liabilities have since skyrocketed and continue to grow at an alarming clip.

My colleagues and friends in the PC Party, I hope you understand, and I think we all in this House need to understand that we right now are squandering our province's greatest income-earning years. Although oil hovers around \$100 today, new technologies combined with uncertain economics make the future value of oil virtually unknowable over the long term. We're not prepared for a bad scenario. We are betting our own and our children's future prosperity on a best-case scenario. We can't do that.

I know we want more infrastructure, and that's important. We do need more infrastructure, but surely we can prioritize the most urgent of needs and stretch that budget over an extra couple of years in order to balance the books. Even the Liberal Party this last week recommended that same idea, one that we've been advocating for a long time. It is not extreme. It is not uncaring. It is absolutely reasonable and essential to do so. Can we not control our spending increases to the rate of inflation plus population growth? Is that really so difficult? Is it too much to ask? Is it too extreme?

We spend more than anyone in the country on social programs per person. Our problems in health, seniors, and community services are not due to a lack of funding. They are due to poor management and subpar planning. The health system, for example, is broken. It does not work. It is causing people to unnecessarily suffer and in many cases die. Unnecessarily. That's a fact, and there's no amount of money that is going to solve the problem. We can't afford that amount of money anyway. Let's come up with solutions for our health care system. Let's look to Europe and to the systems that do work, not the U.S. system. By all means, 99 per cent of the Albertans that I know are not interested in any kind of private insurance system where citizens are oftentimes left in financial ruin if they get sick or, even worse, they don't even get treated at all. No one wants that.

Aren't we ready to look at the models that do work around the world, to introduce competitive delivery, where an Albertan can take their public insurance card to the facility of their choosing, where private providers build infrastructure using their money rather than tax money to compete for Alberta patients with the public system facilities? Shouldn't we stop building new, expensive acute-care beds when we could free up thousands of existing acute-care beds across this province with a much less expensive investment in long-term care for seniors? Wouldn't decentralized health care without paid boards and large PR departments be more responsive to local needs? Would it not result in increased financial partnerships with municipalities and businesses to expand available health services? Would it not unleash the innovative spirit of Albertans to come up with unique health solutions to their very, very unique community needs? Wouldn't it result in a more stable and less expensive system, a more sustainable system as we see these same reforms have created in the European models?

The answer is: yes, it would. It absolutely would. It has worked repeatedly, over and over and over again in those nations such as Austria and Belgium and France and Sweden and Germany and Japan, not that that's a European model but another example. They are outperforming us in our health care at almost every single level, yet we continue to bang our head against the wall and do the exact same things that we have been doing for the last 20 years, for the last 40 years, but specifically the bad things we've been doing in the last five years.

We all have to be courageous on that point. All of us – the New Democrats, the Alberta Party, the Liberals, the PCs, the Wildrose, all independents – need to stop with the fearmongering and religious devotion to the status quo in health care, which does not work. We have to stop thinking that government will solve all of our health problems without help from the private and nonprofit sectors, who have so many of the most innovative and bright people in the province working for them.

We need to be open to new ideas while holding to cherished values, namely that no one, absolutely no one, should be denied health services because of an inability to pay. We can have a sustainable and world-class health system to bequeath to our children and to our grandchildren, but if we continue along our current path in health care, we will leave our children and ourselves suffering, waiting, and bankrupt. My friends, it has to change, and I hope that we can do so together, which brings me to my final point, democracy and free markets.

Democracy is powerful. As imperfect as it sometimes is, it is the only system on Earth that has consistently been able to protect freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, the rights of women, the rights of children, the rights of all men and women to be free, to excel, to pursue success and happiness in the way that they feel is best. Democracy's companion is free

markets, not unfettered markets but free markets. You cannot truly have one without the other.

In a successful democratic and free-market system government's role is to ensure a level and a just playing field. It is to enforce the rule of law and then to let businesses and individuals compete and work together to build better communities. The incentive of financial success results in competition, innovation, co-operation where it makes sense, technological advancement, and wealth generation.

Let us not be deceived by those on the extreme left, and I do not point to anyone here who fits this description. Let's not be deceived by those who would say that free markets have failed. Free markets have not failed. Over the last century they have resulted in the greatest and quickest rise in the standard of living ever witnessed in the history of mankind. We must not let political correctness or revisionist historians claim otherwise. Obviously, the rule of law must be enforced. Obviously, we do need to make sure that regulations that are needed are in place. Obviously, we cannot have fraudsters and thieves game the system to the detriment of honest and hard-working and decent people. But just as one does not throw out their vehicle because they have a flat tire, so too would we be complete ignorant imbeciles should we think to jettison our free-market system because we failed to properly regulate certain financial instruments properly or we oversaw some things that shouldn't have been done with regard to our government debts.

4:30

We need to protect our democracy and free markets. We need to ensure that the rule of law prevails thereunder. We need to make certain that each interference of government with the public is entirely necessary and justifiable. It should always be a last resort to interfere with an individual's rights, never the first resort, which, sadly, has happened too much recently in this House. We cannot allow bureaucratic fiefdom building to trample on the entrepreneurial spirit of Albertans. They're exhausted from it. They're tired of it. It's hurting families. It's too much, and we have to reduce it. We must protect the property of Albertans as carefully as we do the right to free speech or expression or freedom of religion. We must plan to carefully reduce over time the burden of government on the people through excessive taxation and wealth redistribution schemes. We must make our democracy healthy again. That means far more transparency in government, which the hon. Leader of the Opposition talked a lot about very eloquently.

Bill 50 should have never happened in a democracy such as ours: \$16 billion in untendered contracts, to be paid exclusively by Alberta ratepayers, passed out without even an objective needs assessment conducted to ensure their necessity. It is scandalous, and it should be repealed.

There is one principle above all that will save and strengthen our democracy, and that is this. We must restore the proper role of an elected MLA. MLAs are accountable first and foremost to the people they represent, not to the party, not to lobbyists, not to special interests, not even to friends. MLAs are accountable to those who step into that ballot booth and with a pencil mark an X beside the name of a community member whom they are willing to trust with the interests of themselves and their families. It is this right, it is this sacred principle that thousands of our countrymen have died for and a million more have fought for, and we need to enshrine this back into our democracy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for those who wish to comment or question. The hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening with a great deal of attention to the member deliver his comments, and quite eloquently so, I must say. I'll make a few comments by way of questions.

Often when we talk about foreign systems, we don't expect Albertans to have the time or wherewithal to analyze health care systems throughout the world. They often simply accept what they're being told. Is this member suggesting adopting a European Union model of health care, which now is harmonized virtually throughout all the members? That's something I know a little bit about, stemming from that part of the world and actually being a member of such.

You have two parallel systems in Europe right now. Yes, indeed, there is a universal health care system, that any citizen of the European Union can access, but also for an additional fee of 50 to 100 euros you can access a separate, stand-alone health care system, which I guess we would call over here a two-tier health care system. Indeed, many hospitals and clinics are being built for private-use purposes. The majority of European Union citizens are still utilizing the public system, which probably isn't anywhere comparable to that of the private system, that is being operated side by side.

Indeed, they get to access the very same doctors. If you're going through the public channel, you will see them during certain hours during the daytime for a very limited period of time, but if you pay your hundred euros, you get to see your doctor whenever you want. He'll even come and visit you at home and spend as much time as you want. Is that what you want, a two-tier health care system in Canada? That is exactly what the European Union health care model is all about.

