



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday, February 24, 2011

Issue 3

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.

Thursday, February 24, 2011

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Grant us daily awareness of the precious gift of life which has been given to us. As Members of this Legislative Assembly we dedicate our lives anew to the service of our province and of our country. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, it is with mixed emotions that I stand today to introduce very special guests in your gallery. I say mixed emotions because saying farewell to two people that I have truly loved is going to be difficult. I know that when I say *domo arigato*, thank you for your service, and *sayonara*, I truly mean in my heart that we will meet again. Yasuo and Kyoko Minemura have been exemplary representatives of their country, Japan. For over three years they have served, living in Calgary, hosting many of us in this Assembly, always welcoming with their generous hearts the people of Alberta, introducing industries to people and making valuable contacts for Albertans with the people of Japan. They have illustrated by their grace, wisdom, and sensitivity the very best of Japanese exports, two wonderful people that are with us today and seated in your gallery with Tim Marriott. Ladies and gentlemen in the Assembly, please join me in thanking Yasuo Minemura and his darling wife, Kyoko, for their exemplary service. Please stand while we recognize you.

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

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two people I'd like to introduce today. One of them is my long-suffering former legislative assistant, Lindsay Cooke. I know she's in here somewhere. There she is. Stand up, Lindsay. She is a very faithful assistant, and I really appreciate everything she's done for me. She's finally rid of me, but I wanted to have her here to acknowledge the work she's done for me. Thank you, Lindsay.

Also, my good friend and mentor and a former member of this Legislature, LeRoy Johnson, is in the Speaker's gallery. He served from 1997 to March of 2008. He is also, of course, the father of the Member for Athabasca-Redwater. I'm very pleased to have him with us today.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Ms Evans:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When I came into the building today, a wonderful student from this school presented me with a gift that I haven't even had a chance to open. These visitors are from Lakeland Ridge public school, a bunch of wonderful students accompanied by Mrs. Mair, Mrs. Lundin, Ms Chase, Mr. Robertson, Mr. Ron Hauser, Mrs. Gale Fuller, Mr. Greg Fuller, Carla Petroski, Marina Troake, and Alex Tighe. Would the students and their parents and helpers from Lakeland Ridge school please stand? Welcome to all of you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of 19 students, 23 guests in total, from Provost public school in the constituency of Battle River-Wainwright. When I asked them how they wanted to be described, they simply said "awesome," and after speaking with them for a bit, they are. They're accompanied by their exceptional young teacher, Miss Jamie Bishop, and parent helpers Joanne Paulgaard, Kim Higdon, and Linaya Lessmeister. They're sitting behind me in the members' gallery. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. Hayden:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my honour and pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two wonderful people from my constituency, Wayne and Loree Nixon. For a number of generations both of their families have contributed greatly to the Drumheller-Stettler constituency, in Loree's family's case in agriculture but also in rodeo and Wayne's family in rodeo. Wayne also serves as the reeve of the county of Stettler. They've both given tirelessly to their community. Wayne's father and my mother actually attended high school together a few years ago. It's a pleasure, and I ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two very important people. I have here with us today my new constituency assistant, Rashelle Dubrule. Rashelle has had experience in a lawyer's office, and I think that will come in handy as a constituency assistant. She's shown compassion and energy, and I'm pleased to have her here.

Along with Rashelle I have my old constituency assistant, Darin Doel. Darin has been with me for 10 years, so I feel like I'm losing a part of my family, but I want to congratulate Darin because he's moving on. He should be going back to school to become a psychologist because my constituents have come to know him as Dr. Phil. Darin is moving on to be the executive assistant to the vice-president of our central Alberta Health Services, and I would like to congratulate him. He said I could tell you anything but just don't give out his cell number.

Could I have Darin and Rashelle rise and receive the traditional warm welcome from the Assembly. They're in the members' gallery.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two very talented individuals. The first one is Mr. Gordon Chan, whom I had the pleasure of getting to know over dinner last night. Gordon works for Meyers Norris Penny, and I'm impressed with his long and diverse background in the financial industry, working both overseas and in the United States. But what really impressed me with Mr. Chan is his vast and extensive training and experience in the mixed martial arts, something you don't often associate with chartered accountants. Gordon and his wife, June, and his young children, Cassidy and Dakota, now make their home in Calgary,

where he spends much of his time as a hockey dad, something many of us are familiar with.

Many members may know my second guest, Mr. Lanny Westersund. For many years Lanny worked in the Legislature for a number of our MLAs here, and he is still a familiar face in the hallways and at social events. I'm sure my colleagues will agree with me when I say that Lanny is one of the most dedicated and hard-working individuals that has worked here in the Legislature. He currently works for Meyers Norris Penny, where he is active on many of the aboriginal files. One thing I would like to mention is that Lanny is perhaps the strongest supporter of the Calgary Stampede that I have ever met, to the point that he is somewhat of an unofficial ambassador.

With that, I'd like the two to please stand and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly today three special guests and friends. The first is one of two "Cheryls" that manage my constituency office, Sharyl James-Wright. Would you stand, Sharyl? Beside her is her father, Pat James, who is a really good friend of mine as well as of the minister of agriculture and a trail riding buddy of ours. Also, we have Al Kemmere, a friend of mine and a councillor for Mountain View county. I would ask all members of the Assembly to please welcome them.

1:40

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

**Mr. Xiao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to this House a good friend of mine, a good fellow Rotarian and good business leader in town and also a good community leader, the former president of the Rotary Club of Edmonton, Mr. Scott Montgomery, and his assistant, Denise Brunner. They are here for the budget. Please rise and receive the traditional welcome of this House.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a number of guests today. First of all, my constituency assistant in Red Deer-South, Brenda Johnson, and her husband, Ken. Also joining us today is Al Evaniew, a long-time personal friend who works with Brownlee Law, and two very special constituents from Red Deer-South, Marlin Styner, who serves as the chair of the Premier's council on disabilities, and the driving force in his life, his wife, Diane Gramlich. Also joining us today is Tim Creedon, who is the executive director of the Red Deer Chamber of Commerce. I'd ask my guests to rise and receive the warm reception of the members.

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and, in fact, a pleasure to rise today and introduce again to this Legislature my partner, my wife, Debbie Oberle, who has joined us today to watch the budget.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a few individuals that have been a big part of helping to make Alberta a better place. The first one is Gordon Butler, a long-time rancher, advocate for property rights, and just an awesome Albertan, who travels around promoting agriculture and what Alberta has to offer. I appreciate his dedication over the years and wish him the best.

The next two are Said Abdulbaki and his brother, Raed. They are also from Calgary and just awesome individuals that are true Albertans. They're always promoting Alberta and promoting the Wildrose Party and what it has to offer in order to make Alberta a little bit better. I'd ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the honour of introducing two guests, relatives I would say. As you know, in northern Alberta we're related to everybody. They have been recently elected to the Peavine Métis settlement, and they're seated in the members' gallery. Their names are Ken Noskey, who is the chair of the Peavine Métis settlement, and Sherry Cunningham, who is also a councillor of Peavine Métis settlement. I'd ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, did I miss anyone?

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege and honour to introduce to you and through you to all members a couple of people in the members' gallery. They are my wife, Pauline Prins, and seated with her is Mr. Paul de Jong. He is the former prairie director of the Christian Labour Association and currently the executive director of the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada, PCAC, from Calgary, visiting in Edmonton today for the budget. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce a good lifelong friend and a friend of this Assembly, Mr. Brady Whittaker. He was previously the mayor in Whitecourt and now serves and works with the Alberta Forest Products Association of Alberta. I'd ask Brady to stand and please be recognized by this Assembly.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

### St. Albert Sesquicentennial

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One hundred and fifty years ago last month Bishop Taché and Father Lacombe stood on a hill on the north bank of the Sturgeon River and proclaimed that the site would be the ideal setting for a Catholic church and an agrarian settlement. This was the origin of the first nonfortified settlement west of Winnipeg.

Today St. Albert is a prosperous community of 60,000 residents with a land area extending beyond the original St. Albert river lot pattern, which was the norm before the adoption of the Dominion Land Survey system.

St. Albert is renowned in Alberta for its high-quality arts and sports programs and its parks. St. Albert has recently adopted the motto Cultivate Life in recognition of its agrarian roots, its tree-lined streets, and its strong botanical presence.

St. Albert is proud of its most famous citizen, the late Lois Hole, former Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, the Queen of Hugs. Her Honour did so much to cultivate life in St. Albert, starting with the Hole family greenhouses, which have now been transformed into the Enjoy Centre, a major commercial and botanical attraction next to the Lois Hole provincial park and the new Ducks Unlimited viewing platforms adjacent to Big Lake.

On your desks this afternoon is a lapel pin bearing a reduction of a painting by Alan Nuttall, a local artist who often has prints available in the Legislature Gift Shop. The scene on this lapel pin depicts kids skating on the mighty Sturgeon River, with the historic grain elevators, the CN railway trestle, and St. Albert Place in the background. I had this pin minted in recognition of St. Albert's 150th anniversary.

