



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

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Issue 7

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, March 3, 2011

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature 32 very special visitors from Holden school. They are seated in the public gallery. Today we have teacher Mrs. Cheryl Oslund; the principal, Mr. Clayton Roe; and parent helpers Mrs. Cyndy Heslin, Mr. Gene Hrabec, Mrs. Lyndie Nickel, and Mrs. Annette Hrabec. I'm just so glad that I got here in time from Calgary to take a picture with the class. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly today 44 students, three teachers, and two instructors that have travelled two hours from Glen Avon school in St. Paul to come to Edmonton today to the Legislature. I need to say to you that this school is a separate Protestant school. They are proud Panthers, they appreciate where they're from, and they very much are proud of the teachers at their school, of their sports program, and, really, of the education. I'd like to introduce Ms Babcock, Miss Field, Mrs. Gadowski, Mr. Boyko, Miss Kulczyk, and Mrs. O'Neill. If I could ask the class to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you so much.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm thrilled to stand here today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly an outstanding class of students from Drayton Valley. The grade 6 class from St. Anthony school – a school, I might add, that I attended at their age a few years ago – along with their teacher Mr. Leggo and parent helper Mrs. Fontana are in the public gallery today. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's also a pleasure for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 10 of the current participants in the municipal internship program. The municipal internship program gives recent postsecondary graduates an opportunity to pursue a career in municipal government, getting insight into municipal government through hands-on experience. The interns here today have almost completed their program, and when they do, they will join the ranks of 92 interns who have completed the program since 2002. This ensures the continued strength and success of our mu-

nicipalities as trained, skilled professionals steer our course in the future.

The municipal interns that are here today are Caileigh Rhind from the city of Grande Prairie, Keith Freisen from the city of Medicine Hat, Jarret Esslinger from the town of Beaumont, Stacey Mah from the town of Ponoka, Amy Rupp from the town of Raymond,Carolynn Grey from the town of Sundre, Blaine Peterson from the municipal district of Foothills, the town of High River, Clint Neufeld from Leduc county, John Vandenberg from Strathcona county, and Iain MacLean from the county of Wetaskiwin.

Mr. Speaker, joining the administrator interns today are three program staff from Municipal Affairs: Wendy Peters, our manager of the internship program; Val Hope, internship adviser; and Melanie Wood, internship adviser. These individuals are standing now in the members' gallery, and I would ask that you please welcome them to this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed an honour for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you to members of this esteemed Assembly one of my cousins, a younger cousin although I guess most people here would think he's older than me. This young man's name is Sonny, and his actual legal name is Sunkalp Sidhu, but ever since childhood he's aimed to hide his full legal name, Sunkalp. So, Sonny, your full legal name is out there for all the public to know now: Sunkalp Sidhu. He's a dear friend, a great relative, and somebody I'm so proud to have in my family.

Joining him today is his friend and business partner and my friend, Dean Forbes, whom I've had the privilege of getting to know over the last few months. I'd ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really delighted today to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly a group of students from one of Alberta's really exceptional schools, Old Scona academic school. These students are here today to learn more about the legislative process, particularly the role of the Official Opposition in the Legislature. My colleagues in the Alberta Liberal caucus had the opportunity to meet with them earlier today. We were all encouraged by their knowledge and interest. I'm going to make the prediction that one day at least one of those students is going to end up on the floor of this Assembly as an elected member. I would ask them all to please rise and receive the warm and enthusiastic welcome from all of us.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you two special guests, one special guest and one very, very special guest. The first is my constituent Chris Raes. Chris is one of many young Albertans joining the Wildrose cause and has been assisting our caucus with our social media and websites and is doing an awesome job. He's a good friend, and it's been an honour to get to know him over these past couple of years. It's great to see young Albertans stepping up to be part of the political process no matter what party they're supporting. I'd like Chris to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

My other guest also happens to be my sweetheart and my very best friend, Mrs. Anita Anderson. Anita is the rock of our wonder-

ful family, the mother of our four wonderful boys. I think we can all agree here that anyone who can raise such sweet and well-adjusted children must be a truly terrific person and human being. Anita is also a singer and songwriter. She just released her first CD of inspirational music, and you can find it on her Facebook. I love her very much and would ask that she now rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Election Anniversaries

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have some introductions today, too. Three years ago, on March 3, 2008, two members in the Assembly were re-elected for the second time, so this becomes their third anniversary: the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, on this anniversary.

Thirty-one other members were elected for the first time this day three years ago. Congratulations to the hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit, the hon. Minister of Service Alberta, the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, the hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology, the hon. members for Calgary-Elbow, Athabasca-Redwater, Bonnyville-Cold Lake, Calgary-Mackay, Calgary-Montrose, Calgary-North Hill, Drayton Valley-Calmar, Edmonton-Calder, Edmonton-Decore, Edmonton-Ellerslie, Edmonton-Manning, Edmonton-McClung, Edmonton-Mill Woods, Edmonton-Rutherford, Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Livingstone-Macleod, Red Deer-South, St. Albert, Strathcona, Strathmore-Brooks, West Yellowhead, Wetaskiwin-Camrose and hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General, and the hon. members for Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-McCall, Airdrie-Chestermere, Edmonton-Strathcona, and Edmonton-Meadowlark. This is the three-year anniversary for all of you.

March 5 will be the 19th anniversary of the election of the hon. Member for Little Bow in a by-election.

1:40

#### Members' Statements

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

#### University of Lethbridge International Award for Genetically Engineered Machine

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to recognize an exciting and remarkable achievement by a group of students from southern Alberta. In 2010 a team from the University of Lethbridge competed in the annual international genetically engineered machine competition, or iGEM. This competition challenges students to build biological systems that serve some useful function.

The U of L team researched and developed a biological component, or BioBrick, that could break down some of the toxic contents of tailings ponds and turn them into a useful energy source. This technology has the potential not only to reduce our tailings ponds but to actually turn tailings by-products into useful energy. For all their work on the project the U of L team was awarded a gold medal at the completion.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the amazing work of these students and am once again reminded of the incredible innovative talents of Albertans. I would enjoin all members to join me, please, in congratulating these students.

Thank you.

#### International Disability Film Festival

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, last month Calgary played host to the 10th annual Picture This, the international disability film festival. The festival's films tackle the subject of human disability or are written, produced, or directed by people with disabilities. Organized by the Calgary Scope Society, the festival is an important outlet for creative expression by people with disabilities and an important venue for stories about men and women with disabilities.

This year's films included a documentary about one woman's final journey with Lou Gehrig's disease, another about the relationship between a son and his disabled mother, a film about the China disabled persons' dance troupe, and films exploring HIV/AIDS and posttraumatic stress disorder, the efforts of people with disabilities to find rewarding employment, and the joys and challenges of dating and relationships. All this year's films were heartfelt, accomplished, and important. Film submissions came from all over the world from a diverse group of visionary artists. My favourite moment was at the end of the Lou Gehrig's disease film, when the gentleman explained his love of his mother.

I want to thank the Calgary Scope Society for organizing this fantastic event as well as many corporate and charitable sponsors who helped make the festival a reality. Their vision and generosity make it possible for people with disabilities to tell their stories and, in turn, further enrich Alberta's cultural landscape.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Prevention of Bullying Youth Committee

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and speak about Alberta's Prevention of Bullying Youth Committee, a group of 18 youth from across the province between the ages of 15 and 22. They are a dynamic group of volunteers who are passionate about making a difference in their communities and their schools.

The committee has a critical role in providing government with youth perspectives and helping to identify important issues about bullying in Alberta. They provide us with valuable input and advice on the proposed strategies, research findings, and recommendations for action.

The youth committee will be gathering this weekend in Edmonton to learn about media awareness and effective communication, presentation skills, and to work upon improving the b-free.ca website, which was originally created by this committee. The committee will also be reviewing a series of new bullying prevention videos that will be available on the site. These videos reinforce the serious and potentially devastating consequences of bullying.

When these youth return home from the weekend, they will be seeking out opportunities to speak about bullying prevention and will organize events to help raise awareness of bullying in their schools and communities.

Mr. Speaker, we are very fortunate to have such a committed group of youth working with the government on this very important issue. We all need to follow the lead of the youth committee members and do our part to stand up to bullying.

Thank you very much.

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

### Fallen Four in Memoriam

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Six years ago today four brave young RCMP officers full of promise and hope were shot and killed near Mayerthorpe in the Whitecourt-St. Anne constituency. The shooting ended the lives of constables Peter Schiemann, Leo Johnston, Anthony Gordon, and Brock Myrol. Today my thoughts go to the families, friends, and co-workers of these four officers plus the communities in the Mayerthorpe and Whitecourt RCMP detachment areas and all uniformed officers.

The Fallen Four Memorial Society in Mayerthorpe and Whitecourt determined early that these communities will neither be defined nor defeated by the killings, sir. They built a memorial park to show the strength and beauty, and they organize a yearly memorial candlelight ceremony on March 3 to remember Brock, Anthony, Leo, Peter plus all uniformed officers who have died in the line of duty across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to invite each and every one of you and your families to join the hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, me, and the people in my constituency at the candlelight service at the Fallen Four Memorial Park in Mayerthorpe tonight at 7. I congratulate the many volunteers from the Fallen Four Memorial Society and all the citizens of Mayerthorpe and Whitecourt RCMP detachment areas on their ongoing candlelight ceremony to show dignity and respect for the lives of these four young men and all police, peace officers, and soldiers who have given their lives for their uniform.

To the families of Peter, Brock, Anthony, and Leo and to all of those who have lost a loved one who wears a uniform, I assure you that the brave are never forgotten. Thank you. [applause]

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

### Charter Schools

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Next to the rule of law I think one of the most fundamental components of a successful democratic society is quality, accessible public education. Quality, accessible public education ensures that all members of society have the ability to realize their potential and that opportunity is not just reserved for those with vast financial means. The moment public education stalls, we as a society stall. It is imperative that our education system continuously progresses to ensure that our citizens are able to realize the most of their potential. Since 1994 Alberta is the only province to offer charter schools for our citizens. Today we have 13 different charter schools serving almost 8,000 students.

I have recently met with many families, discussing the remarkable work their children's charter schools are doing. Charter schools are essential in pioneering programs that can eventually offer great opportunities for all students in Alberta, not just in charter schools but also by sharing with the greater public system the innovations that are taking place in charter schools. Mr. Speaker, these parents are concerned that the government is planning to do away with charter schools, at least in their present form. I want to make it clear to all my constituents and all the parents out there that I fully support charter schools. I recognize that charter schools have been seeking permanent mandates and better school facilities for some time now. I fully support these directions.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that our charter schools are offering opportunities and innovations that we must make mainstream. Our entire public education system must never sit

idle. It must continuously move forth and offer the best potential learning opportunities for our students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Emergency Medical Services

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last fall in the session I asked the minister of health to investigate how in 2008 the Capital health region had 322 patients receive compromised care due to delays in access. These 322 people know the health care system is still in crisis. To the minister. Four months ago you said you would investigate these cases. What are the results of your investigations?