Let's be clear about it. Yes, they have good outcomes. Why? Because citizens pay from their pocket with their Visa cards for the health care that they receive. On top of that, what Albertans also ought to know is the taxation burden on those countries. Are you suggesting that we also, then, in order to duplicate the same kind of outcomes that they have in health care systems in Europe, not only adopt a two-tier, pay-with-your-Visa-card health care system but also bring in the taxation burden that is imposed on European Union countries, which pays for some of those facilities? In Sweden somewhere around 50 per cent of the average employee's earnings are now taxed by their national government.

Let's put all the facts on the table. Highlighting certain health care systems, Mr. Speaker, and just pulling the good and not mentioning what the real cost of it is and how inequitable it is something very important.

Relative, Mr. Speaker, to the infrastructure comments I would like to ask if the member really feels that we should be more fiscally conservative and not spend the dollars that we're spending on infrastructure. He calls it prioritizing, but what prioritizing really means is delaying projects or not building projects. Would he identify which projects he would like to see delayed? Which hospitals, which clinics, which schools, which overpasses or maybe even tunnels in Calgary would he like to see delayed or removed from the infrastructure plan? As he's saying that, he rises very often in question period and during other comments and argues that this government is ignoring his constituency and not building enough schools in Airdrie. I'm sure there is a need for those schools in Airdrie. But if we're going to prioritize, is this a code word for not building or delaying building? If it is, then how

do you square that off against asking for more schools not today but yesterday in your riding?

**Mr. Anderson:** I have a whole minute to answer that, but I'll do my best. With regard to health care the Wildrose policy is very clear. Clearly, we want to look at what is working in other systems. We don't obviously want to adopt everything in every system, but we look to what works, and what is working, clearly, in the European models is having this competitive delivery model, where somebody will take their taxpayer-funded Alberta health insurance card to the facility of their choice, whether that be private, nonprofit, or public, and buy the services that they need using those taxpayer funds. We're not advocating for any kind of other system, as he suggests.

With regard to infrastructure all I would say is: "You know what? That's a debate that we need to have, indeed." But it would be very helpful if they would be transparent on that side of the House and release their infrastructure list, show us what their list says, how they're arriving at the priorities, and then we can have a debate. Until then they're saying: oh, you can't do both; you can't cut and build. Well, actually, we're suggesting that we spend about \$4 billion this next year on infrastructure. You can build a whole heck of a lot with \$4 billion. But until we know what the priority list is and what objective criteria they're using to arrive at that priority list, how can we have that debate?

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Blakett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to speak to the throne speech. I'd first like to also echo the comments made about the Leader of the Official Opposition and his dedication to this Legislature, to Albertans. I've known him on a personal level to be a man of honour, a man of integrity with passion for this province, and we thank him for his service.

I'd also like to extend the same congratulations and appreciation to our Premier. Being the Premier of a province is a tough job at the best of times. Going through an unparalleled economic downturn makes it even more so, but thankfully we have a Premier who had the vision to set aside money to the tune of about \$25 billion in our sustainability fund. Many of those pundits and those experts and the critics said years ago that we shouldn't put more than \$3 billion into that fund. Our Premier decided: no, I would put more in there. So today we're in the enviable position of anyone in North America of actually having money in the bank, having \$15 billion in cash in our savings account along with \$17 billion in our heritage account.

We look at the throne speech from yesterday, and it's just another extension of the vision that our Premier has. He had never been one to lead our government to being what everybody else is. Alberta for over a hundred years has been the leader in many areas in this country, and the world needs us to be leaders today.

4:40

Yesterday the Premier outlined in Bill 1 a focus on Asia, looking at new markets. I know one thing, Mr. Speaker, that if there's a country out there that has GDP growth in the neighbourhood of 6 per cent, I want to be their friend. You look at India and you look at China and you look at Korea and you look at Japan. That's where the world is going. Two countries alone: 2.2 billion people. In those two countries 400 million university educated people: that's the entire population of the United States. They are growing a tremendous amount, and they are going to need resources. They're going to need those resources that are safe and secure, that Alberta can provide, and that is what our Premier is getting at.

It's not about where we were. We have a rich history, and we have a great heritage, and it's based on hard work, with making money not being a dirty word, where your word still means something, where families created communities, where we always had the responsibility to take care of the less fortunate. We want to leave no one behind.

Going forward, we need to look at our prosperity and how we create that wealth 25, 30 years down the road. We're a very young province, not just in terms of years that we've been in existence but in the fact that our average age is about 36 years. We talk a lot about our aging population, but we are a very, very young province. But we cannot generate enough new Albertans through birth. We need to have immigration. To get immigration, we need to encourage the world to come to Alberta, and indeed it already has. I, like 48 per cent of Albertans, was not born here. I came here because I sought opportunity for my family. I thought that Alberta was the best place to raise that family and provide an opportunity for them and their children moving forward. So I think it's fantastic that we recognize reality.

When I was in Barbados, where my parents are from, a couple of years ago, I sat down with our Canadian High Commissioner, and we talked about how Barbados had changed in the world. He talked about the fact that in Canada and the United States we haven't realized what's going on in the rest of the world. We kind of stand smugly and say: "We're fantastic. We've done this for you." We rest on our laurels. In Canada we built the Deep Water Harbour there, we built the airport, and we thought, "Yeah, well, they'll remember Canadians," but it's a whole generation ago. Where we have one representative for seven islands there and the United States has one representative for seven islands, China has one person on every island. Russia has three people for the seven islands. What are they doing? They're investing in culture. They're investing in the fabric of people because they understand it's the relationships that you create that bring on the commerce, that bring on everything else that you need, and we should be no different. China will tell you: culture first, business second. We need to be bold, innovative, and aggressive in moving forward.

You look at the Olympics back a year ago, Mr. Speaker. There were many people under the opposition parties saying: we spent \$14 million, \$14 million out of \$37 billion, and what did we get for that? We spent \$6 million on arts and culture, yet the opposition says that we don't really believe in that and that we should give more. Like France and Quebec, we showed our artists to the world. The first day at the Olympics they were demonstrating. The second day they were dancing because they were dancing to our Alberta artists, and they saw Alberta through a different lens. We have to show that we have a soul.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we are all born with a left side and a right side to our brain. It's very important that we talk about our resources and that we have environmental stewardship of those resources and responsible enhancement and processing of those, but it's also equally important that we feed the soul of our community, of the people. In the throne speech I was happy to hear the Lieutenant Governor talk about arts and culture and talk about our Alberta Arts Days. Back at the Olympics, when they focused on looking at us – and Alberta was front and centre. We had that train, that the whole world saw, and spent the second Saturday on that train with the likes of representatives from BBC and CNN and Sky TV, the media from around the world. They were just blown away, and they were talking about how fantastic we were, how fantastic B.C. was, what a great partnership between those two provinces, 2 out of the 3 in the New West Partnership. They were absolutely right, but somehow we fail to recognize that.

Our Premier has told me – I remember when I first met him during the leadership, when he was running and I was supporting another candidate, that he talked about a vision for Alberta to make it a showcase. He wanted to make it a showcase for the world and encouraged me at every opportunity that we had to focus on Alberta to do so because when people see Alberta, they see something that they like. They see a place they want to live. They see a place they want to do business. They see a place they want to invest in.

We are innovative. We have a homeless strategy: 11,000 homes created for the homeless, at a hundred thousand dollars per door, 11,000 new homes for those individuals that usually cost the taxpayer about a hundred thousand dollars per year. So for a hundred thousand, or what we would spend on policing costs and health care costs, we're going to house a person so that we're able to treat them. We lead in that. We are innovators. We are leaders. We are meant to be leaders.