St. Albert Place was designed by Alberta Métis architect Doug Cardinal, who has designed many unique buildings in Alberta, Ottawa, and even in Washington, DC. His designs are based on his philosophy that the built environment must blend in with the natural environment. As such there is not a straight line in the entire building.

St. Albert is also well known for hosting numerous provincial, national, and even international sporting events. As I speak, the 55 Plus Winter Games have just commenced with a torch relay, bringing over a thousand seniors from across the province to compete in 13 different events.

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

#### Disclosure of Leadership Campaign Donations

**Mr. Mason:** Albertans deserve to know where the dollars that support party leadership candidates come from. It's no secret that special interests pump tens of thousands of dollars into leadership campaigns, seeking favours. We know, thanks to electoral financing laws, that corporations, especially oil companies, donate tens of thousands of dollars to the Conservative Party, for example. We see the results: the lowest royalties in North America, lax environmental monitoring, and a permissive workplace safety regime. Yet when it comes to leadership campaign donors' donation amounts, the favours sought remain secret.

It's disappointing that the Government House Leader spoke yesterday against an urgently needed debate about leadership campaign donation disclosures. Our call for an emergency debate was for good reason. Albertans deserve clear laws on this before three leadership races come and go by the end of this year, and this government is trying to stall until it's too late.

We would not need an emergency debate if the government had acted years ago, when Alberta's NDP first raised the issue. Instead, they ignored a unanimously supported 2007 motion I made, calling for fair rules. Instead of showing leadership last year, the former Justice minister shuffled the issue off to a committee. This government broke yet another promise to Albertans. The giant loophole in Alberta's election financing laws remains. The Tories' reputation as the most secretive government in Canada is well deserved.

The consequences of this legislative void are clear. The former finance minister, a repeat PC leadership candidate, did not disclose his 2006 leadership campaign donations. Wildrose Alliance

leader Danielle Smith flouted accountability by refusing to disclose her 2009 campaign contributors.

Albertans are left to wade through a hodgepodge of different rules applying to different candidates and parties. There's no guarantee of what and how fast different parties will disclose donation information.

Party promises can be broken. Election laws can be enforced. Every MLA, front-benchers to back, has to meet strict financial rules during elections. We should expect the same in leadership contests. This government needs to stop its shameful denials and introduce donation disclosure legislation now.

#### Oral Question Period

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

#### Access to Psychiatric Care

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has said that there is not a crisis in health care, but yesterday we were contacted by a mother who clearly knows the system is in crisis. She has a son who has severe mental illness, who has been suicidal, and she has taken him repeatedly to the Royal Alex emergency department, where he has been unable to be admitted. She's been forced to leave the province to get the treatment her son needs. To the Premier: why should a mother with a son with severe mental health issues have to leave the province to get access to appropriate treatment?

1:50

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday and as I continue to say, our health system in this province is not in crisis. There is always room for improvement, especially in access, and that's why we've committed to a five-year funding agreement with Alberta Health Services and will continue to look at areas of improving access. The minister will be able in the next question to identify all of those five areas.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, again to the Premier. Access to residential psychiatric treatment for children with mental illness is just not there. This mother has been waiting for nine months to get her son into an appropriate treatment centre. Will the Premier commit to looking into this situation and see what can be done for this mother and family?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Yes.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While access to psychiatric care, especially for children, is lacking in this province, does the Premier agree that 24 psychiatric beds for children are not sufficient to serve all of northern Alberta? Twenty-four in-patient beds.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a good point. I'm not a health care professional, so I can't say whether 24 beds is adequate or not. We'll leave that to the medical profession to dictate. On the other hand, there are things that Alberta is doing that other provinces aren't doing, and that is especially in the area of autism, where we continue to attract families moving to Alberta because we do provide good services and also pay for the medication.

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

### Operating Funds for Hospitals

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, two out of three Albertans recognize what we have been saying in the Liberal Party for some time, that there is an ongoing crisis in the health care system, and it's because of Progressive Conservative mismanagement. An Alberta Liberal government would include operating budgets when planning capital projects. To the Premier. The south Calgary health campus, to be opened next year, was built with no plans for the hundreds of millions of dollars in operating costs. How can the hospital be opened without an operating budget?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to undertake that question. I think if the hon. member stays patient for a few more hours, he will see some answers, possibly, to that question. The bottom line is that we budget in the year of the opening of a facility the costs associated with running the facility. You'll see that coming to pass as that hospital starts to open up. It's a wonderful facility, as you know, Mr. Speaker. One point three billion dollars for one million square feet in Calgary to help them out.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, Calgaryans are very much looking forward to it fully operational. The question is when? With the Peter Lougheed expansion, the Rockyview expansion, the Sheldon Chumir centre, the east Edmonton health centre – a laundry list of Tory mismanagement and broken promises – when will you commit to ensuring that there will be enough staff and funds for these hospitals?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, right now I'll commit to that. The fact is that as these facilities open, Mr. Speaker, funds are put in place in the year that they open to help staff those facilities. In the case of the south Calgary health campus in the current budget, 2010-2011, we allocated \$50 million to begin the off-site training and the recruitment process, and additional dollars will be provided as they are needed.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, history tells a lot about those commitments, Mr. Minister.

Will the minister tell Albertans if the Edmonton clinic, also slated for opening in 2012, is going to face the same problem of underfunded budgets and lack of staff?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** No, Mr. Speaker, that's not the case at all. There will be adequate staff put in place. Recruitment processes and training processes are already occurring. The fact is that right now we're looking for the exact spots that we can fill with the monies that we have, and as we need more spots, they will be filled with more dollars to pay for them. The bottom line is that we have space that is being built, that is being shelled in now because it's cheaper to build the additional space now than it is to try and add it on two, three, four, or five years later.

**The Speaker:** Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Long-term and Continuing Care

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Affordable long-term care is a priority for Albertans and certainly the Alberta Liberals. There are 759 Albertans waiting in hospital for long-term care, yet a thousand continuing care beds were re-announced in the throne speech. Continuing care is not long-term care. To the Premier:

how many of the thousand continuing care beds are actually publicly delivered long-term care?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, again, we're going to be, you know, talking about whether it's continuing care or long-term care. I can tell you that it's about time in this country and in this province that we change the description of long-term care. We don't want to put people in long-term care. We want to put people in a facility that both spouses can spend time in together for their last few years of married life so that we don't separate them because we call one area long-term care and the other one continuing care. Surely in 2011 we can keep married couples together and give them the quality of life that they deserve.

**Ms Pastoor:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Premier, his arguments and his . . .

**The Speaker:** No preamble, please. Go to the question.

**Ms Pastoor:** . . . speaking was actually old hat. These arguments do not stand anymore today. There are people that need long-term care.

How many of these thousand beds will be delivered by for-profit deliverers, where seniors will be nickelled and dimed and dollared just to get an extra bath when they need one?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Further to add to my first answer, we'll make every effort to make sure that seniors can retire in the very same community that they helped build.

**Ms Pastoor:** We are apparently talking about apples and oranges here. Sorry.

There are 759 seniors who are waiting in hospital, and they're there because this government has ignored their needs. When will this government increase publicly funded, publicly delivered long-term care beds?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, seniors of this province are not apples and oranges. They're people that helped build this province, gave us the quality of life that we enjoy today, and we'll continue to ensure that they have the best quality of life possible as they retire and live out their last few years in this province.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Seniors deserve our respect, Premier.

### Reporting of Child Pornography

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a new Minister of Justice, who I want to congratulate and welcome into that portfolio. Minister, a year ago this House passed Bill 202, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act, but it has come no closer to the law of the land. This act has been in limbo for a year, and our children continue to be degraded and abused in secrecy. To the new Minister of Justice: will you commit to having this act proclaimed immediately?

**Mr. Olson:** I want to thank the hon. member for the question. As she might imagine, I've been getting briefed kind of around the clock. This is one of the things I have not spoken to my staff about, but I'd be very happy to talk to them about it and be happy to share that information with you and give you my position once I have met with them.

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



**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you. Thank you, Minister, and I appreciate your response as someone who's been a previous minister, and it is a huge learning curve. Minister, your staff know about this bill. Your staff has misled the public in regard to – they keep telling them they're waiting for the federal government in regard to the bill they have. Please, on behalf of Albertans and the children in this province, proclaim the bill.

**Mr. Olson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this provides me with the great opportunity to say what my observations are about my staff so far, and it's been nothing but exemplary, the treatment that I've had from them. I spent the morning with my deputy and his assistant deputy ministers, and they are true professionals. I have no doubt that they're going to give me good advice on this.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Speaker. Minister, this was no criticism of your staff. Your staff need to know the difference between what the federal government is proposing and what the provincial government is proposing as that legislation.

The previous Minister of Justice knew about this bill, knew this bill needs to be proclaimed on behalf of the children in this province. Minister, will you please proclaim this piece of legislation?