1:50

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I believe the more accurate portrayal of that was that I asked Alberta Health Services to look into that issue. The last I heard, they had not yet completed that, but they had assigned a senior physician to conduct that review. To my knowledge, hon. member, that's being done as we speak. It may not yet be quite complete, but I'll try and get an update for you.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, since this government has no credibility in investigating itself, will the minister do the right thing, as I suggested in the fall, and ask the Health Quality Council to investigate these 322 cases of delayed, compromised care?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, quality assurance committees have a very serious responsibility to fulfill, and I'm sure if they find something that requires a full-blown investigation, should there be anything like that there, they will let me know. I can assure this House and all Albertans that if there is something there, I will be the first to take appropriate action.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, indeed, you will be the first, Mr. Speaker, because the two previous ministers didn't do anything about these 322 cases since 2008.

Will you forward this investigation to the Health Quality Council to give confidence to the people of Alberta that this is being looked into seriously?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Again, Mr. Speaker, if such action is warranted, I will pursue it. However, let's not underestimate the importance of a senior physician working with a number of emergency doctors on this matter. That's my understanding of the current status of it. I'll know more, and as soon as I do, I'll be the first one to let this member know.

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

### Provincial Budget

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While future governments won't have the luxury of oil and gas windfalls to fund people programs and while Alberta's heritage fund sits at \$14.5 billion, your finance minister offered this solution to future generations: impose

a sales tax when the oil runs out. To the Premier: can you please explain to Albertans why their children and grandchildren should pay the price for your government's mismanagement?

**Mr. Stelmach:** First of all, nobody said that this government supports a sales tax. In fact, I said the other day that it's funny how this issue of a sales tax is always coming from the opposition, all opposition parties. You know, I've said that if the sales tax is the right answer to all government spending, why is it that every jurisdiction that has a sales tax is seriously in debt and continues to run a large deficit and to accumulate debt?

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, how does the Premier explain the government's mismanagement of resources when our heritage fund, our savings plan for the future, is worth less in real terms than it was in the '80s?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, once again this hon. member hasn't been following what has happened in this last recession, in fact one of the worst recessions in the last 80 years. The heritage savings trust fund lost twice so far, this last time over 37 per cent in their investments, just like any other senior that lost investments or any other company that has had savings set aside and investments. This year what we did is that we took money out of the sustainability fund, and we put it into the heritage savings fund to inflation-proof it.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, off-budget spending has been the norm in Alberta for years, making Alberta's budgets meaningless as planning tools, helping to illustrate why this government has been so bad at planning. Will the Premier pledge to stick to this year's budget?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, again, this jurisdiction, the province of Alberta . . . [interjections] To the students over here: just listen to the behaviour of these members across. I don't think you do that in your classroom or when you get home. Just listen. They'll keep talking. [interjections] They'll learn a lesson.

Anyway, with respect to budget planning this government has always set aside money for the future. We put it in the heritage savings trust fund, but we also have what we call a cash reserve. During good times we set money aside to offset many of the times that we see this volatility in our revenue stream. We will continue to do that well into the future because we can never predict what the price of oil will be. It was down to \$37 earlier; today it's up to \$101. Nobody predicted that a few months ago.

**The Speaker:** Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### Canadian Strategy Group

**Dr. Taft:** Mr. Speaker, the other day I raised the troubling issue of a high-priced Tory lobbyist, Hal Danchilla, taking over the process of arranging meetings between Alberta Health Services and opposition MLAs. AHS says the \$150 an hour charged by Mr. Danchilla's firm to arrange meetings is needed because their 70 staff working in communications are just too busy. To the minister of health: does the minister believe that \$150 an hour to arrange meetings is money well spent?

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, immediately after this hon. member raised this question, I contacted Alberta Health Services. I spoke with them. I asked for an explanation, and the explanation I was given was that, yes, they did contract an outside firm to help them arrange some very, very important meetings with MLAs from all caucuses in this Assembly because the woman who would normally do that I believe is on maternity leave for a short period of time. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has the floor. Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffero, you're sixth on my list, but if you keep talking, I won't see you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that Mr. Danchilla's firm is a registered lobbyist for businesses seeking contracts with AHS, can the minister explain how a Tory lobbyist can represent AHS in its dealings with MLAs while at the same time acting as a paid lobbyist for corporations wanting contracts with AHS? Is this an acceptable conflict of interest?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, again we're naming people by name here, making allegations. The fact is that based on the information I've received, Mr. Danchilla did not do this work. It is a company that he has a share in or owns with someone else, but he himself is not the person doing the work. I know that's a fine point, but I think it's important to not drag people's names in here with innuendo and allegation.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll table all the background documents.

Let's just do the basics here. Given that it would be a good cost-cutting move to end this contract, what does the minister of health plan to do about this contract?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is unfortunate that they weren't able to find people in AHS to shore up the difference caused by the absence of the woman on maternity leave. Clearly, that would have been the ideal situation. I'll bet you a dime to a dollar that they tried to do that, but AHS is extremely busy right now implementing the five-year health action plan. They're extremely busy trying to ensure they meet the 50 performance targets, and they needed somebody on a short-term basis, for a month or two, to do this work. That's the bottom line.

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

### Capital Infrastructure Planning

**Mr. Hinman:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday when the Wildrose suggested that we should delay the new MLA offices, the finance minister reacted with disgust. He declared that it was too late to stop now that we've begun the project, but that's exactly the problem. We don't know what they are planning to start next. The minister has developed a habit of asking us questions in question period. I always thought that it was the opposition's job to ask the questions. To the finance minister: will you release your secret list of infrastructure projects so that we can start answering your questions on which ones to do first?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, we do have a 20-year capital strategy. We do budget on a three-year rolling basis for our capital projects. Let's go back to the federal building, where they're quoting the numbers for MLA offices. There are going to be over 500 offices that house Alberta's public service in that building. The



MLA component of that would probably be less than 10 per cent. If you tried to stop the project now, you would be responsible to fund the contractor for a very fair settlement. You cannot simply change contracts in the middle of the term. They should maybe . . .

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

**Mr. Hinman:** It never should have been started; that's the point.

Mr. Speaker, given that the finance minister has sounded more like an infrastructure critic, demanding that we release our priority list on capital projects, does he realize how bizarre and hypocritical it is for the government of the day, with all of the information and details that they have, to demand the priority list from the Wildrose, especially when they won't release the government's secret list?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** If we stopped the project halfway along, we would put out of work approximately 600 tradespeople, 50 engineers and architects. You know, they now have access to a consultant who has experience – when minister Lyle Oberg announced the federal building project renovation, he said about the building that we want to make this, quite simply, the best legislature in the world. So they've got access to some expert advice now. [interjections]

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. member. [interjections] The hon. member has the floor.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's wonderful that they're courteous.

Yes, things have changed, Mr. Premier, since then, and they don't know it. The problem is that the finance minister won't release the list to the public. I'd be happy to sit down and review their secret list so that we could prioritize so that they could reduce the deficit. They don't understand that there's been a change. It's time to release the list and stop the politics.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, there are very many different criteria that are used to put together priorities for infrastructure that we build. We look at schools, for example, and numbers of students, safety issues, busing times. On roads we have a very comprehensive follow-up about accidents or other safety-related issues. When it comes to hospitals, we have to look at growth and what's needed in delivering them. Those things are all included in the producing of our capital plan.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think it's unfortunate the schoolchildren had to see the behaviour of the Premier and his crew over there just now.

### Electricity Transmission Line Projects

**Mr. Mason:** AltaLink applied yesterday to build an unnecessary \$1.4 billion line, and every Albertan ratepayer will foot the bill. It's just the first of five power line megaprojects this government rammed through without public consultation so power companies can export power and Albertans can pay. My question is to the Minister of Energy. Will he tell the House why power consumers, including homeowners and small businesses and farmers, face increases in their bills to pay for these private megaprojects?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, let's be clear that Alberta is a net importer of electricity and not an exporter of electricity. We also have the unusual situation in this province where power is generated where the majority of the population does not live. In order to get that power to the high-density areas of the province, we need transmission lines. The current transmission system is some 30 or 40 years out of date. I know that particular member doesn't live in Calgary, but I can tell you I do, and I don't want my lights going out in two years.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I think their lights are going to go out in the next election.

Given that the government is unable to justify or guarantee the costs Albertans will pay for these unnecessary lines, and given that this government ushered in deregulation to benefit their friends in the private sector instead of looking out for Albertans, why won't the minister change the policy so that the corporations who benefit from these lines, who make the profits from the operation of these lines, actually pay for them?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that the House knows that in the 10 years that we've had a deregulated generation market, there's been some, I believe, \$12 billion worth of investment in this province. We have almost doubled the amount of electrical generation that we have. In fact, the amount of increase in generation capacity we have in this province exceeds Manitoba Hydro's entire production.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this government's support among Albertans is suffering because of heavy-handed land grab legislation to support these lines. Given how they rammed through five power line projects without public consent even though Albertans will have to pay the consequences, will the minister admit he doesn't have what it takes to stand up for Albertans when they're forced to pay through their power bills for these private-profit lines?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, just to make sure that the member is understanding, we have a deregulated generation market, but we have a regulated transmission market. So what has occurred here today is exactly what is supposed to occur. The proponent of the transmission line has made its application with the Alberta Utilities Commission. The Alberta Utilities Commission will have a hearing where everyone, including that member, has the right to appear before the Utilities Commission, and they will make a decision. It would be improper for me to make any comment that might be seen as influencing that decision.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

### Access to the Future Fund

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, six years ago this government's flagship bill created the access to the future fund. In this bill they promised \$3 billion to fund postsecondary education. Last week this government announced that payments from this fund would be suspended. So much for this flagship bill and government promise. To the minister of advanced education: is the minister concerned that contributions to our postsecondary institutions will dry up as a result of not following through on their promise to match donations from individual donors?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you very much. We're not worried that the donations are going to dry up. In fact, we've been so successful in having people donate to our colleges and universities that they have stressed that fund beyond what we could handle, so we've put it on hold for two years. It comes back in year 3, and it's going to allow us time to ensure that those people that have made commitments can be matched and that we don't abuse or overuse the fund. Right now we've been very successful in getting money in, and we believe people believe in our postsecondaries and will continue to donate to them.

**Mr. Hehr:** Can the minister explain why this government thought leaving the access to the future fund two-thirds unfunded would be sustainable in the long term?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, the first billion dollars was placed in the access to the future fund, and since then we have had some realities in the economy that have meant that it has been impossible to top up that fund, so we won't be putting any more money in right now. We are going to keep it on hold, but in the future we would hope to see that fund topped up again.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister explain what suspending the access to the future fund for two years after mismanaging it from the start says to young Albertans concerned about their access to the future?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you. Access to the future was largely used to fund capital projects although it also did match some funds for scholarships. We are deeply committed to our students and would hope that scholarships continue to be available. As you know, there isn't any new money for capital projects within our three-year budget, so we don't believe that holding off on matching dollars for capital projects at this time will put any of our institutions in trouble.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### High Prairie Hospital

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people of High Prairie and region are once again optimistic that they may get their hospital built. Naming the design firm for this hospital is good news, but we've heard many announcements on this project before, only to have our hopes dashed. To the Minister of Infrastructure: please explain to my constituents what the difference is between today's announcement and other commitments we have heard before.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the project is moving ahead. It's in our budget, and Infrastructure will deliver the plan. Stantec starts work this month, and it is a delivery on the Premier's vision to build the most advanced infrastructure in North America. If we did what some members opposite are calling on us to do, and

that's to cut the \$2.4 billion in capital spending, this project would never happen.