Alberta Arts Days is an example of how we became leaders. That was created back in September of 2008, Mr. Speaker. We started with 30 communities and a hundred different events. The next year we increased to 116 communities and 700 events, a fourfold increase in participation, and that was not just in Edmonton and Calgary. That was in rural Alberta. That was in Westlock. That was in Fort Macleod. That was in Edson. That was in Fort McMurray. That was in Grande Prairie. It was an opportunity where all Albertans came together to celebrate something in their own community but could be part of something.

Yeah. That was shocking to the rest of the country, but what is even more shocking is that we had the same amount of participation after three years that the province of Quebec took 12 years to plan to get their first one off the ground. We took three months because the people at the municipal level, the leaders in those communities, took charge. They made it happen because they had that can-do spirit.

We were asked to go and help the rest of the country come up with the idea for Canada Culture Days or to promote the idea of Canada Culture Days. I was asked to send a letter to my provincial counterparts, and I followed that up with a phone call to Quebec and Ontario, Newfoundland, all 10 provinces and three territories. This past year we had Canada Culture Days, which was a week after ours. We had nine provinces and three territories participate. So not only do we have what we had in Alberta happening; we had it right across the country, and Alberta was a leader there.

I got to spend the first day in Manitoba. Unfortunately, there was no federal representative, and the provincial minister wasn't there, but Alberta was there. The next day we went to Quebec to participate in the Journées de la culture. There was no federal minister there, but Alberta was there. You know, at the Winnipeg ballet and the Montreal theatre school 25 per cent of those donors are from Alberta. That's something we continue to support. As a government we continue to support it, and we will move forward in that direction.

4:50

The second thing that was mentioned in there was about creating movie magic. I know the opposition Member for Edmonton-Centre talked this time last year about the death of the film and television industry. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the rumours of their demise are grossly exaggerated. In fact, after coming back from Los Angeles a few weeks ago, we realized the production that we're going to have this spring. We have the fifth season of *Heartland* filming in southern Alberta. We have *Blackstone* filming right here in Edmonton for the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. We will have a Sam Steele movie for CBC, that will

start filming in May. And we're going to have an AMC U.S. television series called *Hell on Wheels* also film in southern Alberta.

What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that our 3,000 crew that we have in the province, about three different groups, or three crews, will be exhausted. If we get one of these productions that we know will come forward from our trip to L.A., that we're finalizing in different stages, we're going to have to repatriate people back from British Columbia. We're going to have repatriate people back from Saskatchewan. We're going to be bringing Albertans back because not only are they going to come back for a few months because there is a thriving growth in their industry; there are going to be long-term jobs for them.

Now, I say that because the world has changed. When I was in Los Angeles, we met with studio heads: Disney, Warner Bros., HBO, some smaller studios like Hollywood Center Studios and GreenHouse Studio. It was mainly the finance people. We've talked a lot back and forth about tax credits, but the question that they had wasn't about tax credits. The questions that they asked – and I was there with representatives from unions and guilds and the film commissioners – were about labour rates: you're raising your labour rates. Now, to the credit of the people that were there representing the unions and guilds, they said: "No. We'll maintain that 1 per cent because we want to be competitive." They looked at me and said: "Don't raise your incentive because if you do that, we'll get the labour rates raised, but there's no benefit to me as a studio to be able to do that. You're competitive and where you need to be in that sub \$25 million market."

They were happy because *Inception*, an Academy Award nominee, was filmed at Fortress Mountain, and \$13 million was spent in Alberta just a year ago. From that experience they raved about our crew, our locations, and in our crew not just their professionalism and their level of competence but the fact that they work hard in adverse conditions. It doesn't matter what the temperature is. They'll be there. They will show up on time, they will act professionally, and they will do it with a smile because, Mr. Speaker, they're Albertans. We need to help them move forward.

This is an area that is just part of creative industries. Creative industries, Mr. Speaker, create \$4.54 billion of gross domestic product. That's 4.5 with a B. Now, we talk about diversification. There's diversification. You've got a knowledge-based business. It's green. If you look at 3-D technologies, where we think we can be the leaders in the world – again, Alberta focusing on being a leader, not a laggard, not a me-too; we want to be leaders – we are the pioneers of 3-D in the seismic industry, have been for eight or nine years, and we will continue to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for any comments or questions. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. Thank you. I'd be most interested if the minister would continue on about the value of the movie industry in this province. I know that it looks good on the surface, but I think that there still is a great deal of work to make sure that we can get our local actors and our actual local technicians involved in those productions. So if perhaps he'd like to address that.

**Mr. Blackett:** The hon. member is quite right. We have, as I said, some 3,000 people, from grips and camerapeople to set designers, all of those. When I say three crew, it's about three crew in total. I'm told by the people in the business, our film commissioners, even the union guild members, that there is going to be work for all of those. If we come back with just one production, we are going to have people working in Lethbridge. They'll be working



in Edmonton. They'll be working in Longview. They'll be working in all of those different places. Right now I think it's about \$200 million a year. A little over a year ago it dropped to about \$150 million a year in economic activity. We expect it's going to be back up \$200 million this year. That's not just for the actors and the grips and the props. It's those costume shops. It's the hotels. It's the restaurants. It's all those other ancillary benefits. It's the drivers. You know, it's all the infrastructure that helps with that. Absolutely, we need to put our people to work, and creating projects that we want can do that.

We've talked about it, and the God's honest truth is that we've invested money year after year after year, but we don't always invest in projects to get people employed. Last year, when everybody was talking about production being down, we still spent \$18 million, the same as what we'll spend this year, but we're getting more value out of our dollar.

We've got to make sure that we have our indigenous producers taken care of to tell our Alberta story. We've got to also make sure our people are working. We've got to get a blend of international productions or productions from the States to employ people, but we have to still tell our story, and I think we've got a good mix right now. We're not resting on our laurels. It's every person in this sector working together to make that happen.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. I think we've a couple more minutes left. I also would like to perhaps have a conversation around value-added, when a film may be filmed somewhere else, but in fact we have a sound studio or we have the mixing studios here.

The other thing that I'd like to perhaps bring up is something that I brought up, I think, three years ago, that we have our AMPA awards. No one gets to see those. Why are those movies not put into our libraries? Why don't our schools have the award-winning Alberta films? Why can they not see them? Very, very bad distribution problems.

**Mr. Blackett:** We've had a multitude of different challenges, but your first point is well taken, when you talked about production. One of the things that intrigued the studios down in the south was – they usually come here, they'll film a movie, and then they'll do the postproduction back in California. We can make more money on postproduction than we can on production. For \$25 million spent in Alberta, it could be \$50 million. With a creative hub and the fact that we have the SuperNet – and I talked about 3-D technology. One of the things that they have to be able to do in the field is upload the data to send it back to the studio to look at it to make sure it's correct. You've got to do that real-time, so you don't have to tear down your set and then go back and have to film something that you've missed.

With the SuperNet, with our network of libraries, I said to them, every library is hooked to the SuperNet. You've got all the rural communities across Alberta. You can go there. We can look at how we can provide an uplink. Unlike Vancouver we can transmit the data on that 20-gigabyte pipe to them, and we can disseminate it around the province. So you can be in Olds and set up a post-production studio there. You don't have to be where the physical location is. Because we have that SuperNet, we're able to do that.

You're absolutely right. We should be able to distribute more of our Alberta films within our school system and let people know. We're working right now with the postsecondary institutions on how we can work better together, collaboratively, to make sure the next generation of film producers and crew have what we need. But we need to tell that story so that my son who's 10 years old

realizes that he has an opportunity to be in that industry as well. When you see things that are produced by talent in Alberta, that will help ensure that.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Putting people first. Alberta's most important resource isn't oil or gas, forestry or fertile prairie soil, all of which provide a tremendous advantage to both our personal and provincial well-being. Alberta's most important resource is of the renewable variety. It's people. For Albertans to not only survive but to thrive, we must be viewed by our government not as a cost or a liability but as worthy of investment.