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

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure, but I don't think I have the power to proclaim the legislation myself. If I'm wrong on that, well, I'll find out. What I will undertake to the hon. member is that I will talk to my staff about it. I would be very happy to have her in, and we can discuss it further.

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

### Long-term Care Beds

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there are hundreds of people in Alberta who are waiting in acute-care beds because long-term care beds are not available. Each one costs taxpayers a thousand dollars a day. Over the course of a year the use of acute-care beds by people requiring long-term care costs the province millions of dollars in wasteful health care spending. In light of the serious lack of long-term care beds, why isn't the Minister of Health and Wellness taking action to address this growing crisis?

2:00

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, we are taking action. I'd just draw the member's attention to page 3 of the throne speech, wherein we said, "The government will continue to look to the 20-year strategic capital plan to build priority public infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, roads, and long-term care facilities." That ties in exactly with the 20-year strategic plan, which, as you know, I authored. If you look on page 43, you'll see more evidence of that.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the minister means continuing care beds because that really is what the government is planning to build.

Given that we all know that continuing care beds does not refer to medically supervised long-term care beds but to nonmedical unsupervised assisted living beds and given that people who wait in acute beds require continuing nursing care, how can the minister suggest that a person who needs ongoing nursing care would be safely placed in a nonmedical assisted living facility?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we have 14,500 long-term care beds in this province in 176 different facilities. Now, we've given a commitment to the larger umbrella piece to say that we're going to build an additional 1,000 or more beds each year over the next five years, and some of those may well be what he's referring to as long-term care beds. The point is that we're trying to keep people together longer and keep them in their communities, where they feel they belong.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, given that the health minister seems to share the same misunderstanding of this distinction that the Premier shows, why won't he tell us why medically assisted beds – that is, long-term care beds – where nursing care is available around the clock, are not in the government's plan? Why do they think that they can take people who need that attention, who need that medical care, and put them in assisted living beds, where they don't get the care they need?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, it is exactly in our plans to provide people with the care they require. The difference in the thinking today as opposed to many years ago is that we're not asking them to move every few years when their needs change. We're trying to keep them in the facility and have that facility rise up to the level of care people need so that they don't have to keep moving. That is what has been asked for by families, by communities, by loved ones, and so on. That's what we're trying our best to deliver, the best care possible.

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

### Cross-government FOIP Office

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After years of pressure from Alberta Liberals Alberta became the second-last province in Canada to introduce FOIP legislation. Alberta also has the distinction of being the first province to abolish the office responsible for the act across the public sector. To the Minister of Service Alberta: can the minister explain why her deputy minister told the Public Accounts Committee that the access and privacy office was not being dismantled after the office had already been gutted and was about to be completely gone?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to FOIP and the important work that FOIP does with all government departments, the fact is that the FOIP commissioner and the individuals in each department continue to do great work, continue to protect Albertans' information, and continue to work with government to do the right thing.

With respect to the dismantling there is no such thing going on.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the minister is not answering my question. Either the minister is incompetent, or the minister doesn't know what's happening in her ministry, or she doesn't care.

To the minister again: why did the minister think it was no longer important to keep the FOIP Act up to date and to provide cross-government support and training and advising on cross-ministry and intergovernmental projects?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to FOIP training across government, on a weekly/monthly basis there's training that is provided to all FOIP appointees, all FOIP individuals in each department across government. That is ongoing, and that will continue to go on, working with the Privacy Commissioner and all the initiatives that are going on. So the employees have access to the information to ensure that Albertans' information will be protected and as well that they have access to it.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister again: given that the minister has abdicated her responsibility for FOIP, what is the minister requiring other ministries to do to fill the leadership gap?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess that as Minister of Service Alberta FOIP and the access to information Albertans have are very important to me. The protection of information is critical as well. It's that fine balance that I and the individuals working across all of the government's departments protect every day.

With respect to FOIP and some of the information that's available to Albertans, much of that is now available on the Service Alberta website without having to do an access request.

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

#### Southwest Calgary Ring Road

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday there was an exchange with reference to this week's southwest Calgary ring road open houses. Since I represent a different part of town, I'll bring forward a different perspective. I've heard from many constituents in Calgary-Lougheed over the years. They believe that after 50 years of talking, we all deserve the highway now, and they want it with the same speeds and the same number of lanes as the rest of Calgary and Edmonton. However, in another constituency some people are concerned that the road may negatively affect their neighbourhood. My first question is to the Minister of Transportation. If enough people are opposed to the plan, will he consider abandoning the study and looking for other solutions?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a very good thing that a lot of people attended open houses last night and the night before in Calgary. I believe that it's essential that we get the public's feedback on what they expect for a southwest ring road, and I hope that the consultants and all the officials from Calgary and the province learned a bunch from the open houses.

**Mr. Rodney:** My first supplemental question is for the same minister. Many of the people at these open houses are very concerned with the number of homes that could be removed to make way for the road. Can the minister please clarify exactly how many homes might be impacted in order to build this section of the ring road?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said in the House yesterday to the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, there is a lot of information to be gathered, and there is a lot of information being told and said at these open houses. I want to be clear that all of the things that are out there right now are just options. There are no decisions that have been made. We need to let this process hap-

pen. We need the planning study to go on so that we can make the very best decisions for all Albertans and Calgarians.

**Mr. Rodney:** My final question is to the same minister. Instead of continuing with the planning study, is the minister considering going back to the Tsuu T'ina Nation at some point sometime soon to renegotiate another deal for the ring road land if that indeed is the best-case scenario?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that the province is not renegotiating the offer that was presented to Tsuu T'ina in '09. We made the best possible offer we could make at that time. I believe it's a great deal for Albertans and for the Tsuu T'ina Nation. Their people decided to vote against it. Since then we've heard that the chief has come out and said that his people voted against it because of some clarifications that need to be made. We will make those clarifications.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

#### Carbon Capture and Storage Upgrader Project

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the government announced a new upgrader and carbon capture project to be built outside of Edmonton, joining the Total upgrader announced last fall. Now, this is great news for our economy, and the Official Opposition caucus is very supportive of these additional upgraders, but at a certain saturation point the economic upside loses to the deterioration of community health and the environment. To the Minister of Environment: what specific monitoring enhancements is the government putting in place to address the cumulative effects of these projects?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to share with the member her acknowledgement that this is great news for Alberta. This is a great opportunity for this part of the world. That being said, no one more than I recognizes that increased industrial development brings with it increased pressure on the environment. That's why we have committed to continue down the path of cumulative effects environmental management so that we can in fact predict, not react to, the outcomes that result from industrial development.

2:10

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: when this government intends to capture 5 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2015 but this carbon capture project, the only one that is beyond the letter of intent stage, will capture just one-fifth of what's needed, has the government promised more than it can deliver?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the issue of carbon capture is really a shared responsibility. The actual program itself falls within the Ministry of Energy. But I can say to this member that we have in negotiation a number of proposals that are at various stages, and I think it's far too early for anyone to suggest that these projects will not proceed and that we will not be able to meet that anticipated target.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Surely, the government did a business case. So if the carbon capture and storage project is delayed and does not move forward in tandem with

the upgrader, is there a plan B that's been worked out to deal with an increase of over 3,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a day outside of one of Alberta's largest urban centres?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe I can try to answer that question. Unfortunately, the question started with "if." I would suggest that the hon. member cool her jets and just be a little patient because I think that by the end of this year she'll be very satisfied that what we have embarked on relative to the projects in carbon capture and storage will come to fruition, and we won't have to worry about answering the question that starts with "if."

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

#### Oil Sands Monitoring Panel

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Alberta recently announced a panel to develop a world-class environmental monitoring system in our oil sands. Considering that the eyes of the world are directed at Alberta and how we manage the oil sands, the credibility of this process is crucial. My question is to the Minister of Environment. What can we expect from the panel and the future monitoring in the province?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, I think we can expect the same thing that I expect from this panel, and that is that they provide us with concrete recommendations to ensure that we have a first-rate monitoring system. The kinds of things that I'm looking for are an exceptional physical monitoring network, transparent reporting via the information portal, credible data analysis with a scientific base, and I think one of the most important is that there be appropriate governance and validation aspects that are incorporated into that monitoring.

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

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. The panel membership has come under criticism by some. Even an original member of the panel resigned, citing concerns. How can the minister assure this House that the panel has the right combination of experts and is fully independent?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't by coincidence that we named co-chairs to this panel. One of the co-chairs comes from a science background, and the other comes from an industry background. That's what this is all about. At the end of the day we need a system that is both credible and functional. I need to point out to all members of the House that the majority of the panel members are, in fact, PhD-level experts from areas of science expertise such as ecology, hydrology, and geology.