**Ms Calahasen:** Mr. Speaker, I'm so thankful that we are building those hospitals in small-town rural Alberta because without that there's no hospital. We've waited a doggone long time. To the same minister: knowing that we have a one-stop hospital education facility and that the people of High Prairie have helped design this facility, when will your department and this firm begin working with my regional committee to ensure the community's wishes are adhered to?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have had a land deal with the previous Métis settlement council, and we're working with the current council, and we hope to finalize the agreement very soon. At that point, the design team works closely with the local health authorities, with the officials from Northern Lakes College, with local municipalities. Most importantly, once the initial designs are done, the team will consult with the broader community to address the hon. member's concerns.

**Ms Calahasen:** Mr. Speaker, we don't need to be doing consultations over and over again. Given that, to the Minister of Health and Wellness: could you please tell my people how committed you are to cover funding to operate this facility once it is built?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake for being a real champion for this hospital to get built. This is a \$90 million project that will essentially replace the 25-bed acute-care hospital that's there now. We're going to in fact add five more acute-care beds, so the funding is already in place for the existing capacity. We're adding capacity, and when it opens in spring of 2013, so too will the purse strings open to help fund those additional positions.

2:10

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

### Private Health Care Services

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over a year ago in this House the Minister of Health and Wellness offered to the Leader of the Official Opposition the results of a cost-benefit analysis to compare private versus public hip surgeries. I was wondering how that cost-benefit analysis was coming and why it has not been made public one year later.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** The short answer is because I haven't received it yet, Mr. Speaker, but I'm glad that he reminded me. That is one of those that I do want to follow up on, and I appreciate you raising it in such a professional manner. Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. It surprises me that you're spending so much money, yet you have not received it.

Now, you also promised the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview a similar cost-benefit analysis regarding cataract surgeries, specifically in Calgary, to see how they compare with surgeries done in public institutions. Where is that cost-benefit analysis, and why have you not made it public?

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you. In fact, I'll be going to Calgary next Friday, and I'll tune you up right after that. Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. Again to the same minister: given that in last year's annual report for the Minister of Health and Wellness contracts with private health service providers have increased from \$649 million to \$778 million, a 19 per cent increase, why are you allowing those increases to occur when you have no cost-benefit analysis to justify how this money is being spent?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, the simple answer is that we have many, many more people here who require more services, and as a result we're responding. We just added 3,200 more cataract surgeries. We just added 9,000 more MRI exams. We just added another 5,000 surgeries of various natures to the agenda. That all costs much more money. Some of those are being performed in nonhospital surgical facilities, specifically cataract surgeries. More money is needed to address more needs and shorten wait lists, which is what we're going to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

#### Northland Community Engagement Team

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year an inquiry team appointed by the Minister of Education delivered its report on the governance, management, and operation of Northland school division. At that time the minister said that he would appoint a multistakeholder team to engage the communities that make up this vast school division in developing a new way forward for aboriginal education in Alberta. My questions are to the Minister of Education. You said that we can't afford to lose another generation of First Nations and Métis children and that we must act on this. Has there been progress in the appointment of this multistakeholder team?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, in fact, today we announced publicly the makeup of the team. I can tell the hon. member that we've had an initial meeting with the team, and it is engaged and working already. The team will work with staff from the ministry, staff from other Alberta ministries, and with the staff of Northland school division to maximize the level of community involvement and engagement to ensure the success of students in that area. It is comprised of community elders, members of Treaty 8 First Nations, members of the Métis communities, members representative of the communities at large, one member representing the Northern Lakes College, one member to act as a liaison for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member, please.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my first supplementary is to the same minister. Can he tell us how exactly this team is different from previous inquiry teams?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is not an inquiry team but an engagement team. We have the Northland inquiry report, and it's a good report. There are 48 recommendations, and in fact the last recommendation was to set up an implementation

team. Rather than an implementation team what I wanted to do was to bring together communities of interest to actually engage the communities involved in their education system. We will not be successful unless we can create a value for education in those communities and involve those communities in the education process. The purpose of this team is to work with us in implementing the Northland inquiry report but to provide strategies to engage those communities.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Mr. Speaker, my final question is to the same minister. If Northland is to flourish as a First Nations-Métis educational special-purpose jurisdiction, how does it align with other initiatives under way for First Nations-Métis education?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the main goals in our business plan is First Nations and Métis education and, in fact, eliminating the achievement gap between First Nations and Métis students and other students in the province of Alberta. So this engagement team will help us to work to bring the inquiry report in and to work with Northland school division to ensure that it provides leading-edge education for aboriginal students and therefore provides leading-edge education for all the students in their division, and we can learn from that to apply those learnings to other jurisdictions in this province.

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

#### Environmental Monitoring

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. This government says that it's creating an environmental monitoring system for real this time. Now, Alberta wasn't at the absolute rock bottom for monitoring compared to countries with no monitoring system, but it definitely wasn't in the top 10. To the Minister of Environment: how does a government go from bad to the top with only \$3 million extra added to the budget?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that I can accept the statistics that this member is quoting. Where does she come up with the number that we were number 10 or number 4 or number 5? We've said all along that we have a commitment to protect the environment. I believe that we have been doing a good job in environmental monitoring, but clearly there are opportunities for us to do better, and that's what we're committed to do.

**Ms Blakeman:** Not with 3 million bucks.

Back to the same minister: given that once again, this time in the Peace River area, we have air monitors that are reporting the air quality as good when the odour is so bad that people don't even want to go outside, will \$3 million extra in monitoring provide trustworthy air monitoring this time?

**Mr. Renner:** This issue of \$3 million is a bit of a red herring, as this member knows perfectly well. The majority of the costs of monitoring are currently being borne by industry and will continue to be borne by industry. Mr. Speaker, that's a principle that we believe very strongly in, so to suggest that any kind of a new system would be restricted to only \$3 million is inaccurate and a false assumption.

**Ms Blakeman:** No, I've been pretty clear. This is adding \$3 million to the budget, and you still can't hit your mark.

To the same minister: will the government take over responsibility for water monitoring in the new system given that the

system of the industry self-monitoring has been proven again and again and again to be inconsistent, unco-ordinated, insufficient, and mistrusted?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the precise question that I have asked the panel that I recently appointed to answer, so for me to presume to tell them how to do their job I think would kind of negate the reason that we have this panel in place. We have a panel of world-renowned experts that are meeting as we speak to answer that very question, and I'm looking forward to having that report come from them very shortly.

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

### Off-road Fuel Tax

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of Budget 2011 some fuel tax rebate programs were cancelled, specifically the rebate portion of the tax-exempt fuel use program, or TEFU, and within the TEFU the prescribed rebate off-road percentages program, or PROP. My constituents are asking about these changes and the reasons for them. My questions are to the Minister of Finance and Enterprise. Why was this policy changed, and was there consultation? If so, with whom? If not, why not?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** There were some very difficult choices that had to be made in this budget, and we'll stick by them. We do consult on a regular basis with all sorts of business groups across Alberta, and they tell us on an ongoing basis: you need to review the programs you've got and make sure that they're administratively efficient, that they accomplish the policy goal you set out to do, and that they can be sustained. In this case the program, Mr. Speaker, is for licensed vehicles that may be used off our roads and to keep track of the amount of fuel they use on the road and off the road, add it all up, co-ordinate it with the government.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: did he look at simplifying the administrative process for the rebate for off-road truckers, reducing those costs first instead of cutting the program itself?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Yes, we did. We tried, Mr. Speaker, back in 2005, I think, with PROP, where we decided that we could prorate the amount of fuel that they used in the different industries and tried to develop an average where it could be assigned on that type of an industry basis. However, other industries or other parts of that industry looked and said: well, just a minute; how come we aren't eligible for some kind of a rebate? And the creep starts again.

2:20

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, to the same minister. It is my understanding that off-road equipment will be able to qualify for a rebate on marked fuel, but a TEFU number is needed. Can the minister tell us if this is correct, and if so, how do the businesses apply for this number?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, the program that rebates off-road fuel is still there. It's around a \$160 million program. The program that has been eliminated, to be clear, is the one where licensed vehicles are used off the road. People eligible will still be able to

apply for that TEFU number and be able to purchase fuel, and in some cases, where marked fuel is not available, they will be able to use vehicular fuel and still receive the rebate. So we are going ahead with the bulk of the program.

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

### Community-based Education

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Edmonton public school board released a summary of the pressures pushing it to close inner-city schools out from under the parents and kids who rely upon them. Now, while urban sprawl is a problem, so too are a number of policies imposed by the Ministry of Education. To the minister: as a start, will this minister acknowledge that community-based education is a necessary plank in the provision of quality education to our children?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, community-based education is very important, but it's not the only thing of importance. Parents do want to make choices with respect to the learning styles and opportunities of their children and what's best for their individual children. For the most part, we have engaged in a process, a system that's set up around community-based schools, and that has proved to be a very functional way to set up an educational system.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the majority of district leases are with not-for-profit organizations that provide services for children and families, the kind of wraparound services that this minister claims to support, why won't the minister change his policy so that schools attempting to lease extra space to community groups as a means of maintaining their viability are eligible for IMR and capital modernization funding?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I don't claim to support wraparound services. I support fundamentally and unequivocally the idea of providing wraparound services so that students can be ready to learn and the concerns, the issues they bring from their families and their communities can be dealt with not just by teachers in the school or by the schools themselves but by the teachers and the schools in conjunction with community-based services that are needed. So that's a very important and fundamental aspect of it. One of the things we want to do going forward is make sure that there's a place in the school for those wraparound services to coexist and partner with the schools. I'm very much interested in that type of a concept.

**Ms Notley:** Well, given that there's a quarter billion dollar maintenance deficit in EPSB, shouldered disproportionately by inner-city schools and caused by the government's neglect, and given that new capital project eligibility puts pressure on the boards to close these schools, will the minister admit that his past and up-to-now neglect on this issue amounts to a decision to abandon the education interests of inner-city families?

**Mr. Hancock:** No, Mr. Speaker. Both her assumptions and her conclusions are invalid.

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

### ESL Funding

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government falsely

claimed in the Speech from the Throne that they will boost the number of immigrants in the workforce. Hypocritically, only two days later the provincial budget contained cuts of almost \$9 million to immigrant services and ESL programs. To the Minister of Employment and Immigration: given that the minister has used his federal counterparts as a scapegoat for the nontransference of the money for these cuts, does the minister support the cutbacks, and if not, will he make up the shortfall out of his own budget?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a number of points to be raised. One, the jurisdiction on the number of immigrants that enter this country is exclusively within the domain of our federal government, so this minister and this government haven't any input on the number of immigrants that enter our country, and that number is somewhere around 250,000 immigrants. Any policy shifts on how many enter Canada and/or this province are made exclusively by the government of Canada, and that's what our Constitution allows them to do.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much for that federal immigration explanation. I'm talking about provincial concerns, that when the immigrants make it here, which I'm assuming we want, they're supported.

With private forecasters warning of possible labour shortages by next year, can the minister tell us how many adult ESL spaces will be lost as a result of these short-sighted cuts?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, the federal government as part of their stimulus package has provided this province, as many other provinces, with funding for integration of immigrants, and on behalf of the federal government this government has been implementing these programs. The three-year program has ended; hence the funding has ended. This province, however, out of our own budget continues to be committed to integrating immigrants into our province. As we know, we will need many of them for many years to come.

**Mr. Chase:** As we know, we will need them for many years to come, Mr. Speaker, but we're not willing to pay for them or support them when they do arrive.