Unfortunately, while Alberta boasts itself as being the wealthiest per capita province, far too frequently the First Peoples, our aboriginal and Métis brethren, and the last peoples, those who have most recently arrived from foreign lands, find themselves falling through not simply cracks but crevasses. Evidence of Alberta's failure to involve, to include, to successfully integrate as opposed to assimilate is most strikingly pronounced in our educational system, where 50 per cent of First Nations students fail to successfully complete or graduate after three years of high school. The dropout rate or failure to complete high school for English as a second language immigrant students is even higher, at 70 per cent. This is a colossal waste of talent and potential, for which we pay a very high price both economically and in lost lives.

**5:00**

There's plenty of blame and shame to go around, whether it be the prolonged, three-generational effects of forced assimilation, bordering at times on cultural genocide, fostered by residential schools or the self-fulfilling prophecy of one's own misfortune being someone else's fault. To move forward, we have to get past the accusations, acknowledge what hasn't worked, and adopt best practices which foster pride and self-worth, that celebrate multiculturalism as opposed to attempting to melt it down to its lowest common denominator. Pride isn't something which can be injected; it has to be adopted and nurtured. Diversity should not be viewed as us versus them but as an opportunity to share or, at the very least, appreciate a different cultural perspective, a different language, a different religion, a different point of view.

Overaccommodation can be as destructive as forced assimilation if in the end one is left with nothing to celebrate out of a fear of offending. A practice that has too often exploited individuals without the protection of citizenship is the temporary foreign worker program, so popular with the Alberta government. In contrast, a provincial program that has been successful in fast-tracking citizenship is our provincial nominee program, which needs to be expanded.

If a society is judged by how well it treats its most vulnerable, then Alberta has tremendous room for improvement. How can we accept the Statistics Canada figure of over 78,000 Alberta children living below the poverty line, a functional illiteracy rate of 40 per cent, high rates of addictions, family violence, breakups, and suicide? Why is it that twice as many women are turned away from shelters than can be temporarily accommodated in them as they with their children flee abuse? Why is there so little recognition or support for men who are abused by their spouses?

When a person is injured on a job site, whether white or blue collar, the type of work they do should not preclude them from receiving assistance in the form of workmen's compensation or long-term disability until and if they are able to return to work. Having suffered in the first place, they shouldn't have to fight the system for the support they deserve. They shouldn't be forced

prematurely back to work by the threat of having their compensation and benefits reduced or cut off. Help, whether in the form of appropriate retraining if required or long-term disability support if an individual is so broken that they can't return to work, should be there for them. They and their families should not be forced into destitution by an organization that bonuses caseworkers for arbitrarily reducing their caseloads by discarding the injured.

Seniors should not be forced to choose between paying the rent, buying nutritional food, or purchasing the medications they need. They should be encouraged and supported to stay in their own homes until such time as they, with their families, recognize the need for greater care, in a more institutionalized setting. The quality of care provided should not be based on the size of their retirement savings and should not bankrupt their sons or daughters or force families into warehousing their loved ones and nickelling, diming, and dollaring assisted living facilities when long-term care is what is required.

Alberta isn't devoid of social successes. The 10-year program to end homelessness, especially for those hard to house, should prove to government that not just from a strictly ethical point of view but from an economic standpoint it's considerably cheaper, by almost two-thirds, to do the right thing, which is not only to house individuals suffering from addictions or mental illness, which combined accounts for 60 per cent of individuals languishing on the street or in homeless shelters, but to support them so that they stay off the streets. That 24-hour guaranteed support has also proved attractive to landlords, many of whom would not otherwise have taken the rental risks.

Having made some successful inroads into providing supportive housing for the most destitute, reason would suggest that it should be easier and less expensive to give a hand up to the others, the other 30 per cent plus of individuals working each day but unable to afford a damage deposit on a habitable place of their own.

In Alberta there's no shortage of good, cost-saving ideas, but too often there's a failure to realize the value of the proposed investments. A case in point is the Alberta government's acceptance of the majority of the recommendations of the 2003 Learning Commission report. Two particular recommendations that would have had and still can have a radically beneficial effect toward improving literacy and reducing poverty are funding full-day kindergarten and half-day junior kindergarten. Unlike the forced compliance of residential schools these programs, although optional for families, would be highly subscribed regardless of economic or ethnic circumstances.

The government, to its credit, has encouraged experimental education programs. One of the programs, AISI, that saw a direct correlation between literacy and self-esteem through the reduction of class sizes for grades 1 through 3 in Edmonton's inner-city schools, was abandoned after its first year of piloting despite the tremendous achievement results recorded.

Another missed investment opportunity is the government's continued failure to support inner-city hot lunch programs although common sense, never mind compounding research supports the connection between health and achievement. Alberta currently has one of Canada's highest high school dropout rates and has the lowest postsecondary participation rate in this nation, only 14 per cent. How difficult is it to connect the dots that education equals economy? However, instead of encouraging greater postsecondary participation through bursaries and grants, the government is focused on increasing student debt through loans, raised tuition rates, and a \$500 student facility fee, which has no academic connection.

What values is this government promoting and subsidizing? Clear-cutting trumps sustainable harvesting. Approving new tail-

ings ponds projects trumps water protection and graduated development. Spending money on building more remand centres rather than on legal aid or overcoming learning disabilities. Historical first in time, first in right trumps contemporary public good. Regulation is preferable to legislation as democracy is time consuming, and the outcomes aren't predictable. A penny saved is a spending opportunity lost. Heritage refers to hockey classics, not savings trust funds. Big government is good because the ever-expanding Public Affairs Bureau tells us so.

After 40 years holding the reins of power, why experiment with citizens' assemblies, proportional representation, transparency, or accountability? Cling to power no matter what the cost. Alberta has so much to offer, both in terms of its bounty of renewable and nonrenewable resources. What's needed is a collaborative vision not based primarily on exploitation and extraction but on balance and sustainability, long-term stewardship, rights far too often taken for granted, and responsibilities frequently ignored.

Every Albertan with Canadian citizenship of at least 18 years of age has an opportunity to determine Alberta's future by registering their vote. People around the world are risking their lives daily to have their voices heard. Arise to the challenge, Albertans. Get involved. You and your province are worth the investment.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for anyone wishing to comment or question.

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on this occasion, especially after so many good speeches on both sides of the House this afternoon.

Just before I begin with some of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say thank you to the Premier for his service to this province, not just in this House but for 25 years of public service, beginning in 1986. I first met him in 2001 at an event in Calgary-Lougheed, when the former member had invited me there, and I had a chance to speak with him there.

Secondly, I just wanted to say thank you as well to the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his service to the medical profession but also to this House as well. We may not agree on everything, but I've met him many times on flights home, and we have always had a good chat. I know that he has always been in this business for the right reasons.

There was a lot in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, and really not anything that I can address in 20 minutes. Indeed, a person could talk for 60 minutes or more about the throne speech.

**5:10**

I did want to address a couple of issues as well. First off, there was a lot of comment in the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, about the importance of trade. Now, you go through Canada's history. Originally our trade was predominantly with Britain. Then later it became predominantly with the United States. Indeed, today about 85 per cent of our trade is with one trading partner, again the United States. I think that is great, that we have such a great trading partner south of us. That being said, you look at where the future is going, not so much in the rearview mirror but exactly where we're going in the future. India has 1.2 billion people. China has 1.3 billion people. In fact, those numbers have doubled or more in the last 50 years. It's very important that we look towards the future as to where we are going to go to maintain the current standard of living in Alberta or even expand it as our province continues to grow. I do believe that in the throne speech we did have the right comments, specifically about where we need to go in the future, particularly to Asia.