**The Speaker:** Sorry. We have to move on.  
The hon. member.

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental is to the same minister. The federal government did its own review of water monitoring in the oil sands and, after it was complete, pledged to develop a water monitoring plan in 90 days, which means that it's expected to be released at the end of March. How is the province working with Environment Canada on the development of this plan?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we actually have officials from Alberta Environment that are working in conjunction with Environment Canada to develop the system. But I have to point out

that what the federal government is looking at is the technical side of the system. What we are concentrating on is that in addition to the technical side we have to have a system that has appropriate governance, has appropriate scientific validation, and, once again, has the transparency through an information portal.

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

#### Public Consultation on Parks

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just a heads-up to the individual acting on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Earlier this month the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation stated that new parks legislation would not be reintroduced this sitting so that she could listen to the views of Albertans and stakeholders. To the minister: if consultation is important to the minister, to this government, will she actually invite the public and conservation groups to town halls and open forums before bringing forward another parks bill?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take that question on behalf of the minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. You know, that minister is very clear about the importance of consultation and her commitment to that, hon. member. I will take that under advisement for the minister.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. That public forum consultation is absolutely essential. Groups such as Canadian Parks and Wilderness, the Sierra Club, and the Alberta Wilderness Association do not believe that this bill even in an amended fashion will pass.

With the Alberta parks system not keeping up with population growth and with the government failing to meet its preservation targets from 1995, will the minister commit to expanding the parks system and setting aside more land in an undisturbed state as her number one priority for this year?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take that question as well under advisement for the minister.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Given that parks account for almost half of Alberta's tourism activity, will the minister again permit parks funding to be cut to protect tourism programs? Kind of an oxymoron circumstance even though cutting one undermines the other.

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well, I'll take that question under advisement for the minister.

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

#### Inclusive Education

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All my questions are to the Minister of Education. Many of my constituents, parents of special-needs students and teachers alike, have expressed concern

over the government's stated desire for inclusive education. Many of them either have failed to understand what this direction means or flatly oppose the direction because of what they think or perceive it to mean. Can the minister once and for all provide this House, my constituents, and all Albertans with a clear explanation of what he considers inclusive education and how it will look at the classroom level in our schools?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, probably not in 35 seconds. Inclusive education means that every child has value and that every child needs to be included in the education system. That does not refer to placement. It doesn't mean any child in every classroom, but it does mean that every child deserves to have learning opportunities and that those opportunities are determined by teachers and schools together with parents and together with health professionals and advisers so that that particular child's learning needs can be met in an inclusive system.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the biggest challenge to special-needs education is a lack of accountability for funding and programming at the school level can the Minister of Education tell us how this concept of inclusive education can ensure accountability?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This concept of inclusive education means that you look at the learning needs of the child and fund based on that. It is more difficult than a formula-based approach, but it is more important to understand what kind of technological supports, what kind of learning supports, and what kind of health supports the individual child needs and to try and arrange the funding so that you have the resources surrounding the school and the classroom to support the child, the learning technologies around, and then, of course, appropriate teaching skill levels to deal with an individual child's needs. That's more difficult than coding and funding, but it's also more effective.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that answer.

Is there any merit to looking at a policy that sends differential funding for coded students straight to the school which the student attends so that allocation of that funding can be done by principals at the school level in consultation with parents and staff?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, no, Mr. Speaker, because we do have school boards across the province and we do entrust school boards to deal with the appropriate needs of all the students that are entrusted to them in their jurisdiction. We fund the boards; they allocate the funds. But we do need to work in the context of making sure the structures are around so that the supporting health professionals, the supporting structures are there, that they can be drawn on through student health partnerships and other resources, that the technology is there, and that the teachers have the appropriate access to the learning that they need to be effective to the children that are entrusted into their classrooms.

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

2:20

#### Legal Aid

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Due to the funding crisis in

legal aid judges and lawyers agree that it is failing in its mandate to ensure that low-income people are represented in the courts. Indeed, just two days ago the Law Society told ministers, and I quote, that no community is safe if it does not make justice available to all members. To the new Justice minister, whom, by the way, I congratulate: will you correct the neglect of the former Attorney General and start by admitting that the lack of financial support for legal aid in Alberta is creating an inequality in access to justice so profound that it threatens the integrity of the whole justice system?

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

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, of course, our government supports the legal aid program, and we have been consistently supporting it. There has been no reduction of funding from us in the last three years. Other forces have caused some reductions in funding, and we are monitoring this very closely. We're working with the Legal Aid Society and the Law Society, and we expect that we will be able to talk about this further after the budget.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this problem has been going on for two years now, and monitoring is not what's needed.

Given that the current eligibility for legal aid is so tight-fisted that even people on AISH can't qualify and given that the courts observed in November that legal aid is, quote, becoming an impediment to the administration of justice, end quote, why won't the Justice minister admit that the former minister's callous neglect of the legal aid funding crisis while monitoring has put the justice system out of reach of some of the most vulnerable members of our society?

**Mr. Olson:** Mr. Speaker, the former Justice minister did a wonderful job working with the Legal Aid Society. They have developed some very innovative programs, some of which are now being reviewed. As a result of that review, I think that there's a more nuanced and targeted approach. Not everybody needs a lawyer to do everything for them. There are lots of other opportunities to provide support information. Our safe communities initiative also provides that type of support.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister was making that same argument a year and a half ago. By the way, lawyers are telling them that safe communities is in jeopardy right now because of the failure to deal with the funding problem.

Now, given that the president of the medical staff association at Alberta Hospital has written a letter which states, and I quote, that this is creating the criminalization of the mentally ill because of their inability to get legal aid anymore, why won't the Justice minister admit that his government is failing Albertans by denying the legal aid funding that it requires?

**Mr. Olson:** Mr. Speaker, our government is not failing Albertans. Again, I would just say to stay tuned for the budget.

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

#### Electricity Supply

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government lacks a clear plan for Alberta's electricity system. With generating units Sundance 1 and 2 offline the cost of electricity will increase, there will be a reduction in reserve capacity by 7 per cent, and it will

increase our dependence on imported power. Essential to economic development is affordable and reliable electricity. To the Minister of Energy: given that the last few months we have seen record consumption and prices, does the minister agree that without these two generators it will further escalate electricity prices?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing to confirm that. I would say in answer to the member's question about a clear policy that this province does have a clear policy when it comes to energy, not like the Liberal government in Ontario. The government of Ontario has brought in a policy on energy where now they're going out and having to borrow a billion dollars to rebate consumers. That is a government that has no policy around electricity.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, that's Ontario's problem. I'm trying to get to the root of Alberta's difficulties here, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the Alberta Electric System Operator predicts potential energy shortfalls – that's the Alberta Electric System Operator, not Ontario's – without these two generators, is the minister worried there will be brownouts or blackouts?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, electricity prices in this province are less than they were in 2002, not like in Ontario, where the prices have doubled because a Liberal government brings in some booga-booga policy around green energy. That's the problem we have.

**Mr. Hehr:** Oh, Mr. Speaker, those Ontario Liberals.

Given the record consumption and high prices I'll ask the minister to focus on Alberta here for a second. Should we not be encouraging building baseload generators near Calgary and other major centres, where it makes the most economic sense?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my last answer, electricity prices in this province are, if not less, certainly equivalent to what they were in 2002. So I'm not sure what the hon. member is asking about with the two Sundance facilities. The generation capacity of those two will be almost made up when the new Keephills plant comes on in a couple of months.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### Coal Exports to Asia

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ridley Terminals at the port of Prince Rupert recently signed a deal with an American coal company that may impact Alberta coal producers. Ridley has agreed to ship 2 million tonnes of American coal this year to Asian markets and 2.5 million in each of the following four years. This will bring Ridley Terminals close to the shipping capacity of 12 million. My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Did Alberta Transportation have a hand in enabling the coal-shipping arrangement between Ridley Terminals and the American coal producer Arch Coal of St. Louis, Missouri?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Transportation is aware of the agreement between Ridley Terminals and Arch Coal; however, the ministry had nothing to do with enabling the shipment of coal from the United States to Ridley Terminals. Ridley Terminals is a federal Crown corporation that has made a business deal with an American coal company.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to advocate for our domestic markets and to make sure that we are looked after here. I'll write a

letter to the federal minister to strongly encourage improved terminal capacity . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member. [interjection] Okay. But the hon. Member for West Yellowhead has the floor.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy that the minister has talked about domestic markets, but my concern is whether or not the Alberta government and Transportation will put pressure on the Crown corporation to make sure that Alberta coal producers have a viable export option.