Given that 1 in 5 Albertans and 1 in 4 Calgarians will be foreign born by 2017, as the projections go, why are we taking away ESL programs in both Education and this minister's department instead of investing in our immigrant arrivals?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, this member's presuppositions are false. Alberta continues to be the province of choice for immigrants from all over the world. As a matter of fact, we continue to be a net province, attracting secondary migration. Immigrants choose other provinces initially, and then they come to Alberta. Why? Because the jobs are here, the economy is here, and we are not following their policies.

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

### Charter Schools

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite considerable public support and third-party evidence indicating their success, the future of charter schools in this province remains by some to be in doubt. Despite a number of studies and discussions and surveys stretching back five years, no action has been taken that would

help charter schools do a better job of serving more students. To the Minister of Education: when can charter schools expect to finally see this government grant them permanence?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The future of charter schools in this province is not in doubt. The policy decision has been made to move to permanence of the charters. The question that remains is how to do it. We fully intend as we bring forward a new education act – and we have communicated this to the charter schools – that we will put in place in the new education act the structure to be allowed to do it. Then as we move forward, what we need to do is ensure that while they're made permanent, they don't lose their reason for being.

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With one charter school having a wait-list more than 150 per cent larger than its enrolment cap because there are no facilities for more students, will the minister be doing anything to make more and bigger facilities available to charter schools?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, this is one of the concerns with respect to permanence, that charter schools are not able to acquire their own property because they can't guarantee a lifespan beyond their five-year charter. We're working with them on that. We fully intend to help them resolve that issue with the permanence piece, but in the meantime we are constantly working with public school boards to determine when a facility has become available and which ones could be available for use in the broader public system, which includes the charter schools and a system to find appropriate accommodation for their operations.

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. In a recent interview, Minister, you indicated that charter schools haven't done a good job of spreading their innovations to the broader education system. Can you clarify this comment for all Albertans?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That probably wasn't one of my better interviews. What I said was that charter schools had two reasons for existence. One was to provide choice, and the other was for innovation. They had done a good job on choice. In fact, their existence had helped us move the public school system to embrace choice, but there hadn't been a very good job done in sharing the innovations, and I left the implication that that was the fault of the charter schools. It's not the fault of the charter schools. It's the fault of the system. We're doing a lot of work with our AISI program, with other processes. The learnings that we have, whether they come from charter schools or whether they come from other public schools, we need . . .

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

### Electricity Transmission Line Projects

*(continued)*

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Evidence continues to mount that much of this government's \$16 billion transmission upgrade is an unnecessary burden on Alberta ratepayers. With clean and locally generated electricity from natural gas becoming

more affordable than ever and with industry increasingly going off grid with cogeneration, there is simply a new economic reality that suggests that a huge chunk of these lines is not needed. To the Energy minister: will he repeal Bill 50 and require the AUC to do an independent needs assessment using 2011 data to determine whether the impending increase on Albertans' power bills is necessary?

2:30

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there is only one natural gas fired generator in the planning stages that I'm aware of that as of now is prepared to go ahead. It's at Wabamun, and there aren't a lot of people that live at Wabamun, but there are a lot of people that live in Airdrie and in Calgary. In order to get the power from Wabamun, it needs a high transmission line to get it to Airdrie, Chestermere, and Calgary.

**Mr. Anderson:** There are two being built in my constituency right now. Get your facts straight. Good grief.

Given that the closing of two of TransAlta's Sundance coal-fired plants by Lake Wabamun has eliminated – get this – over 25 per cent, or 560 megawatts, of all available transmission between central Alberta and Calgary yet the lights remain on and given that well over twice that amount of power will soon be brought online right beside Calgary in my community, why does this minister continue to defend ATCO's and AltaLink's transmission line projects? Is your lone goal higher power bills for Albertans, sir?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the member sat in this House, might have even sat on this side if I remember, and approved Bill 50 because it is imperative that over the next 30 years we have transmission in this province to ensure that when we have power generated at centres like Wabamun – as an example, the new Keephills coal-fired plant is due to come on in April. TransAlta has announced plans to commence its Sundance 7, which will be fired by natural gas. It will need transmission. I come back to the fact that if this member wants his 50,000 residents of Airdrie to have power, then they probably will need transmission to get it there.

**Mr. Anderson:** This whole thing smells really bad, guys. I hope you get that.

Given that tens of thousands of Albertans are dead set against moving forward with these transmission lines without first having an independent needs assessment conducted and that many more Albertans are upset that these billion-dollar contracts were handed out to PC donors without competitive bidding, will this minister do the right thing and listen to Albertans, repeal Bill 50, and give Albertans the peace that this isn't the most irresponsible and expensive boondoggle in our province's history?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the only thing that smells here is the inaccuracy of that comment. We have something in this province called the Alberta Electric System Operator. It is not a branch of government; it is an independent operator. It has professionals that do . . . [interjection] I'm not sure if he wants the question answered or not. It doesn't sound like it.

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

#### Expired Vehicle Insurance Cards

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Minister of Transportation. Section 822(4) of the Insurance Act requires that

an insured motorist must destroy a pink card upon expiry of that card. Could the hon. minister please explain the rationale of making it an offence to have an expired pink card in your vehicle?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's well known that every vehicle owner in Alberta is required to make sure that they have insurance on the vehicle. Therefore, they have to carry proof that they have insurance, and that proof is a valid pink card. There are two different parts to this. He's referring to the one under the Insurance Act. We also have one under the Traffic Safety Act, and I think it's section 167 subsections (1) to (8) of the Traffic Safety Act. Our part of the act has a whole different intent than the other, but the 822 he's talking about, if I remember right, states that you can't falsify . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member. [interjection] Okay. Sit down, please. You've exhausted your time.

Hon. member, you have the floor.

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. minister has just doubled my concern. Given that many law-abiding citizens of this province when receiving a new pink card or new registration merely place it in their glove compartment along with their other registration certificates, what is the justification for levying a \$230 fine for such a misdemeanour?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, under our legislation, section 168 of the Traffic Safety Act, it's actually a \$172 fine. The intent of the legislation, though, was to give a ticket if you had an expired pink card but couldn't produce a valid one. When you produce the valid one, it should be common sense that you have insurance. Our Solicitor General has been doing such a great job that there are so many policemen out there that are interpreting the law a little differently, but under the other act, as I said before . . .

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

**Mr. Allred:** Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe I should direct my last question to the hon. Solicitor General. Would it not seem reasonable to you as the Solicitor General that law enforcement officers should use some discretion and only issue a warning for such a minor offence rather than creating disrespect for the law by such an officious act as imposing a \$230 fine?

**Mr. Oberle:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Minister of Transportation for throwing me under the underinsured bus.

Mr. Speaker, we all want officers to practise discretion, remarkably only when it works in our favour. I don't think that asking officers to practise discretion, which they do out there, actually – I think our officers do an excellent job on the highway – is the right way to go. I think the member feels strongly there should be some changes to the law. I encourage him to work with his colleagues to effect that change.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

#### Southwest Calgary Ring Road

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Liberals believe in preserving green space and supporting the livability of cities. This government has held open houses at which it proposed to potentially push the Calgary southwest ring road right through the valuable green space. As this government retreated from the parks bill, they should remove any option to bring this road through the green space. To the Minister of Transportation: with the Tsuu

T'ina potentially back at the bargaining table should this not be the priority option?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, there's no more I can say on this issue. We've talked this issue to death. I've got to give all of our people involved kudos for doing such a good job on the open houses that are being held. They're gathering all the information, and let me tell you that we're moving ahead with something in that area.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Premier or the minister should sit down with the chief, Big Plume, and get on with the job. With the Tsuu T'ina Nation's long-term needs for increased traffic flow to support the future commercial development plans, would this not be better than kicking people of Lakeview out of their homes and destroying the Weaselhead green space?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member read the paper this morning, he's seen that the chief put out a news release yesterday, and he's going to go to his people to see if he wants to talk to us anymore. I've got to respect the process they're using.

**Mr. Kang:** I think, Mr. Speaker, the minister should work with the chief to get the job done.

Will this government follow the Liberal plan and preserve the Weaselhead green space?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, my door is open. I'm going to respect the process.

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

#### Taber Labour Market Information Centre

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency the Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association has raised concerns about service changes. After April 1 residents need to seek services through the Taber Alberta Works office rather than the current resource centre. The association is concerned about the impact of this change on Low German Mennonites as they need one-on-one services because of limited English skills. My question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration: what is the local Alberta Works office doing to support a seamless transition and ensure that the needs of Low German Mennonites are met?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. Change is always difficult, but with this commitment of our government to have a fully balanced operating budget, some realities had to take place. Indeed, in the town of Taber this particular department had two offices. We have amalgamated the services into one office. That will not reflect on the quality and quantity of service offered. However, it'll be offered out of one of our offices, known as the labour market information centre, in the town of Taber.

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

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what supports are in place at the Taber Alberta Works office to assist those individuals to connect to local jobs?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, I'm actually proud to say that it's quite a wide range of services. Historically the labour market in-

formation centre would have been known as welfare offices. Well, now that is the last thing that they should be known for. They offer aptitude assessments. They offer employment counselling. They match potential candidates with employers. They actually also assist employers in finding employees. They have a variety of information on job markets in the vicinity and in other parts of the province and the country. So the spectrum of services is very dedicated and well-qualified employees of this ministry is available and will continue to be available to residents of Taber and the surrounding area.

2:40

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

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Low German Mennonite population is a very important aspect of the labour market in Taber, my question again to the same minister: if we want to build Alberta's labour force and increase employment capacity for Low German Mennonites, why is the government reducing services for this growing population?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, this member is correct. The Low German speaking population is actually growing. We're attracting more of them from Mexico, and we're happy to have them because they made fabulous agricultural employees, and now they expand into many other industries as well. We will continue to attract them. We are not changing the quality of service offered to them. We simply will be offering it differently from a different location. All we're doing is amalgamating our services under one roof, and that is part of our commitment to make sure that our operating budget is balanced in this province.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 18 members were recognized today. That was 108 questions and responses.

It strikes me, in attending question period the last couple of days, that a number of members still have not had a chance or an opportunity to read *Beauchesne*, as I requested them to do the other day. So could I just refer you once again to the sections of *Beauchesne* 403 to 420 and refer to both the questions and answers, and perhaps we'll all have an opportunity by Monday to have refreshed these very important rules as we come back to question period.

We'll continue the Routine in 15 seconds from now.

#### Members' Statements

(continued)

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

#### Oil Sands Royalties

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The budget for 2011-12 puts Alberta in a precarious position. The government has managed to maintain funding for health care and other services only by draining the sustainability fund. Since 2009 the government has already spent two-thirds of this fund. This year the government expects to take more money out of the fund than will be left by the end of the year. Therefore, the fund will not be able to cover another \$3 billion deficit. The government is gambling that another economic boom will arrive before the province's savings completely run out, but what happens if that boom doesn't come in time?

Alberta's economic recovery depends on highly volatile world markets. The government's own fiscal plan states that there are

significant risks to the economic outlook, yet the government's plan leaves no room for error. If the budget's rosy forecast does not come to pass, the government may choose between deficit spending or cutting services like health care, education, and the environment.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is another choice. Alberta's royalties are among the lowest in the world, yet we have one-third of the globe's available reserves. We have the advantage of being a stable, secure source of energy located close to the American market. Despite this, the oil sands industry continues to get a sweet deal from the government. Although the government's target for oil sands related royalties and land sales was a share of economic rent of 50 to 75 per cent, since 1997 the government has only managed to capture an average of between 8.9 and 14.6 per cent.