It is disconcerting to me that often the enemy in our prosperity can actually be at home. In fact, earlier today in question period we talked about the federal bill to stop tanker traffic west of B.C. That would have a very significant negative impact on our province, and it's really disconcerting that we see these types of bills brought up as private members' bills, I would suggest, for the short-term and fleeting political gain of someone who does not have the best interests of this province at heart.

As we keep on looking forward, Alberta does have a history of having a number of younger elected officials. I'm pleased to be one of them, at least for a few more years, and we have to look towards the next generation and what the needs of the next generation are going to be. It's often been said to me that the very city to which I moved in 2000, Calgary, in the last 10 years, in fact, has grown greater than a city the size of Regina or Saskatoon. That is only one city in this entire province. We obviously have a very good thing going here, but we always have to be mindful of what the pressures are and where we may need to go in the future. So expanding our markets to Asia, I definitely do think, is a good move.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we do have a resource-based economy. I always want to move beyond the whole notion of hewers of wood or drawers of water. We have to be competitive, and that was recognized, actually, in last year's throne speech with Bill 1, the Alberta Competitiveness Act. We can't simply depend on our resources alone. A lot of people may go and get excited at the fact that oil, as I checked the markets today, is at \$98.10. Well, that's great, but that being said, we also see that the gas prices are very low, just under \$4.

It's not just enough to export our natural resources; we need to be talking about upgrading our natural resources. We want to take steps to develop more bitumen at home. For example, the bitumen royalty in kind program, that was announced a couple of weeks ago, I think is a positive move towards that. It will result in having more bitumen upgraded here. Of course, you have the added benefits beyond just simply the royalties. You are going to have higher employment in these areas. This is a good-news story for today but also for future generations.

A big part of our competitiveness, though, of course, involves our low tax rate. I remember I was in university when Alberta brought in the 10 per cent flat tax rate. That has resulted in a lot of further income tax that has been collected from people and businesses that have in fact moved here to take advantage of the low tax rates that we offer here as well. I've heard a lot of speeches today regarding competitiveness, but then people also mention in this Assembly how we want to provide better services. The question I would ask is: would you increase these taxes? I think that we've struck a good balance of taxation in this province already.

The throne speech also talked about education, Mr. Speaker. My family, of course, has a long history of education, with my mother, Marguerite, being an educator. My grandfather Phil Hauk, who I just visited the other day, 93 years old, often goes back to stories in the classroom and the importance of educating people today and people in the next generation. In fact, people are great resources in this province. Many people come here, and the children that they invariably have when they come here and decide to stay do need a quality education.

The quote from the throne speech that most strikes me here is "an inclusive education system that supports [those] with special needs." That appeals to me in particular, Mr. Speaker, because no two people are alike, and you need a variety of educational options to educate the next generation of Albertans. Part of these include Catholic education, public education, and, of course, charter schools, many of which are in my constituency. Of course, I do

support an expanded role for charter schools, the model being that different approaches actually work, the model of choice. Why? Because we have very, very differing needs of students throughout this entire province. I think we should move further along this model as well.

I listened with interest to the hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit talk about the film industry. This came up to me when I was knocking on a door in Riverbend, a part of my constituency, in the last election, and this woman asked me not what my education is, not what my health policy is, not what my taxation policy is, but she wanted to talk about arts. I really didn't have much to answer at that point other than the fact that when she said, "Well, you must have participated in something," I said, "Well, I was a singer when I was younger, of course." She had said: "You really need . . ."

**Mr. Rodney:** Give us an example.

**Mr. Denis:** No, I'm not going to sing for you today. I'm sorry.

Having an arts policy is very important for this entire province, and it was mentioned in the throne speech as well. Recently I was contacted by a gentleman who had a film and video issue, and we talked about it. He talked about the importance of a knowledge-based economy but also that the new generation, like it or not, is on platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Now, I don't believe that you tweet your way to power. I think it was the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood who had said that first, and I would agree with him, probably on that alone. That being said, this is where the platform of the new generation is.

We need a comprehensive strategy on how we're going to support the arts here. One of the ways in which the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit has done this is by founding Arts Days. The fact that the throne speech goes and talks about that and that we plan to continue with that, I think that that also is important.

The throne speech also did talk about safe communities, Mr. Speaker. I often go back to January 1, 2009. Why is that day of importance? Well, we had two people killed in my constituency in a gang shooting. I represent a semisuburban area of Calgary. You would typically think that you might find shootings, things like that, downtown or in an industrial area. Well, no. That's not true any longer. You find it in residential areas as well. So I'm happy that the throne speech also talked about safe communities.

It talked about a gang reduction strategy as well, and I'm happy that we're going to be continuing with this. With our law enforcement framework we're going to be moving forward with the Fort MacLeod training centre. I again say that we need a two-pronged approach when it comes to tackling crime. You want to tackle both the conditions where people may likely offend, particularly the young people as well, but you also need to deal with offenders and putting the victims of their crime first.

Now, I did want to address something I'm most passionate about, and that's no surprise to anyone here. That's our housing policy. My priority as a minister here is both for the taxpayer and for the client. Some people say: how can you do both? Well, you can focus on outcomes, not so much how much money you actually spend but actually what your eventual result is.

Through competitive tendering and through a private partnership that we have, we've been able to bring our cost per unit down to about \$97,500. By way of comparison, the city of Calgary had some so-called affordable housing in the Louise Station downtown at 4th Avenue. Guess what that cost? Three hundred and twenty thousand dollars. That was not affordable to the taxpayer. It has to be affordable to the taxpayer and affordable to the client. Through our request for proposal process we receive three times

the amount of private sector applicants that we can actually go and fund. The fact that the throne speech actually goes and mentions this I think talks about this government's ongoing commitment to affordable housing.

Now, I do have a quote for today. "Government always finds a need for whatever money it gets." That was Ronald Reagan. Interestingly enough, in fact, when it comes to our housing policy, we're doing just the opposite. Last year we were able to find a 19 per cent savings in our budget, again through our competitive and open tendering process and through our private sector partnerships. For this year, well, I guess we'll have to stay tuned until tomorrow.

On the human side, of course, we're on track to create 11,000 affordable housing units by 2012. Most interestingly, with our homeless policies we're seeing our shelter usage come down. Shelters are important, Mr. Speaker, but they are not the solution. It's the difference between managing the problem and ending it. By focusing more on permanent housing, we've seen the shelter demand go down. For future generations, whichever government may be chosen in the next election, I really hope that we continue with this program because it's working.

The Member for Calgary-Varsity had talked about how he supports this. I want to say thank you to him in particular. It is really disconcerting to me when I receive calls, though, from other members saying that we should abolish these programs. I've never heard anything so out of touch with the average Albertan as when I hear calls for things like that.

We also need to focus on the reasons for homelessness. It's not simply when someone goes and says: get a job. I think that's a very ignorant comment. To me it's not a crime to be homeless. I've met with many of these people. I've met with many people who experience addiction issues, mental illness, domestic violence, or people who have simply fallen on hard times. The importance is that we need to treat people as individuals.

#### 5:20

This weekend I was at a program called Project Homeless Connect in Calgary. The Member for Calgary-Glenmore was there as well. We actually had a chance to chat with some of these homeless people again, and it's important to have that ongoing dialogue as well.