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, since I've been the Minister of Transportation, we have always advocated for all of our producers here to try to get our products to market. I've put lots of pressure, as much as I could, on the federal ministers. I've gone together with our counterparts from British Columbia and Saskatchewan to write letters, to make sure we could have capacity on our rails to get our products to market, and we continue to do that. I suggest that we can improve that capacity in the ports if the federal government . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. With world export markets in turmoil, especially with what's going on with the floods in Australia, what can Alberta coal producers expect in the future with respect to their ability to export coal to Asian markets through Alberta?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure this member that Alberta Transportation will continue to review the issue on behalf of Alberta's coal producers. We'll continue to work with the federal government to ensure that Alberta coal producers have viable export options. That's very important to be able to grow Alberta's coal industry. In the future the federal government should carefully review similar contracts that have the potential to limit any growth of Canada's economy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

### Capital Infrastructure Planning

**Mr. Hinman:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are disappointed and are questioning the government's integrity because of its secret infrastructure list. The last few days the Minister of Education has continued to erode that trust of Albertans by implying that they're not mature enough to understand the changing priorities. The truth is that the political reasons for changing these priorities are unacceptable to Albertans. To the Minister of Infrastructure: will you table the government's secret infrastructure priority list and the criteria used to determine that list for all Albertans to see?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me make it very clear: there is no secret list of infrastructure. The first thing is that Albertans very much deserve the infrastructure and the need for infrastructure that we are presently providing. The infrastructure needs change throughout this province. As the hon. member knows, populations increase, and needs for schools, needs for hospitals and infrastructure change as times change.

**Mr. Hinman:** That's no answer. Given that this government purports that it is open and transparent, clearly it is not by that ridiculous response.

Yesterday the Minister of Education refused to make the secret list public. Will this minister do the right thing today here in this House and make the list public for all Albertans to see? They understand. Show the criteria. Make the list public.

2:30

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, spending money on projects that are important to Albertans is what this government does. We are investing. We invested over \$7 billion last year on projects. Twenty-two schools were opened last year. We're going to open schools this year. We have started on hospital projects such as the Grande Prairie hospital, such as hospitals in the northern and the southern parts of this province.

**Mr. Hinman:** Mr. Speaker, talk about a secret list. Given that I have been asking for this secret list for years and nobody has ever seen it, this government's priorities are a farce. For five years Fort Macleod has been promised the police training centre. Fort McMurray and Strathmore are still waiting for the long-term care facilities promised by this Premier himself. For two years highway 63 has seen no paving.

**The Speaker:** Let's get to the question.

**Mr. Hinman:** Sure. Actions speak louder than words.

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned before, whether it be transportation or whether it be health care or whether it be education – I'm not sure if this hon. member would expect the schools list to be in place for the time that the schools are built. Airdrie has grown 50 per cent in the last five years. Chestermere has grown 80 per cent. They need schools.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much.

### Regional Planning

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, some Albertans have expressed concerns over the Alberta Land Stewardship Act. They say that we haven't consulted adequately over the regional plans. Some of them are saying that we are taking away landowners' rights without compensation, and some of the opposition members are even calling for us to repeal ALSA. My questions are all for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Why do we need regional planning like in ALSA, Mr. Minister? Why can't we continue with what we're doing right now?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The reason that we require planning, quite simply, is that there are 60,000 new Albertans that come to this province every year, either born here or who move here. For the last dozen years or so that's happened. We've got an additional million people in the province of Alberta, and by 2030 we believe that 5 million people will call Alberta home. There are multibillions of capital dollars being deployed in Alberta on an annual basis. We need to plan to go forward, and Albertans expect solid planning from this government.

**Dr. Brown:** To the same minister: if regional plans are about providing leadership, does that mean that the government is dictating the regional plans to the people of Alberta?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest: anything but. You know, Albertans are clear on one thing on this issue. They're very clear that they expect this government to move forward with regional plans that include a recognition of cumulative effect on air, water, and land base of all activities in Alberta. We've gone out and consulted with Albertans extensively on this issue. At the end of the day very few, if any, Albertans would argue that we need proper planning going forward.

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Minister, if the Alberta Land Stewardship Act were rescinded, as some of the opposition politicians are calling for, what would the result be for planning in the province of Alberta?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that to that question there is a very solid and clear answer. You don't have to think very far back to see what happened with the lack of planning in the lower Athabasca region, when some \$30 billion a year was deposited on the landscape in Alberta. We need to have solid plans going forward. At that point in time all Albertans were suggesting that we weren't planning properly.

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

### Funding Guidelines for Medical Research

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. For decades Alberta's Heritage Foundation for Medical Research was the envy of the nation and was attracting some of the brightest minds in the world right here to our province. This government replaced that foundation with a poorly defined corporation called Alberta Innovates, that two years later remains a giant question mark within the research and scientific community. To the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology: are there rules in place that prohibit political interference in the selection of medical research projects, and if so, will you show us?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's true that the funding for AHFMR was moved into Alberta Innovates, and it's been a great move. The money is still in place. It's still funding medical projects, as it has for 30 years and continues to do so. That is operated by an arm's-length group which selects the projects that will be funded and chooses how they'll be funded.

**Dr. Taft:** To the same minister: when Alberta Innovates enters into partnerships with industry, what guidelines protect taxpayers' money, or is the government simply allowing that money to subsidize the R and D efforts of corporations?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Each agreement is different. Within those agreements we do not subsidize the operations of businesses, but we do support the research activities that may occur within those businesses within the partnerships.

**Dr. Taft:** Does the minister have any firm timelines – and I mean firm – for when the first round of research grants will be issued

given that Alberta Innovates officials haven't been able to be more specific than sometime this year?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, thank you. There's going to be some information forthcoming shortly that may help us to talk about that a little bit more, so I'll leave that to the budget discussions, which are going to happen in a few minutes right here in this Chamber.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Catholic Education

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are all to the Minister of Education. Recently in my constituency office we're pretty well overwhelmed with cards regarding Catholic education, and in talking to my colleagues, I understand that their offices are starting to get these same cards. Minister, I've never heard the Premier, I've never heard you, I've never heard our caucus talk about removing the rights of Catholic education, but somehow this misinformation is being passed around. Can you clear this up for me, please?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, I've been unequivocal when this question has come up. We have a very good education system in this province, and one of the reasons it's very good is because we have choice. Catholic education is one of those choices. Minority faith education is enshrined in the Constitution of this province. We're not going to do anything to change that. It's a fundamental part of our public education system in this province, and it will continue to be supported by this government.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you for that, Mr. Minister.

Since I made you aware of the situation some days ago, have you had an opportunity to see who is spreading this fear amongst the Catholics in our province?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the cards that the hon. member is talking about appear to come from the Catholic Women's League, and while I respect and encourage people to engage in the discussion, I think they're raising an issue over something that would remain relatively small. A former Minister of Education, David King, has started a petition to get rid of Catholic education. It doesn't seem to be getting any traction. I can tell you that it hasn't gotten any traction with this government because we believe in choice in education. We believe that choice actually makes a good education system better, and the Catholic system is doing a good job in this province.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, thank you for that, and I hope that it's going to clear up the situation.

Can you expand on what Mr. King's motive may be to get these people all riled up?

**The Speaker:** Well, I'm sorry, but the motive of an individual not in this Assembly has no bearing on what we're doing.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Integrated Police Information Database

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Strategic IT initiative or Alberta police integrated information initiative or API3 or common technology and standards to facilitate informa-

tion integration and interoperability: this obscure jargon is what passes for this government's explanation of a combined database of police notes, which can include speculation, gossip, and opinion. Since this system has been around so long, I'm sure the Solicitor General can tell us who does have access to this unverified information. Private security personnel? Government collection agencies? Homeland Security if they ask? Who?

2:40

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spreads – well, for lack of a better term I think booga-booga works quite well. The information that police are going to collect is the same information they've always collected. It's going to be accessed by police members, the same way it always has been. It's going to be overseen by FOIP legislation and the Privacy Commissioner as it always has been. It's exactly the same. For the member to allege that security guards can access it: not true. For the member to allege that we'll be storing children's fingerprints: simply not true.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. To the Solicitor General: given that a privacy impact assessment is a risk management tool, could the minister explain why it was not done five years and \$65 million ago?

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, the member alleges that we started this project five years ago and that we've spent \$65 million on it. That's simply not true. But the bottom line is that if the member knew something about privacy impact assessments, she would understand that it's a very detailed documentation of who accesses the system, how it's monitored, who reports to whom, how supervisors oversee it, and you can't do it before you have the system. It doesn't go live till the PIA is done.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, speaking of done, given that the minister is now promising that all will be revealed in the privacy impact assessment, would the minister commit to not implementing this system until the assessment has been made public?

**Mr. Oberle:** I thought I made pretty much exactly that commitment yesterday. Is the member now asking me not to do a privacy impact assessment? That's exactly what we're going to do, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Well, that was 19 members today. That was 114 questions and responses.

I want all members to take a look at the clock. We will do a recess promptly at 3 o'clock. We have a fair amount of Routine work to continue, so we'll go into it right now. We're going to continue with Members' Statements, where we left off.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Raymond Comets

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to rise to recognize a group of talented young athletes from my constituency of Cardston-Taber-Warner. The Raymond Comets are the 2010 Alberta athletic tier 1 football champs. They earned the title by defeating Edmonton's Harry Ainlay Titans during a hard-fought game late last year.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, this victory marks the third consecutive provincial win for the Comets and the seventh time in 14 years that the Comets have earned the championship title. This record is truly reflective of the hard work and dedication exhibited by both players and coaches.