Alberta's NDP is committed both to balanced budgets and adequate funding for important social programs, including health care. These goals can both be met if the oil sands industry paid its fair share for Alberta's oil sands wealth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Alberta Mentoring Partnership

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak about the Alberta mentoring partnership, which features government, community agencies, and youth working together to increase mentoring opportunities to support Alberta's children and youth.

The vision of the Alberta mentoring partnership is that every child and youth at risk who needs a mentor has access to one. Mr. Speaker, mentors are urgently needed across Alberta. There are many more children and youth waiting than mentors available to volunteer. Becoming a mentor is a great way to contribute to improving the lives of young people. Mentors are also positive role models in the lives of the young people, in turn helping them to become successful, contributing adults. You don't require special skills or a lot of time to be a mentor. As little as an hour a week can make a positive and lasting difference in the life of a child or youth.

During the month of March, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta mentoring partnership will run an awareness and recruitment campaign that will be seen and heard on radio stations and billboards throughout the province. The theme of the campaign is Mentoring Makes Sense: You Don't Have To Be Superhuman To Be a Mentor, But You Can Feel Like It.

We know from research that when young people feel supported, they are less likely to become involved with drugs or crime and more likely to complete high school and move on to postsecondary education or the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, supporting children and youth is everyone's responsibility. I encourage all Albertans to step up and consider mentoring a child or youth and to help improve the lives of our province's young people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Allred:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of postcards addressed from the future of Catholic education in Alberta. I received 40 of these

postcards in my constituency office on February 9 this year. These 40 constituents of mine appeal to include in the new education act the right of Catholic schools to be governed by elected officials and request the government of Alberta to provide "adequate, predictable and sustainable funding for the education of... our children" without fundraising by parents or children.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission I'd like to make just a brief comment on the process of tabling these returns.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, just table it. Thank you.

**Mr. Allred:** Okay. Thank you.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings relating to my questions to the minister of health on the arrangement of meetings between opposition MLAs and Alberta Health Services. The first is some electronic correspondence. It originates from Alberta Health Services, and then it's taken over by the Canadian Strategy Group, just to provide the paper trail.

The second is a printout of information on the Canadian Strategy Group featuring its principal, Mr. Hal Danchilla.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am again tabling e-mails from individuals concerned about clear-cutting in the Castle. These e-mails come from Jill Cunningham, Chris Sargent, Connie Griffiths, Lynn Bowers, Jenifer McPhee, Doug Leach, Fay Douglas, David Hulsman, Linda Leon, Stephen Ross, Julien Lafaille, Geoff Hoare, Eugene Spanier, Virginia Smith, Wendy Agate, Brian Bjarnason, Melissa Hart, Ralph Cartar, Fiona Old, Marla Allison, Martha Milne, Don Davidson, Eva Durance, Donna Wunderlich, and Sarah Aspeslet.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Zwodzesky:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to table copies of e-mailed correspondence that occurred today between me and Dr. Robert Burns, who was the registrar at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta immediately prior to the current registrar, who took over somewhere in 2005. In this e-mail, which is with respect to several unfounded allegations that were raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, Dr. Burns states:

I can confirm that I was Registrar at the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta from 2001 until mid 2005; I can also tell you that the reason for my departure was the critical illness of a family member who at that time lived in Nanaimo [British Columbia]. We left to be near and supportive to him and to his wife, my sister-in-law. There was no other reason for leaving the province and the position.

He makes a couple of other statements and then adds in:

As far as the allegations are concerned, I can categorically state that I know nothing about them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, please be brief. Thank you.

### 2:50 Projected Government Business

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



**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Government House Leader please inform us what will be on our agenda next week in terms of business? Thank you.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Monday, March 7, of course, is private members' business.

Tuesday, March 8, in the afternoon 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, and as per the Order Paper; Committee of the Whole for Bill 9, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2011, and consideration of His Honour's speech, day 7 of 10.

On Wednesday, March 9, in the afternoon in Committee of Supply the estimates of the Department of Energy and as per the Order Paper.

Thursday, March 10, in the afternoon consideration of His Honour's speech, day 9 of 10; second reading of Bill 1, Asia Advisory Council Act, and Bill 10, Alberta Land Stewardship Amendment Act, 2011; Committee of the Whole on bills 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; and third reading of Bill 9, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2011.

[The Speaker in the chair]

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 9

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2011

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of the Treasury Board and minister of finance.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 9, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2011.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much. Certainly, we had a look at Bill 9 the other evening, and there's a lot of money at stake. We heard from various ministers why it was needed, and there were, I guess, reasonable requests. The first group of ministers was requesting upwards of \$650 billion, and then, of course, we had some other requests there as well. But this request comes at a time when we learn, Mr. Speaker, that this government is for the fourth year in a row having a budget deficit, a significant budget deficit. If you total them all up, it's close to \$10 billion in deficits.

Fortunately, we are in a position where we have money set aside from robust economic times, when our natural gas prices were quite high and oil, whether it was conventional oil or bitumen, was fairly high. So there was an amount set aside to deal with these issues. But when you look at the budgeting pattern of this government and you see the size of the government and you see the pattern, it is quite disturbing.

There are some ministries – two that come to mind are Children and Youth Services and Employment and Immigration – where exactly a year ago the budgets were cut by tens of millions of dollars, yet the other evening we heard passionate, articulate explanations as to why this money was now needed. I don't doubt

for a minute that there are increased costs in administering children's services files. I don't doubt for a minute that there's more pressure on the hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration to deliver social services in a timely fashion to those that need it and request it. But what puzzled me, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that a year ago – and I will use those two departments as examples – they were suggesting they didn't need the money. So somebody somewhere made a mistake.

Now, we had a discussion yesterday afternoon – I don't believe it was you, hon. minister – about the amounts that went unexpended in the budget of 2008-09 in various departments. Certainly, Employment and Immigration was one; children's services was the other. How easy is it for me to remember this? Because there was only one department, the one that hosted Alberta's official delegation at the Vancouver Olympics last year, slightly over a year ago, and that's Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Every other department gave money back to the minister of finance across the way, some in significant amounts, others in modest amounts. But it was \$1.5 billion that was unexpended.

There was, as was pointed out correctly to me earlier in question period, a supplementary supply estimate for 2010-11. Again, this is following the pattern. Every year we've got to come back and ask the Official Opposition House Leader for more money. We know what she thinks about that, but every year we're back here. We're not listening to her. She gives articulate, reasoned arguments as to how you can budget better.

I'm disappointed that you're not listening to this hon. member either, but you did listen to this party when you created the sustainability fund, or the stabilization fund. You did do that. Albertans actually appreciate that because it is a way that we can supply adequate funding for essential public services without cutting and slashing like you did in the mid-90s, or your predecessor Dr. Steve West did.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I have to get on the record that I heard the hon. member across the way talking not about supplementary estimates but about his current budget, at the Macdonald hotel, and I was sitting there wondering what Steve would say.

**Ms Blakeman:** I'm sorry. His budget for the Macdonald hotel?

**Mr. MacDonald:** No, no. He was presenting his budget, giving an update to the Chambers of Commerce at the Macdonald hotel.

**Ms Blakeman:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. MacDonald:** While we're talking about that, I believe he was in Calgary in the morning at a breakfast meeting. So he works pretty hard, and he gets around, and you've got to admire that. But if he gets a chance this year, I would encourage him to rigidly follow the budget, that we are debating now in this Assembly, and hopefully we won't need these large amounts in supplementary supply. It sends all the wrong signals. The first signal is: we can't manage with the money that we have. We can come up with lots of excuses as to why we need more, but I for one think we can handle this a little bit differently, and we can handle it in a way that is easier on the taxpayers.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had an opportunity as an Assembly to discuss this supplementary supply at length on Monday evening, and the third party never got on the record. We debated at length, and the Wildrose Alliance just are nowhere to be seen in *Hansard*, so I would like to invite them now, please, to

get on the record and let us know what they're doing in the Legislature and to give us their views on this piece of legislation.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview: were you surprised that you couldn't find the comments in *Hansard* of the Wildrose Alliance regarding this requisition for close to three-quarters of a billion dollars extra? Were you surprised you couldn't find it?

3:00

**Dr. Taft:** Well, I appreciate the question from Edmonton-Gold Bar, and others may have similar questions. I have searched through *Hansard* for the evening of February 28. I see many comments from the Official Opposition, the Alberta Liberals, and, of course, from government members. My eyes may be failing me, but I don't see any comments whatsoever from the Wildrose Alliance. There's just nothing on the record here. So again I would urge them; perhaps next week they will take up the challenge and the invitation.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Additional questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Does the member have an opinion as to why?

**The Speaker:** Sorry. Through the chair, please.

**Ms Blakeman:** Does the member have an opinion as to why these comments would be completely missing from the *Hansard*?

**Dr. Taft:** Well, I think I have to leave that up to the general public or to anybody who reads *Hansard* to perhaps figure out why there is nothing on the record from the Wildrose Alliance on their views on this particular legislation. They do seem to make a lot of noise in other settings about government spending, yet it seems to be silent in here. So I'll leave that mystery up to others to solve.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Others under 29(2)(a)?

There being no additional comments, any additional members wishing to participate in the debate?

Shall I call the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

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

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

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

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

[Debate adjourned March 1]

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get a chance to respond to the Speech from the Throne that was delivered here on February 22, 2011. I was reading with interest this outline of how the government plans to build a better Alberta. You can go through this at length; I know we have.

I certainly would encourage an increase in trade with the Asian markets, the Asian economies, but that being said, we have to make sure that our interests are being protected and our products in this province are being promoted. With that, I would specifically note agricultural products. We had a discussion earlier in the week in this Assembly regarding the habit of allowing steel products to be fabricated in South Korea, contracted by Imperial Oil for Fort McMurray, at a time when they get royalty and tax concessions and breaks here. That's supposedly how the new world free markets work, but if you do a little bit of research downstairs in the library, you'll find that South Korea is one of the countries with the highest agricultural trade barriers on record. In some cases it's close to 80 per cent. I would hope that if we're going to put this new emphasis on opening up Asian markets for their products to come here, we have to make sure that . . . [interjections] Yes, we are on the throne speech. You sound like you're on the other side there.

Now, when we allow countries access to our markets regardless of their trade record or their trade pattern and regardless of whether they have been charged one time or two times or three times for dumping some of their subsidized goods, in this case steel, on unsuspecting markets, what we have to do if we're going to have any sincerity toward Alberta's agricultural producers is ensure that they have access to these markets, that their goods and their products will have fair access to these developing markets. So if anything was to come out of this committee that the Premier is proposing to create through the Asia Advisory Council Act, that would be it. If I could have a short wish list of what I would like that committee to do, it's to please stand up for the public interest of this province and ensure that we are treated fairly in our trade matters.

Now we can talk about investing in infrastructure here. We can see where there are seven new hospitals, one noted in Edson. I had an opportunity to visit Edson the other week, Mr. Speaker, and there was a photograph in the leading newspaper in Edson. Hon. Member for West Yellowhead, I don't know if you were in it or not, but I did notice that the former Member for West Yellowhead was there, but he's taller than you, so maybe he just . . .