I just want to conclude with a couple of thoughts as well. Every one of us is fortunate to live in Alberta. I would put to every one of the members here today that if we were in many other places in the world, in fact, the arguments that we have here might seem trivial, given the problems we see across the world, the problems that we see in the Middle East, the problems that we see in war-torn countries, the problems that we see in Third World countries. That being said, it is upon us always to never forget the people who we represent and the voters and the taxpayers, and they must always come first.

As we move forward into this session and to the next one, we must also remember the promise of this province and the fact that freedom isn't free and the fact that we have a great resource, and the resource is not so much our oil and gas but our people, the people who we represent and the people, also, who come here and who will come here. I'm confident that as we move forward, we will continue to provide good governance and good opposition for the people here because that is what is truly the promise of this province, and that is truly what the people here deserve.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for anybody who wishes to comment or question.

If not, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity today to respond to the throne speech that we heard delivered yesterday by our new Lieutenant Governor in his first opportunity to do that.

I've had a lot of opportunity recently to sort of think about different versions of Alberta, and I'm really struck by how young Alberta is. Someone earlier mentioned an average age of 36 years old, I think. It's true; we do have a very young population.

We are, really, all things considered, fairly prosperous. Before anyone leaps to their feet and starts telling me about the tough times and all that kind of thing, yes, but if you travel at all, you start to get a real understanding that we may have had some challenges here but nothing like the challenges that they have faced in other places. All things considered, we really are fairly prosperous and continue to be fairly prosperous.

There's room for improvement always, but we are quite well educated. We have opportunity for good education here that lots of other places in the world and even closer to us don't enjoy. I have someone that's on my constituency association who is a teacher here and was a teacher in New York. Boy, he can tell me about the differences in the quality and availability of good education. So there are lots of things that I would like to do to improve the education system and access to it. I'm the daughter of two teachers, so it's kind of in our blood in my family. But, really, we are fairly well educated.

My brothers are in the trades – actually, most of my extended family is in the construction trades – and I'm very grateful that we have many different apprenticeship programs here in this province. In some of those cases the apprenticeship programs are run by the unions, which I am also very grateful to have in this province. I know that's not something that's shared by my colleagues opposite, but I am grateful for the unions. I think they play a very important role in our labour force. I think they work hard to give us a quality of life. I think there are a number of things that we can thank them for today that they lobbied for and advocated for and brought into being, like a set workweek of five days with weekends off and things like that. In fact, a public education system originally came out of the union labour movement.

I'm grateful for that because I think it gives us safer workplaces, and I really believe in the collective bargaining process. There are things that we could do in this province to make that better. That's a bit of a tough row for me to hoe in this province, given the current administration. I'm not going to stop trying because I do believe that there should be first contract legislation, and I think that there should be replacement worker legislation here as well. That's important to me, I think it's important to the labour movement here, and I would really like to see it in place.

Overall, I think we are hopeful and have every reason to be an optimistic province. As I said, that doesn't mean there aren't things that I wouldn't press you all very hard to change, and you know I will press you hard to change those things.

We are and can be a province of the 21st century. That, Mr. Speaker, is why I was so puzzled by the throne speech that I heard yesterday. It wasn't optimistic. It wasn't looking forward into the 21st century. The ideas that were in there weren't doing that. I was really puzzled by it. Even today in listening to the people from the government side, they've been bringing forward lots of ideas that I will probably talk about if I get enough time. But those ideas weren't in that throne speech, and I don't understand why. To me it reflects a way of thinking that is about rushing back to try and recreate the 1950s, and that's just not where we are anymore. That's just not the province that we live in.

Here's an example. We have fewer labour jobs here in Alberta. Increasingly, we've had robotics and other kinds of mechanics

that have taken away the need for assembly line workers or piecemeal workers. So that kind of manual labour, where you didn't really need a great education to be able to go in and get that kind of job, is disappearing on us. Some would argue: good; they weren't great jobs to begin with. I'm not going to comment on that.

You say: all right, where are the new jobs coming from? Where are the jobs of the future? The kids that are in school now, what are they going to do? What's out there for them? We're losing those sorts of manual labour jobs that tended to sit at the bottom of our labour pool. Where are the new ones coming from? We have a traditional grouping of jobs that are changing, but I think they're going to stay there in health, in education, in the social services, even in the arts, as influenced as that is by new technology. I think those jobs are going to change, but they're mostly going to stay there.

So where are the new jobs? What we keep being told is that the new jobs are in a creative, knowledge-based, innovative sector. It's about your brain, not your physical ability to heave stuff around. It's about how you can use your brain and your imagination. You know, one of the things that we're very successful at here in Alberta is the Internet games that you play where they're all animated and they fight each other out in storylines. We're very successful at developing those games here. BioWare, that company, that's what they do. They develop these online games. That comes out of Alberta. That's a knowledge-based, creative job sector. That's where we need to move for the next grouping of jobs. There'll always be management, and there'll always be retail. Yes, of course. But where are the rest of those jobs?

I was very puzzled to not hear any of that in the throne speech. What I heard was: let's get as many of our natural resources, both sustainable and unsustainable, and sell them, just shoot them out of this province as fast as we can and sell them all over the place and develop new markets in other places for people to buy our renewable and nonrenewable natural resources. I thought: whoa. I thought we were trying to reverse that trend. I thought we were trying to diversify our economy. We should be looking at how we can keep that stuff here.

Let me give a bouquet to the government for the BRIK program. That's exactly what we're talking about. That's taking that natural resource and keeping it here so that our people get jobs, good high-tech, well-paying jobs, so that they enjoy a quality of life. That's the kind of thing we need to be talking about, not continuing to ship our natural resources away to other countries.

Often, it comes back to us in a secondary or tertiary market, and the quality isn't even as good.

I'm told that often happens with raw food product that we ship out, for example. So why, why on earth? How 1950s is it that this government is talking about their big new idea, to ship more natural resources out of the province? That just doesn't make sense to me.

### 5:30

They were talking about forestry. They were talking about agricultural product, wheat. They were talking about oil and gas products. We're talking about those upgraders starting to come online again and be possible in the Industrial Heartland. I'm quite excited about those upgraders, but we do need to balance that with very strong environmental protection because there's a certain saturation point of those upgraders where you start to lose your quality of life, and the balance, the scales shift.

That's the role of government. That's part of what government does, that they provide what business will not do because business doesn't make a profit doing it. So things like police forces and fire and providing municipal services and things like that: there is a

role for government. I know that my colleagues opposite think there isn't, and they want smaller government, blah, blah. Okay. Fair enough. I disagree. I think there is a role for government, and one of those roles is environmental protection, consumer protection. That's what it needs to do. It needs to give a level playing field. It needs to be able to set limits on what the private sector can do.

"Profit" is not a dirty word; it's just that it's not the only word. Often I sit in here and I listen to people go: "We gotta grow. We gotta make more money. Money's the bottom line. It's all about money." No, it isn't. Most of us in this world work. That's true. We work to make money to do other things. Money is not the only thing. Profit is not the only word. There are other things that are important to Albertans, like clean air, like fresh water, like recreational opportunities, like spending time with their families. So "money" or "profit" is not a dirty word; it's just not the only word in the Alberta that I see.

As I said, I think that environmental protection is a big part of that. We need vigorous, muscular environmental protection that is action defined. This has been an ongoing quandary for the government because instead of actually taking the action, the steps that people expect to see that would result in change, we just get another PR project. We get more spin put on top of it.