I would like to take this time to congratulate each and every member of the Raymond Comets. Good luck, and here's hoping for another victory in 2011.

Thank you.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

### Rural Teacher Practicum Program

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to speak about an innovative program that encourages Alberta's future teachers to consider teaching in rural Alberta. The rural practicum initiative is part of Alberta Education's workforce planning framework for action and is another way that government is partnering with Alberta school districts and postsecondary institutions for the ultimate benefit of Alberta students.

Rural school districts around Alberta have had some difficulty attracting and retaining new teachers. Alberta Education in partnership with the University of Alberta and several rural school jurisdictions have responded with a program designed to encourage education students to consider a rural practicum placement. This program gives the university students a unique opportunity to form connections with superintendents of the rural boards and their administration. This gives them a great advantage when it comes to finding a job after graduation.

There are, however, challenges that remain for student teachers who choose a rural practicum. Most students face the cost of travelling or maintaining two residences as their six-week practicum will take them away from their home. In order to ease the burden, Alberta Education is working with Horizon school division, Northland school division, Holy Family Catholic regional school division, and St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic separate regional division, which is part of my constituency of Drayton Valley-Calmar.

The government is providing help with the increased cost-of-living expenses associated with a rural practicum as well as helping student teachers find accommodations and make connections within the community.

I wish these students all the best in their practicum experience. I'm sure that these school divisions will truly benefit from the experience of hosting these student teachers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Social Enterprise in the Nonprofit Sector

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about social enterprise in the nonprofit sector, which is defined as a business operation commonly run by a charity or nonprofit organization with revenues reinvested into the programs and operations of the nonprofit. Examples of social enterprise include revenues the Girl Guides generate from selling over 4 million boxes of cookies that go towards funding their programs. Selling the cookies helps Girl Guides gain valuable skills and experience.

Goodwill thrift stores generate revenue that helps fund their operations and also provides training for people with disabilities and inexperienced individuals to gain work experience.

EthniCity Catering is a nonprofit venture that specializes in multiethnic food produced by immigrant women who lack Canadian work experience. The revenue from the catering company helps support the Centre for Newcomers' programs.

Mr. Speaker, last week our province joined a privileged rank in Canada's social entrepreneurship movement when Trico Charitable Foundation launched three exciting new programs with a financial commitment of \$2 million. First, the Trico foundation will provide funding and educational opportunities through their enterprising nonprofits Alberta program for organizations to evaluate and enhance their social enterprise. ENP Alberta will empower nonprofit groups to enhance their sustainability by providing grants and technical assistance to develop and grow their profit-generating social enterprise.

Secondly, the foundation promotes and encourages social entrepreneurship through its partnership with the Canadian Youth Business Foundation and also by presenting four annual Social EnterPrizes, which recognize entrepreneurship within the nonprofit sector.

Social enterprise builds greater resiliency and independence within the nonprofit sector . . .

[The Speaker in the chair]

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Calgary Airport Trail Tunnel

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month Calgary's city council did the right thing for Alberta's largest city and ordered to build the Calgary airport tunnel. On that day Calgary's municipal leaders showed that they have a vision for more efficient, cleaner, and cost-effective transportation links. There was even some talk in the media at the time that many Tory MLAs, including the Premier himself, were finally considering the value of supporting the tunnel. Sadly, those promising talks seem to have been stamped out by this government, which has returned to the old, tired line that Calgary already has enough money, that it's their project, and they should foot the bill alone. While Calgary city council showed their vision, this government shows that they have developed a case of tunnel blindness.

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, this is far from a Calgary-only project. The tunnel will benefit all Albertans by improving access to Alberta's busiest airport. Tourism, small businesses, and big businesses will all benefit from the presence of the tunnel. Calgarians should not have to bear the burden alone for the tunnel construction. This issue isn't just about traffic congestion. It is about growth, prosperity, and positive economic development for the province as a whole. It is about putting our money where our mouth is when it comes to livable cities and fighting climate change. It is about protecting small businesses and improving quality of life for Alberta families.

It is time for this government to dig its head out of the sand and use a shovel for a better purpose, to build the airport tunnel. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.



### Provincial Cabinet Tour

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday, February 15, I welcomed nine ministers to the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency as part of a province-wide cabinet tour. In both Bonnyville and Cold Lake the ministers were greeted by well over a hundred people in each of the communities, who were thrilled about the chance to engage in a one-on-one dialogue with their government. The response to their visit was excellent. My constituents and our public officials were grateful for a chance to discuss first-hand the issues that matter to them and to be assured of this government's continued commitment to prosperity and progress in Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Speaker, issues of health care, education, resource development, transportation, and landowners' rights were the major topics of the day. The ministers did a phenomenal job not only of addressing questions related to each, but they succeeded in providing my constituents with insight into our commitment to them and their needs as we move forward.

I would like to thank the city of Cold Lake and both the town and MD of Bonnyville for hosting the events and helping to make them so successful. On behalf of the constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake I urge this government to continue to plan events just like this one and make every effort to bring our government ever-closer to the people of this province in every constituency and every community.

Thank you very much.

2:50

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 201 Health Insurance Premiums (Health Card Donor Declaration) Amendment Act, 2011

**Mr. Sandhu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 201, Health Insurance Premiums (Health Card Donor Declaration) Amendment Act, 2011.

Mr. Speaker, this bill proposes to require all Albertans to make a choice regarding their organ donor status on the back of their personal health cards. They would be compelled to choose either yes, no, or undecided. This requirement would not apply to holders of current health cards or those unable to consent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo on behalf of the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

#### Bill 202 Legislative Assembly (Transition Allowance) Amendment Act, 2011

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce on behalf of the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere Bill 202, referred to as a private member's bill, to amend the Legislative Assembly Act concerning the transition allowance.

Bill 202 instructs the Members' Services Committee, via this amendment added at the end of section 39 of the Legislative Assembly Act, to replace the transition allowance with a retire-

ment allowance that will not exceed one month's pay for every year served to a maximum of 12 months' salary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got the appropriate number of copies of a report put forward by the Alberta Electric System Operator which clearly shows that with Sundance 1 and Sundance 2 going down, we'll be continuing to rely on power from outside the province as well as most likely experiencing price rises. I leave that to be picked up by the Clerk.

Thank you very much, sir.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today: five copies of a letter and my cheque to the Lethbridge Food Bank for November of 2010, to which I send a cheque every month to support my mantra of the fact that AISH should be indexed, as are MLAs' salaries. It's for \$146.25, which was half of the pay raise that I got in 2007. It will be the same for December 17, 2010, and the food bank that month was the Coaldale Food Bank.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Hon. members, I wish to table with the Assembly today the appropriate copies of the members' allowances amendment order which was passed at the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services at its February 17, 2011, meeting. The order came into force that day.

### Projected Government Business

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If I could prevail upon the Government House Leader to please share with the Assembly the projected government House business for the week commencing the evening of February 28.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, February 28, of course, in the afternoon is private members' business. In the evening, subject to the passing of a government motion this afternoon, we would anticipate meeting in Committee of Supply at 7:30 for the supplementary estimates. Sorry; the motion was passed yesterday, so we will be meeting on Monday at 7:30.

On Tuesday, March 1, in the afternoon will be day 3 of consideration of His Honour's Speech from the Throne. So it will be budget replies first and then responses to the Speech from the Throne and, time permitting, introduction for second reading of Bill 1, Asia Advisory Council Act; Bill 2, Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011; Bill 3, Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 2011; Bill 4, Securities Amendment Act, 2011; Bill 5, Notice to the Attorney General Act; Bill 6, Rules of Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2011; Bill 7, Corrections Amendment Act, 2011; and Bill 8, Missing Persons Act, such of those as we might be able to get to. The

intention would be to introduce them for second reading so that they're on the table. And as per the Order Paper.

Wednesday, March 2, in the afternoon we would anticipate meeting in Committee of Supply to consider the estimates of Finance and Enterprise and as per the Order Paper.

On Thursday, March 3, in the afternoon consideration of His Honour's speech, day 5 of 10 for throne speech responses and then further debate on second reading of bills 1 to 8 such as we might get to and as per the Order Paper.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure and an honour, and thank you very much for allowing me to introduce to you and through you two people that have made the trip all the way up here from Vauxhall, Alberta, on this very cold day. Dwight and Jan Tolton have come here for the very first time to take in the budget. I wanted to especially recognize them. They're typical of community people that really get involved, get things done. Jan is involved with the school. Dwight is an MD councillor with the MD of Taber. They're host parents at the Vauxhall Academy of Baseball, strong proponents of it. I really thank them for taking the time to come up. I'd like them to stand and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in order to prepare appropriately for the presentation of the provincial budget, this House will stand in recess until 3:15 sharp.

[The Assembly adjourned from 2:58 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.]

### Orders of the Day

#### Transmittal of Estimates

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order!