**Mr. Campbell:** I was in the back row.

**Mr. MacDonald:** You were in the backhoe?

**An Hon. Member:** The back row.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Oh, okay. I thought, Mr. Speaker, that he said he was in the backhoe, and I didn't think there was any sod-turning there in that cold.

In Edson, which is mentioned in this throne speech, it was a \$108 million project, and this was the unveiling of the sign to announce the project. As I understand it, that's how the newspaper article reported the entire afternoon, that it was a sign unveiling to announce that this new hospital is going to be built and that it will be \$108 million. It was the first time, Mr. Speaker, that I saw such a public relations exercise to promote the unveiling of the sign to announce the construction of the hospital. I'm glad to see Edson was in there. I know the hospital that is currently there has not been fixed up lately. In fact, I believe – and I could stand corrected – it is over 40 years old. It was one of the last things the Social Crediters built. But it certainly needs an upgrade and some

time and attention. While I was sitting in here listening to the throne speech, certainly I did find that interesting.

Now, this statement that is made in the throne speech where we're promoting or advocating adding value to raw resources is certainly something that's near and dear to the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater. We all welcome the North West upgrader. I was surprised to read that the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater had been promoting and, I hope, is still promoting the idea that maybe we'll change some of these royalty regulations and take the transportation costs for bitumen through the pipelines off the amount, or at least a portion of it, that's netted in the calculation of the royalty formula.

Another good idea I believe was presented – Mr. Speaker, I doubt you were there – at the PC annual convention, at the last policy convention they had. I believe this item was discussed there.

**An Hon. Member:** Were you there?

**Mr. MacDonald:** No, but I read about it. I certainly did read about it.

**An Hon. Member:** Do you believe everything you read?

**Mr. MacDonald:** I'm sorry?

At that convention it was also discussed that maybe the diluent or dilutant or the dilbit, whatever you want to call it, which is the petroleum light end that's mixed with the bitumen so that it flows through the pipeline rapidly and without any problems, that perhaps the cost for that product should not be allowed as a royalty reduction. What the hon. member was suggesting and what was discussed at the PC Party convention was that maybe that would be a way to incent further development of bitumen upgraders here in Alberta. I find that absent. We talk about the bitumen royalty in kind program in this document but not that.

**3:10**

Before we move on to talk about health care, I would also like to mention this statement – and I certainly would like more details on this – where the government is estimating that an additional 1.4 billion barrels of oil can be produced using enhanced oil recovery. Some of this would come from the carbon capture and storage technology that is being implemented. Of course, if we look at this year's budget, there's over \$500 million allocated for that. The throne speech goes on to say, "To put it in more familiar terms, Alberta could produce more conventional oil in the future than it has already produced in the past." I did a rough calculation on this \$1.4 billion worth of production, and the \$25 billion that's stated in here could be collected in additional royalty and taxes. That's well below the take that is anticipated in the strategic business plan of the current budget year under discussion, or debate, in this House. The 22.3 per cent take for taxes and royalty on this amount I think is really low. It is really, really low considering this is a government that for the fourth year in a row is racking up a deficit.

Now, in the time that I have left, I certainly would like to express my dismay that health care was left to page 10 of this throne speech. Health care, I thought, would be the first priority that this government would try to fix because they broke it. They broke it through absolutely incompetent mismanagement. We see a budget that has ballooned. Mr. Speaker, from \$4 billion in 1993 it is anticipated in two years to be close to \$16 billion. We have seen population increases, that's true, but we haven't seen this aging population that this government is trying to blame these health care costs on because the population is not getting that much older

than it ever was. I'm really surprised, after the mess that was created with the creation of the Alberta Health Services Board when the nine regional health authorities were fired, that there wouldn't be more direction, more discussion on what we're going to do with health care.

Now, earlier in question period we talked about this very issue. It was a year ago, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and the Member for Edmonton-Riverview both asked the current minister of health for the cost-benefit analysis to back up the statements that private is better and saves money and delivers services more effectively and more efficiently. A year later that hasn't been done, but how much money have we spent? Lots. We only have to look at contracts to compare voluntary and private health service providers. Lots and lots of money. All kinds of money.

In 2008-09 the private health service provider contracts were to the value of \$649 million. A year later, before the minister tables or makes public his commitment to provide proof that all of this will work, we see a 19 per cent increase in the contracts from one year to another for private health service providers. This is information out of the Alberta Health Services annual report. So are we managing our money wisely? I would certainly say definitely not.

Now, when we look also at the creation of the Health Services Board in the first place, the deputy minister at the time candidly admitted before Public Accounts that there had been no internal or external cost-benefit analysis done. It surprises me. We know of all the consultants that are hired on that side of the House, but none were hired to do a cost-benefit analysis to determine if this would control costs and improve services for the sick people. Nothing was done. But, wow, can this crowd ever spend money. They can spend money.

That's why I'm disappointed to see that there is no mention in here of a value-for-money audit. Why are these private contracts increasing? Where are they increasing? Who are these contractors? None of this was provided to the opposition.

Now, when we look at the total budget for health care – I quoted 1993 earlier, Mr. Speaker – the total budget has increased in only nine years by over 110 per cent. Citizens, taxpayers, ask the question: where did the money go? Well, the government doesn't want to answer that. If you look carefully at the financial statements, you can see quite a pattern. Facility-based emergency and outpatient services in Alberta Health Services: we have seen a \$350 million increase over five years. It's gone from roughly \$870 million up to well beyond \$1.2 billion in that time period. Are there fewer lineups? Are there shorter lineups at these emergency rooms across the province when you put them in a time frame? There certainly are not. There are 16 hospitals in Edmonton and Calgary, which do the majority of the ER care. Those lineups are not getting any shorter. Are people getting admitted or treated quicker? No, they certainly are not.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, alas, the time has left us, but Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

There being none, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Xiao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure for me to rise today to respond to the Speech from the Throne, a speech delivered so eloquently by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. As a proud member of our armed forces and through his tenure in Europe, the Middle East, and Central America Colonel Ethell witnessed first-hand many significant events, and I would like to express my gratitude for his many years of outstanding, dedicated public service to our country and the international community.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, this will be the last session for our Premier. I would like to take this opportunity to express what a great honour and privilege it has been to work with our Premier and to wish him the very best in all of his future endeavours. With Premier Stelmach what you see is what you get: a sincere, caring, and hard-working leader.

Mr. Speaker, there are many points that I would like to comment on, but today I would like to highlight the way the throne speech frames and defines our government's commitment to industry and business. As His Honour stated, "Our province has relied heavily on a single customer, the United States, which buys about 85 per cent of our province's exports." We are indeed fortunate to have a close and stable relationship with the U.S., which has helped us to achieve tremendous growth throughout our history, but due to the globalization of our world economy over the last few decades as an international businessman I'm very happy to see that our government has recognized the need to also diversify the markets internationally.

3:20

In order to be a viable competitor in the world marketplace, it is fundamental to ensure that we have a skilled workforce, advanced infrastructure, and a competitive tax system. This is why I'm so pleased to see that our government will continue to recognize the importance of these areas.

We will continue to educate a strong workforce. Our businesses and industries require the best and the brightest to be competitive, and our children will be the planners, leaders, and entrepreneurs of the future, the people building our communities. It is in our interest to ensure that they are the best they can be. After all, Mr. Speaker, investment in education is investment in our future.

We will continue to build 21st century infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, advanced infrastructure is fundamental to our future economic growth, and I'm very pleased that we will continue to build roads, schools, hospitals, and seniors' facilities to make sure that our province is ready for the next cycle of growth.

We will continue to ensure that Alberta has one of the most attractive tax regimes in the country. Mr. Speaker, personal and corporate taxes will continue to be at 10 per cent, small business will still be at 3 per cent, and we will still have no PST and the lowest fuel tax in Canada. Our low taxes will ensure that Alberta remains the ideal place to invest and to start a business. As His Honour stated, "We will continue to show the world how our province is becoming a hub of creative thinking, where innovation turns ideas into reality."

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some brief remarks on competitiveness. As His Honour stated, "Being competitive also means making the most of the advantages we have." Our advantages are that we have rich natural resources – oil sands, natural gas, and coal reserves – a strong agricultural and agrifood industry, and a very strong forest industry, a resource of natural beauty for our tourism industry.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so very optimistic about the future of this province. We are all most fortunate to live in a province that is as rich in our people, our resources, our landscapes, and our collective desire to ensure that Alberta continues to be an exceptional place to work, to live, to raise our families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for five minutes of questions and comments.

There being none, I will call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Mr. Sandhu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and share my comments on the Speech from the Throne. Before I begin, I would like to thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for his inspiring words. I would also like to thank him for his years of dedicated service to the people of Canada and the province. His life should serve as an inspiration for all of us here today.

I would also like to thank our hon. Premier. Under his leadership we have emerged from the global economic downturn better than any other jurisdiction in Canada. In fact, because of his dedication to infrastructure spending Alberta is well positioned to return to future growth and prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency of Edmonton-Manning is unique as it contains rural, urban, and industrial areas all within the same borders. I'm pleased that the incentives laid out in the throne speech will help all three sectors.

Without a doubt, the most important idea mentioned by His Honour was the introduction of Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act. Mr. Speaker, this bill is a reflection and a continuation of our successful trade mission to India late last year. Just as an aside I am impressed that even with all the jet lag from the long flight, our hard-working Premier was up and ready to work right away in India. In my own experience it takes 30 to 40 hours to settle down.

It immediately became clear that much work needed to be done. At the Canada High Commissioner residence reception it was identified that Canada needed to increase trade from \$10 billion to \$15 billion over the next three years. Much of this trade could come from Alberta. I'm pleased that our Premier has recognized this trade opportunity, and I'm pleased that he has acted so quickly to introduce Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act. As stated by His Honour, "Albertans look to their government to lead the way, to survey the landscape of both the short term and the long term and plan accordingly."

In my mind, Bill 1 is both a long-term and a short-term vision for the province. It connects us to one of the most dynamic economic regions in the entire world. This is an area that is growing now and one that is likely to keep growing in the foreseeable future. Mr. Speaker, as part of this bill I would stress the need for the creation of an Alberta trade office in India. We already have one in China. Expanding this concept into India has the potential to greatly improve both relations and trade between our provinces. After all, as His Honour stated, "Our province's long-term prosperity depends on our industries being globally competitive."

Mr. Speaker, in addition to trade, infrastructure is key to global and internal competitiveness, and I agree that now is the best time to invest in our infrastructure. Due to the global downturn our dollars go further than ever before, and we are building the schools, hospitals, and ring roads that we will need going forward. I am particularly happy to hear about the promise to renovate existing health facilities as this gives these old centres a new lease on life. In fact, my constituency is home to both Alberta Hospital and the Northeast community health centre, that could stand to benefit from this plan.

Other infrastructure projects of note include the recent announcement of the new North West upgrader. While this project is being driven by private investors, it was Alberta's sound business practices that drew them here.

I am also excited about the continuing work on the Anthony Henday Drive. The first steps have been taken to build the new segment of the Anthony Henday Drive, from Manning Drive to Whitemud Drive east. The project includes 27 kilometres of six- and eight-lane divided roadways, eight interchanges, nine flyovers, two river structures, and 47 total bridge structures. Construction is expected to start the summer of 2012 and finish by

fall 2016. This will help foster growth in the area and in my constituency. This ring road will allow the hard-working people in my community to transport themselves home safely and quickly after a hard day of work and to spend more quality time with their families.