For example, I was expecting to hear in the throne speech that we were going to have a new water act. There's been lots of talk about it. We know that there are serious issues about water in the southern part of our province. We know that there are serious issues about FITFIR – first in time, first in right – questions about it. We know that there are increasing concerns from one party and desire to have it from another side for water markets and selling of water licences. I expected to see something about that in this throne speech. Nothing.

All there is is that the government will continue to do groundwater mapping. Well, at the rate we're going with groundwater mapping, it's literally a decade or more down the line. One of the things that we have in our environmental policy in the Official Opposition is that we would invest enough money to speed up that groundwater mapping process so that we could at least get that information into our hands a lot faster.

The government, as always, is really fixated on money and on the stability fund. Sorry; sustainability fund. You know, I keep making that mistake. For some of the members that are fairly new to this House, that were elected after 2004, you've got to forgive me rolling my eyes at you all the time. But, honestly, I sat in this House and listened to Ken Nicol talk about the stability fund until I thought my eyeballs were going to fall out. He was the one that kept saying this is what we've got to do. While we're making new money, while we're making money from our resource base, we need to be putting that aside to level out our traditional cyclical economy. See, I can still hear that stuff; I sound like him when I'm talking. He was absolutely right.

The government took it and takes credit for it now. You know what? I don't care. I really am just interested in best practices. If that's what's actually going to move us forward and make a better Alberta for all of us, I don't care who gets the credit. I just want to see it put in place.

I notice that lots of people now from different parties are talking about indexing AISH payments to the cost of living. Great. I can't remember who in my caucus started talking about that. I really don't care now. If I can get the Wildrose onboard with that and the Conservatives onboard with it – the NDs already were – yippee. Let's do it. It should be about best practices for our constituents, not about some set ideological position that doesn't allow you to move from it.

On that, I would like to challenge the government to do a white paper on government revenue. I would like to have a white paper produced that we could discuss in all kinds of contexts, all kinds of forums, on Twitter and Facebook, about how the government raises money and what it does with it. What do our constituents really think about taking natural resource revenue and subsidizing services they are getting today with that money, right out of the ground right to paying services today, no savings involved? What do they really think about a consumption tax or about municipal funding? Let's do a white paper on that. That would be interesting. That would be new.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for anyone to comment or question. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the member would be averse to perhaps discussing more of what she would like to see in that white paper because I think that it's probably a good idea and that the white paper, of course, would then be shared with all Albertans.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Well, because it's one of those things that politicians are never supposed to speak about for fear that they'd get labelled as tax and spend, although I notice that one of my colleagues, Battle River-Wainwright, has talked about consumption taxes in the past. Good on him because I think it's something that should be examined. I think it is an issue that people want to weigh in on. I think we've got to get over this idea of being slammed as a politician because we're willing to talk about different sources of revenue. I mean, none of us wants to burden people so that they don't have a quality of life, but do we have the best balance right now? Is a 10 per cent flat tax on income the best way to do things?

What about municipal financing? I think the municipalities would argue. The AUMA is now trying to get a piece of provincial income tax to subsidize what they're doing in the municipalities. Anyone in a municipality, some of you in here, will tell us that property taxes are not flexible and don't deal with growth. So on every level of what we're doing here we don't know if this is the best mix of government revenue, of revenue to help us deliver the programs and services, and I think that's something we should look at.

The other thing we need to look at is investment. Investment is about having your money make money. So when you talk about investment, to me that's about investing in education because smart, well-educated people help your province make money. They become part of that knowledge-based economy.

Investing in the arts. I was very happy to hear the minister finally talking supportively of the arts. Thank you so much. Thank you for finally spending time with the people in the film area and hearing what they're saying. Thank you very much for that. I'm sure they appreciate it, and I definitely appreciate it.

Investing in the arts, depending on which figure you want to use from the minister's department, is an \$8 to \$12 return. That's an investment. Man, if I could put my money in a bank and get \$12 back for every dollar I put in, we'd all be running to the bank. So why on earth are we not investing in the arts when we know that's the kind of return that we can get? I mean, honestly, cutting the arts? For the amount of money that that budget is right now, it's pocket fluff for you guys. You are cutting a couple of million dollars. It's pocket fluff out of a total \$37 billion budget, and the

effect it has on that sector is devastating because it already works on not very much money.

So when you talk investment, there are a lot of places we can invest in this province where our money would make money. Two of them are investing in education and investing in the arts.

Thank you for the opportunity to expand on that.

**5:40**

**The Acting Speaker:** There's still some time left under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Do any other members wish to speak? The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate very much the opportunity to respond to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne, and I appreciate very much His Honour and the commitment that he's made to public service in our province.

I have a few comments with respect to the speech. I said yesterday after hearing the speech that I felt that this was a last will and testament of this PC government. What it represents, in my view, is a recapitulation of promises and commitments that have been made over the years but which remain unfulfilled. For example, the commitment to cancer, dealing with the cancer epidemic that's going to be expected, was something that Premier Klein raised five or six years ago, when he promised a billion dollars for cancer care. Of course, that didn't transpire.

There are many others. Another one I think that is worthy of mention is the police college in Fort Macleod, Mr. Speaker, and the promises that were made to establish that many years ago. Again, that has been recapitulated. There are promises relating to health care, of course, and to long-term care, to children in care, around community and family safety, better environmental planning and monitoring, and so on.

I think the speech really represented a dawning realization that the government has not provided the leadership in building a strong economy or creating jobs in the future. It also has to take into account the government's dependence on revenue from non-renewable energy sources – particularly the natural gas royalties are not going to be there in the future – and the reductions that the government has made in taxes for the corporate sector, where these taxes have been cut by nearly half over the last eight years, and of course the flat tax on personal income, which gives a massive gift to the very wealthiest Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, also the speech does not deal properly, in my view, with royalties, and it doesn't recognize the fact that this particular government under this Premier came into office promising a royalty reform and promising to increase royalties and the numerous steps backwards since that time, to the point where we're virtually at the same place we always were, charging some of the lowest royalties on gas and oil in the world.

Our party has a very different view of Alberta, a view that's confident and which believes that there are common-sense, effective solutions that stand up for our families. I think people, notwithstanding the various leadership races that are underway in some of the political parties, are waiting to hear what can be done to assure a strong and prosperous Alberta, and that's what I'd like to speak a little bit about today.

Mr. Speaker, education is critical. The future of our province depends on a well-educated and a well-skilled population. We believe that every child needs fair access to the best possible education, but I think that that requires strong support for local school boards to ensure that communities have the schools that meet the needs of their families. Schools in older communities are vulnera-

ble to being closed, and in our view this is a real blow against these communities. It works against the ability of families in those communities to provide the best possible education for their children. We take seriously the threats made to local governance in education, and we think that this is something that would be very detrimental to our educational system. We need to find ways to help support local school boards and not to create anxieties for them.

Mr. Speaker, in postsecondary education we need to do more to make education choices affordable for every person. We believe that the refusal to limit increases in noninstructional fees is a significant detriment. They become a backdoor route for postsecondary institutions to make up for underfunding on the backs of students. The government requires approval for postsecondary institutions for setting tuition fees, and they should not allow this loophole to be used to get around that. The government needs to be accountable, as do the postsecondary institutions, to make sure that education is provided in a way that does not affect accessibility of students, particularly those from less affluent circumstances.

Alberta New Democrats have for years championed positive change in the health sector, and we've presented real and effective policies to do that. I want to talk a little bit about long-term care because this government has created a great deal of confusion, and in my view deliberately so, between long-term care, which is part of our health system in which people are medically assessed as requiring ongoing care, nursing care, and so on, and in which drugs and other services are provided as part of our health care system, and assisted living or designated assisted living, where people pay on a cost-plus basis for every additional service, pay for their own drugs, and generally receive lower levels of care. The government is attempting to substitute assisted living beds for a real need in long-term care beds. That need, Mr. Speaker, is about 14,000 by the year 2019, yet the government is only committing to providing a few thousand assisted living beds over the same period.