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, I have received certain messages from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the government for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, when a set of estimates is to be tabled, section 8 of the Government Accountability Act requires that an amended fiscal plan be tabled. Accordingly I wish to table both the 2010-11 quarterly budget report for the third quarter,

which serves as the amended fiscal plan, and the 2010-11 supplementary supply estimates. This quarterly report has already been provided to all MLAs, and as I speak to you now, this report is being made public, as required by section 9 of the Government Accountability Act.

These supplementary estimates will provide additional spending authority to 13 departments of the government. When passed, the estimates will authorize increases of approximately \$638.7 million in voted expense and equipment/inventory purchases, approximately \$0.4 million in capital investment, and approximately \$124.3 million in nonbudgetary disbursements. These estimates will also authorize transfers of approximately \$25.1 million of the previously approved spending authority between departments.

### Government Motions

6. Mr. Snelgrove moved:

Be it resolved that the message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2010-11 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a debatable motion, but seeing no members rise, should I just call the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Government Motion 6 carried]

7. Mr. Snelgrove moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the number of days that Committee of Supply will be called to consider the 2010-11 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund shall be one day.

**The Speaker:** This motion, hon. members, is not debatable, so I'll call the question.

[Government Motion 7 carried]

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Government Motion 5, agreed to by the Assembly on February 23, 2011, I wish to table the 2011-12 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates as well as the 2011-12 government estimates.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the Government Accountability Act requires that the government table the government's business plans and consolidated fiscal and capital plans. The hon. Premier will table the government's strategic plans and ministerial business plans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the government strategic plan and ministry business plans as required under sections 7 and 8 of the Government Accountability Act. The strategic plan sets out the government's vision and long-term strategic plan and also includes the government's three-year business plan, which outlines the government's strategies, goals, and measures necessary to track results over the next three years.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** I now wish to table the government's consolidated fiscal and capital plans for Budget 2011. The consolidated fiscal plan is required under section 4 of the Government Accountability Act, and the consolidated capital plan is required under section 7.1 of the same act.

3:20

**Budget Address**

8. Mr. Snelgrove moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege today as the MLA for Vermilion-Lloydminster to present the government of Alberta's budget for 2011-12, a practical, responsible budget that respects the economic lessons of the past while continuing to build for the future, a budget that combines restraint with the traditional Alberta values of community and compassion.

Like so many Albertans I learned those values from my parents, Bob and Margaret Snelgrove, who are in the Speaker's gallery today. They grew up during the Great Depression. They learned the value of a dollar. As so many Alberta families have done throughout the history of our province, they figured out what it takes to prosper through difficult times: live within your means, save something for emergencies, and plan for better days. I'm proud to say that this budget reflects those values.

Over the last 16 years Alberta paid down \$23 billion in debt. In the good years we saved nearly \$25 billion, with \$17 billion of that going into Alberta's emergency savings account, the sustainability fund. Through the recession that solid foundation allowed the government to plan for better days, to continue our investment in the future of our province. That's the Alberta way, Mr. Speaker: learn from the past; look to the future. Thanks to a combination of prudent management and foresight, Alberta has weathered the downturn and emerged from it in a stronger fiscal position than any other province.

At the beginning of the recession our Premier announced a plan to see Alberta through the difficult times, a straightforward plan built on four simple principles. We would manage our spending carefully, cutting back where it made sense; we would protect and enhance funding for priority public services like health care, education, and supports for Albertans in need; we would continue investing in roads, hospitals, schools, and other public infrastructure, supporting tens of thousands of jobs, and preparing for a return to economic growth; and we would continue to compete for investment and skilled workers with the lowest taxes in the country.

We were able to carry out this plan because we had savings in the bank to pay for it, savings that would get us through the recession with our fiscal strength intact, our core public services preserved, and our province positioned for growth. Mr. Speaker, growth has returned to Alberta. Led by a strong oil sector, our economy has recovered from a deeper recession than expected and is expanding again, with a forecast growth in the coming year of 3.3 per cent. Investment has rebounded in both oil sands and conventional oil, and increasing oil exports are expected to drive Alberta's economic growth over the next three years. That growth is forecast to average 3.2 per cent between 2012 and 2014, a strong but sustainable pace that should keep inflation in check and employment growth manageable.

Business investment outside the oil sector, following a weak 2010, is expected to pick up this year as other sectors of our economy strengthen. Alberta's manufacturing shipments were strong in 2010 and are expected to continue to gain strength as the global economy moves firmly into expansion mode.

The employment picture is also forecast to continue to improve in 2011 with the addition of over 40,000 jobs. Employment growth is expected to continue in the years ahead, averaging just under 2 per cent per year through 2014, driving the unemployment

rate down to 4.5 per cent. This strong labour market coupled with solid growth in personal income is expected to boost consumer spending. In short, the overall outlook for our economy is positive, with most indicators looking up.

But there are reasons to be cautious. Natural gas prices are expected to remain weak for the foreseeable future, with natural gas storage levels close to record highs as supply outstrips demand.

As an exporting province Alberta's economic health is closely tied to that of the U.S., and while economic recovery has taken hold south of the border, it remains fragile. These are not reasons to expect the worst, but they remind us of the need for ongoing vigilance in how we spend taxpayers' money. Mr. Speaker, Budget 2011 reflects that need for vigilance.

Both operating expense and total program expense are forecast to increase at a rate lower than population growth plus inflation. Because the recession hit Alberta harder than first thought, revenues are not projected to be as high this year and next as forecast a year ago. However, we expect to be back in the black by 2013-14, and we will continue to use our savings account to cover our deficits as we get back to a balanced budget.

With improved overall global economic and energy price prospects the outlook for Alberta revenue is positive. Total revenue is forecast to increase \$1.6 billion in 2011-12 to almost \$35.6 billion, then grow by an average of \$3.2 billion over the next two years, reaching \$42 billion in 2013-14. Leading the recovery in revenue this year is a 13 per cent increase in revenue collected from personal and corporate income tax, but to be clear, this is not because tax rates are being increased.

As our Premier has often said, you cannot tax your way out of a recession. This government remains firmly committed to maintaining the lowest provincial tax regime in Canada, with low personal tax, with low corporate tax, the lowest fuel tax, the highest personal and spousal tax exemptions, no capital tax, no payroll tax, and no sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, with any other provincial tax system Albertans and Alberta businesses would pay at least \$11 billion more in taxes each year. This is not a burden we are prepared to place on our province. Our approach, as always, is to keep taxes low and grow the economic pie. So the factors driving the forecast increase in tax revenue – more jobs, higher wages, and stronger corporate profits – are all signs of a growing economy.

Growth in the resource sector, particularly in the oil sands, is also expected to drive revenues. Resource revenue is forecast to increase by \$300 million to \$8.3 billion in 2011-12, rising to nearly \$12 billion in 2013-14. This is due mainly to increasing revenue from bitumen royalties, which are forecast to climb to \$4.1 billion this year, more than the combined totals of royalties from natural gas and conventional oil. By 2013-14 bitumen royalties will grow to over \$7 billion due to increased production. Revenue from conventional oil royalties is forecast to be relatively flat while revenue from natural gas is expected to drop 38 per cent compared to last year and remain low for the next two years.

Most other government revenue is forecast to continue to recover and grow over the next three years. One notable exception is federal transfers, which are forecast to fall by nearly \$500 million, or nearly 10 per cent. This is mainly the result of the winding down of federal stimulus programs introduced during the recession. So it's not a surprise, but it is a reminder of our grievance with the federal government over the unfairness of the Canada health transfer to Alberta.

3:30

All other provinces will receive at least \$805 per person in Canada health transfer cash this year while Alberta will receive

\$558. Even as Albertans contribute far more per person to Ottawa than the citizens of any other province, they are still being shortchanged by over \$900 million this year alone. Mr. Speaker, it creates two-tier federal support for public health care. This is clearly unfair, and your government will continue to insist, in the strongest terms, that Albertans be treated equally.

As our revenue picture brightens, we must continue to be prudent managers of Albertans' dollars. Our emergency savings are shrinking, and we must begin to rebuild them. That means keeping our spending in check, Mr. Speaker, and this budget does that. Total operating expense is forecast to be \$33.9 billion, an increase of \$720 million, targeted at priority areas. At 2.2 per cent that increase is less than population growth plus inflation of 3.5 per cent, a trend forecast for the following two years as well. Total expense, including capital grants and other expense, is forecast to be \$39 billion, an increase of just one-half of 1 per cent.

However, this is far from being a status quo budget. It continues a strong investment in Alberta's future. Our spending plan for the upcoming year continues to focus on five priorities: increase access to quality health care and improve the efficiencies and effectiveness of health care service delivery; enhance value-added activity, increase innovation, and build a skilled workforce to improve the long-run sustainability of Alberta's economy; promote strong and vibrant communities and reduce crime so that Albertans are safe in their homes; provide the roads, schools, hospitals, and other public infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing economy and population; and ensure Alberta's energy resources are developed in an environmentally sustainable way.