3:30

In closing, I would again like to thank His Honour for his wise and inspiring words and again thank him for his duty and devotion to the people of Alberta and the people of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to again thank our hon. Premier for his vision, leadership, and hard work. Under his guidance we emerged from the global recession better than anyone else in North America, positioning ourselves for future growth and prosperity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

I have no additional speakers on this matter.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 1

#### Asia Advisory Council Act

[Adjourned debate March 1: Ms Evans]

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't know where my notes are. Oh, God help me. Thank you very much for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act. I'm trying to remember what I'd thought about this when I looked at it, and I'm just going to have to wing it.

**The Speaker:** It's only 20 minutes.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you for reminding me of that, Mr. Speaker. Appreciate your help.

There are a couple of things that you notice about this bill right off the bat. For starters it's four pages long, and that's all there is to it. As a flagship bill that's representing the major thrust and the proudest moment of a government for the spring sitting of this fourth year of this particular legislative term, it's not filled with a lot of meat.

The second thing that I noticed. When I talked to the throne speech, I talked about how we are moving away from manual-labour-based economies and toward knowledge- and creative-based economies. I'm pleased to see that in this act that's acknowledged. When it talks about what the council is supposed to be considering under its mandate, it does talk about: "expand existing economic, research, educational and cultural opportunities." It is about new market opportunities and international investment and improved communication and partnership, which is great. It also includes tourism opportunities and cultural exchanges. At this point I'll stop and remind the hon. members opposite that it costs money to do cultural exchanges.

There was an understanding there that it isn't just about taking our raw natural resources and shipping them out of the country for someone else to process, which is a real frustration for me. The government's thinking tends to be very much stuck in the 1950s, when I think we need to move forward.

This bill is going in the direction that I think we should be going into, but once again it's a council that is appointed to give advice to the government. Now, in listening to what the minister had to say as she spoke to this bill, she was very clear that in the first year all that was going to happen were the appointments to the council and some identification of issues they wanted to deal with and some prioritization.

Now, there is a sunset clause in this bill for December of 2014, so really this is a four-and-a-half year program, and there have been no other details given. We've got year 1, which is the 2011-2012 year, in which the appointments are to happen. There's some sort of list of issues it's going to deal with and some prioritization according to what the sponsoring minister had said, and then it's silent. There's nothing more on what this is supposed to do in year 2, which would be 2012-13, and year 3, 2013-14, and year 4, from April 2014 to December 2014, at which point you've hit the sunset clause and it's over unless it gets renewed. I'm quite concerned that we would launch into something with no concept of what we're going to do for three and a half out of four and a half years' worth of existence of this particular council.

The other issue is that there's no money attached to it, and when queried about it, the minister said: well, it wasn't going to take that much money because the members weren't being paid but that any money that did need to be spent they were going to take from administration. One assumes administration in the minister's ministry of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Well, the obvious question is: what's been identified that is superfluous in that budget that it can be cut to be allocated to this?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

This is just sounding a little last minute to me. That's the problem. It's sounding like something that got whipped up. It has not been anticipated in the budget. No one is able to tell us what's going to be foregone or what's going to be given up in that administrative budget in order to pay for this. There's no idea of what might be needed to pay for it, so it does really sound to me like somebody dreamed this up a week and a half ago. [interjection] Well, I'm sorry. You've got absolutely no detail that goes with it, and that's what making me think that.

The other thing that I know, having run one of these arm's-length councils, is that there are two things that are really important. [interjection] The Minister of Infrastructure is so eager to get in on this debate. I'm looking forward to what he has to say. I always appreciate when he engages in the discussion.

There are two things that are really important about these councils, and this is how the government can control their effectiveness. One of them is the appointments to the council. If you appoint, you know, a number of people that are deeply partisan and deeply loyal, they'll tend to do exactly what is signalled to them by the government, and it may not be as efficient or as rigorous as it should be.

The second is the amount of resources and support that's given to the organization. If you give them no resources or support, make it difficult for them to meet or make it unappealing for them to meet, you're going to have a less successful council. I'm speaking from experience. I mean, when the government wasn't happy with the Advisory Council on Women's Issues, our budget got cut, and I had to lay off researchers so we could produce less re-

search, which meant we produced fewer documents. That's how they controlled us. I'm very wary, knowing that there's not a lot of detail in this bill or in the minister's introduction of it that covers the two areas that I think can be quite problematic.

A couple of other points. I think some of the good points, the pluses on this bill, are that it does recognize an economic diversification. It's clear that a number of people are looking to that Asian market, including some of our metropolitan municipalities. I suppose there's never anything wrong with having advice sought from people in Alberta and given to the minister. Things like strengthening collaboration and global competition and an opportunity for flow of investment and things like that: all good.

3:40

I've raised a couple of points that I'm concerned about already, and here are a couple more. I honestly don't know this, so if somebody does, please tell me. I'm wondering: is there anything in place around outside investment in our province? If we end up with investment coming in that in effect takes over a business or substantially takes over a sector, does the government have any control over that? We've got some very large family farms and some farms that are essentially owned or controlled by some large U.S. or international food producing groups. Is there a limit to that? I mean, can we end up at a point where an outside-Alberta company owns 80 per cent of our food production in Alberta? Is there anything that stops that? When we talk about promoting Alberta as an attractive destination for international investment, good point, but where do we lose control of our own resources in Alberta? That may be a small problem to be solved in my concerns if you can answer that question.

I'm also interested in what's being contemplated under the idea of education. Is that to encourage international students to come and get an education in Alberta? Are we doing fellowship exchanges? What exactly was being contemplated under that?

The rest of the bill is essentially administrative. It just talks about, you know, the appointments rolling over and that there will be no remuneration paid, but there would be reasonable travel and living and other expenses. Then the minister went on to say: well, actually, those expenses aren't even going to happen either. She has an expectation that people that were going anyway would be council members, and that struck me as a little strange. Why would that be the case? I mean, I can see having some people that travel there on a regular basis because there is a level of expertise that you'd like to tap into, but wouldn't you be trying to balance that with some other appointees on that committee to whom you would be expected to pay travel expenses? Then you're going to end up with a situation where some of them are getting paid for their expenses and some of them aren't or where the government is expecting to reimburse some of them and expecting not to reimburse others, which I think sets up a real inequity that is not healthy.

A couple of last questions. You know, I can remember in budget debates when there used to be a department of economic development, and we were often saying: what's the difference between the work that is done by the then intergovernmental affairs – it's the same department; it's just had a number of different names – and what's done by economic development? I mean, they seem to have the same mandates in a lot of cases. Here I'm saying: what's the difference between the work that's being done by this council and the work that's being done by the department now anyway? Are we doubling in our allocation of resources?

Overall, I don't have any monumental complaints about what's being considered here. I'm just disappointed. I was hoping for something that was a bit more imaginative, more creative, more

energetic. It really is feeling like the government is kind of ho-hum, done it all, and can't quite think up new things that they want to do. For a number 1 bill that is supposed to be getting all of this attention, it just doesn't feel very interesting.

I'm sure it will be valuable and all of those things. I'm not knocking that. I guess I'm saying: is this the best you could do for a number 1 flagship bill? I mean, considering that Peter Lougheed's very first bill in his first time as Premier was the human rights act, and I think his second bill was repealing the eugenics act. I mean, big stuff, big thinking. [interjection] Well, you know, I'm being kind of kidded by the Minister of Education, but I think he's right in that it's as though all the big-thinking ideas have been done by this government and they're finished. There aren't any more.

As I say, this isn't a bad bill. I mean, it's not a terrible thing. You know, as somebody said, there was a brass band in here for the reading of the throne speech and the introduction of Bill 1, and it just seemed a tad over the top, considering the content of Bill 1, for all the fanfare. Maybe a penny whistle would have been about the right level of hoo-ha to promote this bill. Other than that, it's just kind of nice but not spectacular, and for Bill 1 I was expecting a bit more.

You know, there are a lot of things that this government could be doing. I mean, at one point Bill 1 was the cancer foundation act of the previous Premier, his legacy about the cancer foundation and, you know, some much bigger ideas, and this just doesn't seem like a tremendous, big idea. [interjection] Well, yeah, I think it can go there. [interjection] Well, I have managed to engage members on the other side, and that, of course, is my delight and my joy, so I will take my seat and allow some of the others, now that I've engaged them, to get up and tell me what they really think.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for St. Albert, do you wish to speak?

**Mr. Allred:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today and speak in support of Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act, being proposed by our hon. Premier. Before I comment on this piece of legislation, I'd just like to thank the Premier not only for this bill but for his many, many years of dedicated service to this province and the people of Alberta.

The actual legislative alterations proposed by Bill 1 are comparatively small, but the intent of the legislation is simply to create an advisory council. However, the scope and the reach of this council are what truly make this legislation significant and very critical to Alberta's future. If passed, Bill 1 will form the Asia advisory council. In turn, this council will be tasked with advancing Alberta's cultural and business interests abroad, specifically in the emerging economies of Asia. These economies include the major economic powerhouses of China, Japan, and India and potentially many of the smaller but growing Asian economies, and of course, Mr. Speaker, you would be very well acquainted with some of those.

Mr. Speaker, as part of its role the council will be mandated to provide information to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations on a variety of issues. These issues cover a broad range of topics, and these could include ways to expand our markets, ways to improve tourism, and ways to improve cultural and educational relations.

The end result of Bill 1 and the Asia advisory council will hopefully be the expansion of Alberta abroad. Alberta is an exporting jurisdiction but is limited in its trading partners. In fact, 85 per

cent of everything we produce and export goes to one single market, the United States, our neighbour to the south. While this relationship has helped pave the way to Alberta's economic success, it is not without potential pitfalls. Becoming so dependent on one market means that if this one market were to struggle or change course, it would take Alberta with it, and obviously there are some major concerns in that regard right at the moment.

3:50

The solution to this is to expand our reach and diversify beyond this one market and look for other markets that are interested and in need of the resources and services that we have to offer. If you were to look at the global economy, it quickly becomes obvious where the growing economies are. Mr. Speaker, Asia is without a doubt one of the fastest growing economic centres in the world. It is filled with a growing population craving a lifestyle similar to that in North America. This means that they will need three things – food, fibre, and fuel – and Alberta can provide all three.

Alberta is an agricultural centre blessed with expansive fields, world-class livestock, and a farming community dedicated to high-quality agricultural products. Alberta is a forestry leader, with expansive wood resources and a dedicated timber industry, and of course Alberta is an energy powerhouse, with the world's second-largest proven oil reserves. In short, Alberta is the ideal trading partner for these up-and-coming economies.

Mr. Speaker, beyond these three resources, Alberta is also blessed with a young, well-trained, and ambitious workforce, so in addition to possessing the resources these nations desire, we also have the people and skills these nations need. Just as an aside on this point, one product of Alberta's well-trained and ambitious workforce just happens to be my son Paul, who is a commercial pilot currently employed by a private commercial airline in Shanghai. I emphasize: private. Apparently, it's the first private, nongovernmental airline in China.

Alberta has the potential to forge one of the most successful trading partnerships in our history. However, this would be almost impossible to achieve without the direction proposed by Bill 1. I would again like to stress the importance of this piece of legislation. Bill 1 will create the direction and guidance needed to successfully break into these new and expanding markets, eliminating our overdependence on our one trading partner, which has served us very well. But the future is fraught with dangers. Expanding our markets to include Asia will dramatically strengthen our economy and will help mitigate the effects of future economic downturns.