It is a crisis in the making, Mr. Speaker. It's already a crisis for many families, some of whom have to give up full-time jobs in order to provide care for elderly family members because they can't afford or can't get the care which they require. Unless the government deals with the situation, we're going to have a serious crisis not only affecting the well-being of elderly and chronically ill individuals in our province but affecting families that are trying to support those individuals. We have done our very best to bring this issue front and centre to the attention of the government, and so far they continue to ignore the fundamental difference, as they ignore their promise made in the last election for 600 additional long-term care beds.

Mr. Speaker, we also have proposed good solutions with respect to prescription drugs. The government would like to have us believe that all of the cost increases that we're facing in our health care budget in this province are due to people aging, being out of shape, or smoking, making personal choices that are affecting the costs of the health care system. But they ignore the fact that one of the major single contributors to increases in our health care budget is drug costs. They ignore the fact that large pharmaceutical corporations have patent protection for 20 years in this country, and they use that in order to provide drugs at very, very high prices because they essentially have a monopoly.

We brought to the attention of the government that current negotiations between the government of Canada and the European Economic Community for a free trade zone involve demands from the EU for extensions of patent protection since the European economy is the host to a significant number of some of the largest

drug companies. That has been identified as something which in Alberta alone may lead to an increase in our health care costs of \$210 million per year, yet the government has remained silent with respect to the negotiations that their cousins in Ottawa are conducting with the European negotiators.

5:50

Mr. Speaker, we've talked about ways that we could economize on drug costs, and we talked about a plan. Unlike the government, which has failed twice now to bring in a new seniors' drug plan, we were able to show how we could substantially increase coverage for drugs to seniors without increasing taxes by even \$1. That is based on a New Zealand plan. By negotiating bulk-buying prices with the big drug companies for brand-name drugs, we estimate that we could save over a hundred million dollars a year. If that was put back into seniors' drug coverage, we could make sure that seniors have the drugs that they need without exceeding \$25 a month regardless of the number of prescriptions. Right now in this province it's \$25 per prescription. Of course, many seniors have multiple prescriptions, so the costs can be hundreds of dollars a year for seniors with multiple prescriptions.

Mr. Speaker, there's lots that can be done to improve health care. I talked about long-term care. The lack of mental health care beds in the province is another blind spot of this government. They talk about more community sports, but they don't talk about more mental health beds, and it is the lack of mental health beds and the lack of long-term care beds that lead many people to be placed in acute-care beds in our hospitals. That, of course, means that those beds are not available for emergency room patients once they've been stabilized in an emergency room. It's the fundamental reason for the crisis in our emergency rooms.

The government, instead of dealing with long-term care and mental health beds, which are much cheaper to operate than acute-care beds, is addressing the problem by adding more acute-care beds instead of freeing up the ones that we have and, at the same time, dealing with a chronic shortage of mental health and long-term care beds.

Mr. Speaker, solutions are there for the health care system. We don't necessarily think that you have to add more money, but you have to spend more wisely. This is reflected in a recent poll, which shows that 66 per cent of Albertans believe we have a health care crisis, and 60 per cent of those people believe that it is not a lack of money but mismanagement that is creating the situation. New Democrats have always been the most reliable champion of public health care. We invented it, and we will stand up for it always. I don't mean to in any way denigrate the commitment of other parties to this, but I just want to underline that it is something that is at the core of our values and our beliefs.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we have to talk a little bit about the whole question of landowner rights in this province. The government has forged ahead with three pieces of legislation – formerly Bill 19, Bill 36, and Bill 50 – all of which are designed to eliminate the traditional protections for landowners against arbitrary government actions with respect to their land. That is being driven, quite frankly, as Bill 50 showed, by a desire to forge ahead with massive new transmission infrastructure projects, which the government conservatively estimates at \$8 billion, but I think a more realistic estimate is \$16 billion. That is many times the total value of the entire infrastructure in our province for transmission today.

Why is that occurring? The government wants to go ahead with this. They've overridden traditional protections for landowners for their property, and they have eliminated the traditional requirements that these projects be justified before a regulatory process,

with people having the right to intervene and challenge the costs and challenge the need for the projects. The cabinet will simply designate them as essential infrastructure, and all of that is short-circuited and no longer required.

Why is this happening? Well, in our view – and we, I think, take a different view than the other parties on this – this has to do, fundamentally, with the deregulation of generation in our province. We addressed this issue at the forum in Vegreville, which the Premier didn't attend, but we had Danielle Smith from the Wildrose Alliance, and we had the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, the Liberal leader, present and myself on the stage. Ours was the only party that took the position that we felt deregulation was the problem and that it had to be changed. The other two party leaders and, I know, the government all said that they favoured going ahead with deregulation.

That, to me, is a key question because deregulation of generation means that instead of approving after a regulatory process a new generation and building the new transmission that's required specifically for that generating site, whether it's a coal plant or a gas plant or whatever it is, now anyone can build a plant anywhere they want. So when we met with people from the transmission authority, with one of their chief planning engineers, after some discussion it dawned on me that the real reason was that you wouldn't really know where anybody was going to set up their plant, and if they thought they could make money, they could because it's no longer planned and no longer regulated. What that means is that you have to build a transmission infrastructure that is robust enough to handle it. [Mr. Mason's speaking time expired] If somebody wants to ask me a question, I have a few more things to say.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Ms Notley:** Yes. That was a very interesting point that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was making about transmission lines and overfunding, so I think that I'd maybe like to hear a bit more information on that.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, hon. member. I do appreciate that.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, with respect to that is that, in fact, we are overbuilding our transmission infrastructure in order to accommodate generation deregulation. It's massively overbuilt. It's been likened to building a 32-lane highway between Edmonton and Calgary, far more than you need. I mean, it would be lovely to have, but I think that we need to recognize that all of the costs related to this are going to be paid by the electricity consumer, so we're going to see sharp increases in our power bills in

order to build infrastructure that allows people to export their power to the United States on a for-profit basis. That has led this government into a real minefield in terms of where they're going, and there are more mines ahead with respect to that.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we are committed to balanced budgets. We are committed to fair taxation but also to competitive taxation. We believe that if this government had not walked away from revenue from the wealthiest people in our province, from the oil industry and the gas industry and the most profitable of corporations, we would not be in a deficit position today. This government has created this situation. When the times were good and the money was flowing in from natural gas royalty revenues in a big way, they felt that they could give gifts to all of their friends and reduce the amount of taxes that they were paying. Now the middle-class families and the working families of this province are paying the price.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say very clearly that we do not think that the vision which is included in this Speech from the Throne is, frankly, much of a vision at all. It really is a reiteration of the things they wish they had done, the things that they promised to do that they might get around to sometime if they were ever elected. But I think they have exhausted the patience of the people of Alberta. They're out of ideas, and they're almost out of time. I think that this very weak speech reflects that very well.

Alberta New Democrats have a vision, a more positive vision for the people of this province, and we're going to continue to communicate that to the people of Alberta. We expect that there's going to be increasing levels of support for a more progressive, more humane, and more sensible vision for this province than that contained in this Speech from the Throne.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** There's still time available on 29(2)(a).

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that we adjourn, but I'm not sure: do we have to have a motion to adjourn debate first?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, if I may, at this point in time, looking at the clock, I would like to adjourn the debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, in light of the time, I would now move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m. to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]







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