Funding for health care is forecast at \$14.9 billion. This includes a 6 per cent increase in the base operating grant to Alberta Health Services, in line with the five-year funding commitment made last year that will see a further increase of 6 per cent next year and 4.5 per cent in each of the two years after that. This will increase the base grant to Alberta Health Services this year by \$545 million, to \$9.6 billion. Short-term results from this substantial investment in health care, expected to be achieved by March 2012, include 360 new hospital beds, 3,000 more surgeries, 2,300 more continuing care spaces, and 3,000 more Albertans receiving home-care service. We are putting new dollars into front-line actions. Albertans told us to put people first, and we are.

Funding for K to 12 education is also again being increased, and significant support to the postsecondary education system will be provided. Initiatives to build a skilled workforce for the future will continue. School boards will receive \$5.7 billion in operating grants and property tax support this year, an increase of over \$250 million, or 4.7 per cent. The funding will cover the salary and associated pension costs of a forecast 4.4 per cent increase in teachers' wages effective September 1. It also provides for general enrolment growth and increases in supports for students with severe disabilities, English as a second language, and student transportation services.

Advanced Education and Technology program expense is budgeted at \$3 billion, which includes \$2.8 billion in operating support. This includes a \$62 million increase in operating grants to universities, colleges, and technical institutes. More than \$250 million is budgeted for research, innovation, and technology commercialization initiatives, including \$202 million in operating support for the four agencies under Alberta Innovates. The Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research and the Alberta heritage science and engineering research endowment fund will continue to support increased grants to maintain health research at Alberta universities and to support long-range initiatives such as nanotechnology research.

Almost \$170 million in disaster support was provided to the agriculture industry in the past year as poor early-season weather and other conditions impacted that sector. Although commodity prices for wheat, canola, and beef are encouraging, ongoing agriculture support programs are being maintained, with nearly \$1 billion budgeted in Agriculture and Rural Development. With over \$41 million budgeted this year, the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency will continue to implement programs to help build an internationally respected, competitive, and profitable livestock and meat industry.

The safe communities innovation fund in the Ministry of Justice will continue to support crime prevention pilot projects and the development of municipal, regional, or aboriginal community crime reduction and prevention plans. Since 2008 300 new front-line police officers have been added, just exactly what this Premier said, and in the coming year 30 new probation officers are being added to target repeat or high-risk offenders.

Our commitment to Albertans most in need will continue. Nearly \$783 million is budgeted for income and health benefits and other supports to more than 42,000 disabled adults, an increase of 3.5 per cent. This funding provides for caseload growth and maintains the maximum monthly income benefit for AISH recipients of \$1,188 and the average monthly health benefit of about \$370. Since 2005, Mr. Speaker, funding to the AISH program has increased by over \$290 million, or 60 per cent.

The Premier's 10-year plan to end homelessness in Alberta will continue. Nearly \$93 million in operating support is budgeted, an increase of \$7 million. This will provide about 3,500 spaces in emergency shelters as well as outreach support services to assist homeless Albertans. Since 2009 about 3,000 Albertans who were homeless have been placed in permanent housing.

Budget 2011 also provides a \$16 million increase to seniors' programs, including the Alberta seniors' benefit, dental assistance, and special needs, and a \$39 million operating increase to children's services programs, including intervention services, foster care support, child care, and family support for children with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, if you believe in the future, you build for the future, and this budget continues to do that. Nearly \$2.6 billion is budgeted over the next three years for expansion, renewal, and maintenance of health facilities and equipment, including the redevelopment and expansion of the Tom Baker cancer centre and the completion of the south Calgary health campus; construction of the northern Alberta urology centre, including a men's prostate clinic, as part of the new Edmonton clinic south; significant progress towards a new regional hospital in Grande Prairie, including a cancer centre, and redevelopment of the Medicine Hat regional hospital; new health centres in Fort McMurray, High Prairie, and Edson, and a new central Alberta cancer centre in Red Deer.

More than \$700 million in capital support is being provided for Alberta schools over the next three years to create more than 15,000 new student spaces, including the construction of 14 new schools in Calgary, Edmonton, Okotoks, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove, and Langdon under the second phase of the Alberta schools alternative procurement plan and the replacement of three other schools in Sexsmith, Drumheller, and Millet. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education is working together with school boards on innovative ways to accelerate the school capital plan to meet the needs of our ever-growing student population.

Alberta's postsecondary universities and colleges will see continued investment as well, including the completion of the SAIT trades and technology complex, the agricultural research facilities

at Kinsella and St. Albert, the University of Alberta's Edmonton clinic north, and the Bow Valley College expansion project.

**3:40**

The capital plan also includes more than \$5 billion over three years in municipal infrastructure support for our growing communities through the municipal sustainability initiative and other programs. It also includes \$4.6 billion over three years for the provincial highway network, nearly \$1.7 billion this year alone, one of the largest investments in our transportation infrastructure in the province's history. This investment will fund construction and rehabilitation work on highways throughout the province, with continued construction of the ring roads in Calgary and Edmonton and continued work on highway 63.

The capital plan also includes necessary investment in water and waste-water management. Over \$750 million will be provided over three years for monitoring and other regional projects supporting the water for life strategy, for municipal water and waste-water partnership grants, for irrigation rehabilitation grants, and for other projects.

Mr. Speaker, as a globally important energy producer Alberta must continue to focus on being a national and international leader in greening its energy production. This budget continues to support the groundbreaking climate change and emissions management fund. To date the fund has announced commitments to support 16 clean technology projects, with more support expected shortly for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

This budget also provides \$70 million in 2011-12 for carbon capture and storage projects, part of the government's \$2 billion commitment to use this technology to help address climate change. In addition, nearly \$17 million will be provided in 2011-12 for enhanced environmental monitoring, science, and reporting, an increase of 21 per cent. The recently appointed environmental monitoring panel will provide recommendations to government by June 2011 on the development of a world-class monitoring, evaluation, and reporting system for Alberta's oil sands.

Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that positions our province for continued growth and prosperity. It enhances Alberta's competitiveness in the global marketplace. It continues to support jobs and create opportunity. It enhances the public services and programs that Albertans value most, like health care, education, and supports for those in need.

Yes, this budget projects a deficit this year and a smaller one next year, but let's be very clear. These deficits are the result of our commitment to build the hospitals, schools, highways, and other public infrastructure we need as our province continues to

grow. We have money set aside to pay for that continuing investment in the future. At the same time we will continue to pursue savings within government, building on our proven record of finding in-year savings in our program expense.

Mr. Speaker, at the heart of this budget is a rock-solid belief in Alberta's future as an economic leader, in the potential of our province and the potential of its people. When the recession hit, we were faced with a stark choice. Do we stop investing in the future, do we abandon our priorities, or do we manage through difficult times and make sure we position our province for economic leadership? As a government with this Premier's leadership we made the right decision to keep building Alberta.

Through the worst economic downturn in 80 years we chose to continue investing in Alberta's future, to stay true to the values this province was built on. Why? Because sound fiscal management has given us the resources to do it and because it's our responsibility to ensure this province emerges from this recession in great shape and prepared for the future.

Mr. Speaker, as I look at my parents today, I can't help but recognize that we Albertans have been given an opportunity and a quality of life available to very few in this world. It didn't happen by accident. It was the hard work of generations of Albertans that has made this province what it is today and the foresight of successive governments in creating the framework of fiscal strength and flexibility that allows us to continue building for tomorrow even during difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, this budget remains true to the pioneering spirit and values that made this province what it is today. It shows confidence in our people and in our future. It sets us on a path to join together with all Albertans to build a better Alberta.

I want to thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank you, members of the Assembly. I want to thank you, Mr. Premier.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition I beg leave to adjourn the debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the Assembly do now adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on February 28.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:45 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 27th Legislature - 4th Session (2011)**

**Activity to February 24, 2011**

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

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

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

- 1 Asia Advisory Council Act (Stelmach)**  
First Reading -- 6 (Feb. 22 aft., passed)
- 2 Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011 (Brown)**  
First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)
- 3 Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 2011 (Rogers)**  
First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)
- 4 Securities Amendment Act, 2011 (Brown)**  
First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)
- 5 Notice to the Attorney General Act (Rogers)**  
First Reading -- 18-19 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)
- 6 Rules of Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2011 (Olson)**  
First Reading -- 19 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)
- 201 Health Insurance Premiums (Health Card Donor Declaration) Amendment Act, 2011 (Sandhu)**  
First Reading -- 55 (Feb. 24 aft., passed)
- 202 Legislative Assembly (Transition Allowance) Amendment Act, 2011 (Anderson)**  
First Reading -- 55 (Feb. 24 aft., passed)









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Other inquiries:

Managing Editor  
*Alberta Hansard*  
1001 Legislature Annex  
9718 – 107 St.  
EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E4  
Telephone: 780.427.1875