Mr. Speaker, again, I applaud the Premier for this well-thought-out piece of legislation and thank him for his long-term vision. With that, I will conclude my comments and will be voting in support of Bill 1.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I'm pleased to speak to the government's flagship bill of this session, Bill 1, an act to create a committee. I will certainly echo some of the sentiments of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre in terms of the disappointment in terms of the scope of this bill and what it really says about the government's imagination and its energy and inventiveness and creativity because I think it really speaks to the lack of those qualities in this government.

The hon. Member for St. Albert talked about the need to engage emerging economies. Mr. Speaker, most of these economies emerged decades ago. They are not emerging economies. They are dominant economies in the world and, in the case of China and Vietnam, have been for a couple of decades. Of course, Japan was an emerging economy in the 1950s, so it's a very long time ago. India is a rising economy. I suppose you could call it an emerging economy, but it's already a very powerful economy in the world. While there's some development there, it's already a powerhouse in terms of the world economy.

For the government to finally realize what's been going on in Asia for the last 30 years or more is a little bit late. I think they slept in and missed school today, Mr. Speaker, because this particular part of the world has been emerging as a dominant part of our economy for a very long time. This is not a bad idea. It's certainly not something to set the world on fire in terms of government initiative, but it's also very, very late in the day.

We've been warning in this House for a long time about overdependence on the American market. That was very, very obvious to us during the BSE crisis, which was also a number of years ago, that even when it comes to agriculture, we have too many eggs in one basket in the United States. When the United States decides to move in the area of protectionism, then, you know, we suffer for the lack of diversification in terms of the markets that we have. I think that there are lots of good reasons to diversify, but I think that, again, the government has kind of missed the boat on this, Mr. Speaker. The opportunities to diversify were present 20 years ago in this province, and the government has been only too happy to languish in the embrace of the American economy.

I want to just indicate to members of the House that while we're supporting this particular bill, we're singularly unimpressed by it and more than a little disappointed, as the hon. member from the Official Opposition said. If we were going to do a Bill 1 as a New Democratic government in this province, we would probably do a Bill 1 about making sure that we develop the petroleum resources of this province in a way that benefits the people of this province and ensures that the value of the resources stays in this province for the benefit of the people of Alberta. That would probably be our priority. Of course, the government is very interested in being hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Americans and now the Asian economies as well, and that's not good enough.

I think that in the future people will look back on this period in the province's economic development and realize the vast lost opportunities to make this truly a prosperous province for generations to come and across all groups in society, all classes of people in our province. That opportunity is being lost although small numbers of very rich Albertans are certainly benefiting from this government's policies. In the end, we've been blowing through the financial benefits of the oil and gas industry and the oil sands industry in this province very quickly, as we have seen.

Mr. Speaker, it's not something that I think speaks very well of this government's vision or its ability to continue to move Alberta forward in the way that it has done. I will certainly say that in the past earlier Conservative governments in this province have moved this province forward, but that's very much in the past, hon. members. The government has been running out of steam for some time, and I think this is kind of the last gasp of a boiler that just can't drive the engine of this province anymore.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's interesting as well that this committee that's established by Bill 1 doesn't even account to the government as a whole or to the Premier but to the minister of intergovernmental affairs, so the question really arises in my mind: by what rationale has this been made into Bill 1 for the

government? It doesn't seem to have the appropriate status that I would expect from a Bill 1.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre also referred to Bill 1 in the past, the Alberta Human Rights Act, like Peter Lougheed's first piece of legislation, a signal piece of legislation in this province that really set Alberta apart, set Alberta ahead of other provinces, and really showed that there was vision and there was principle behind that first Progressive Conservative government of this province. That is so far in the past now, Mr. Speaker, that it may as well be ancient history because there's nothing left of that vision and that energy for making our society a more just and fair society. Those kinds of concepts have evaporated in this government, and it's left for Alberta's NDP to stand up and fight for greater equality among all Albertans.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, just to conclude my comments with respect to Bill 1, as I think one of the other hon. members said: "It's nice. There's nothing wrong with it. We'll vote for it." But don't get too excited over on the other side because we're really not very enthused, which you may have gathered from my comments.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to stand and ask a couple of questions of the hon. member on the opposite. First of all, when you talk about the expertise, well, I say to you that I know that you pride yourself on being an expert of hindsight. If you are an expert of hindsight, you should also be a learner for the future.

Mr. Speaker, one comment was made, you know, that we slept in and should have been there a lot sooner. Well, let me say to you that we were there a lot sooner. Maybe the member does not realize that changes in technologies and changes in, if I can use the word, commodities and changes in opportunities have taken place. We are taking advantage of that today.

I want to also say to you that a statement was made – and I wish the hon. member would answer it – when he talked about the status of this particular bill having the expertise only in International and Intergovernmental Relations. Mr. Speaker, this is the expert, and we have to guide our direction through a minister whose responsibility and expertise is relations with other countries.

I also say to you, as I just mentioned briefly, that the world economy has changed. Visions have changed. If that hon. member has not seen that, I think it's critical that he needs to pay more attention to the world markets and to the world opportunities. Mr. Speaker, population and lifestyles have changed.

Also, if I can say to this you – you say "too late" – I remember being on a delegation more than five years ago with the Northern Alberta Development Council. The Northern Alberta Development Council's sole purpose was the discussion of opportunities through Prince Rupert for our lumber industry, for our oil industry, for our product.

Mr. Speaker, also, if you remember, not very many months ago what happened was that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning went to India with the Premier and other members to look at this possibility. For the last possible point I also remember this hon. member criticizing this government for going out and trying to look for markets while they're here.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to respond to that hon. member. Of course, he misconstrued the comments of the time. Very much of it was a political junket. Looking for markets is a good thing, and I support that. But, you know, this member says that . . . [interjections] It was a political junket, by and large. I think it's clear that this government is finally getting around to dealing with this.

This hon. member tried to indicate that this was in fact something the government has been on top of all along. But what happened when the Americans closed the border during the BSE crisis? We had our cattle industry in this province plunged into a crisis, and people were losing their shirts because the government had failed to diversify the economy and the markets of this province. What happened when the Americans imposed the changes because of the softwood lumber dispute? It badly hurt our industries here. If they ever did something, if they decided they didn't need our oil or that they wanted to punish us by not taking it, we would be totally shafted in this province because this government has absolutely failed to diversify its markets despite getting lesson after lesson after lesson from international politics and economics.

I want to say just in conclusion [Mr. Mason's speaking time expired] Too bad.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Now we will continue on the bill. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of Bill 1, introduced by the hon. Premier, the Asia Advisory Council Act. As Alberta looks to the east for increased trade and investments, it seems only fitting that I begin my remarks by quoting an ancient Chinese proverb. Wise sages teach us to, and I quote, dig the well before you are thirsty. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what Alberta is doing with regard to Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act. The passage of this bill will ensure that Alberta's well of prosperity does not run dry by tapping into the incredible potential of the Asian market.

If passed, this act will put into place an advisory council that will provide expertise on ways to advance Alberta's cultural and business interests in Asia. The members will provide our government with expertise on up-and-coming regional and sectoral opportunities, new market opportunities for Alberta exporters, and opportunities to build on our educational and cultural relations in Asia. Their intimate knowledge of the Asian market will help Alberta maximize business opportunities and attract investments into our province, building on the solid foundation that this government has been building that many members have mentioned, building on the solid foundation that our international offices in Beijing, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Shanghai, and Seoul have established.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that Alberta engages the full potential of the Asian market. The Asian countries are outperforming many industrialized nations; the facts are simply undeniable. Let's take China, for example. China alone offers a market of 1.3 billion people. It is also one of the strongest countries coming out of the global recession. In fact, *The Economist* recently declared China the world's second largest economy. An International Monetary Fund report supports this finding, stating that China's economy is projected to grow by 9.6 percent in 2011, and it's no wonder when you look at the performance of China's provinces and cities. To put it in perspective, the province of Guangdong's GDP is almost as big as the entire country of Indonesia. When you look at



Shanghai, its GDP per person is as high as Saudi Arabia's. The fact is that China is a rising economy, and Alberta needs a firm foothold into this market if we are going to continue to sustain our prosperity.

China is currently Alberta's second largest trading partner, but there are many more opportunities we can explore in trade and investment. China offers an emerging market for science and technology in the areas of information and communications, life sciences, environmental technologies, energy-related technologies, and agricultural technologies. Alberta can also help meet China's demand for food with exports of wheat, beef, and canola oil and products.

We can also harness the power of China's economy by attracting more investment into our province. Chinese companies have already shown great interest in our energy sector. Husky Energy, owned by Hong Kong businessman Li Ka-shing, has long been a fixture on Alberta's energy scene. Just recently PetroChina invested \$5.4 billion into Encana's Cutbank Ridge natural gas asset. This new investment joins the billions of dollars already invested in Alberta's energy sector by China National Petroleum Corporation, the China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation, and China National Offshore Oil Corporation.

**4:10**

Mr. Speaker, in another show of faith the Bank of China opened a branch in my home city of Calgary recently, signalling the bank's confidence in Alberta's robust economic climate.

Economically there is no question that Alberta can and will benefit from increased trade and investment with China and with Asia as a whole. However, there are also many intangible reasons why now is the time to engage the Asian market. Alberta is changing. Now more than ever our population reflects the diversity found all over the world. All we need to do is to look around Alberta to see the changing face of business.

As the parliamentary assistant for Employment and Immigration I have seen the impact of globalization on our province's labour market. Not only are Asian countries driving global markets; they are also our number one source of skilled immigrants. In addition to generations of Albertans of Asian descent, year after year Alberta's labour market is strengthened through new immigrants from China, India, and the Philippines. These Albertans have intimate knowledge of their countries of origin, knowledge that will give our province the edge to help us solidify our market position in Asia. Passing the Asia Advisory Council Act will allow us to tap into the rich experience of our growing cultural communities and give voice to the thousands of Asian Albertans who help make up our rich social fabric.

Mr. Speaker, the time is now to engage China. Now is the time for us to seek the expertise and the guidance of individuals who can help us harness the power of countries like China. Now is the time for Alberta to diversify its export markets for the sustained success of our economy. I urge all members of the Legislative Assembly to give their support to Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act, because now is the time to dig our well before we become thirsty.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the hon. member a question. She said that now is the time to engage China, and now is the time to diversify our markets. My

question to her is: why is now the time to do those things? Why wasn't the time to do those things 10 or 15 years ago?

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Well, thank you for the very good question. We have been building this foundation in terms of relationship, in terms of our trade development with China for the past decade. I think we started in the '70s. But this is a different phase in China's economic and cultural and educational development. There's a growing middle class, and advancement of technology is presenting different opportunities for the province of Alberta and China to explore additional opportunities. It's the new population. Their needs are different. Their interests are different. Their need for resources is different from 10 years ago. Much of the current state of development in China was developed over the last 30 years, so we're dealing with a very different country. I think that's part of the reason.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, could I just ask a question? We did hear the indication from the member from the other side that basically said that we're 10 years or 20 years too late. From that message I am gathering that he is saying, "It's too late. Let's quit. Let's bury our heads in the sand, and let's not look for new markets, especially for those in China and in India." I want to ask the hon. member: is there still opportunity in those markets?

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank for the question from the hon. member. There are still plenty of opportunities. In fact, those opportunities will be building on the tremendous strong relationship that we've built over the last 20 years. The Chinese people are a people that remember past deeds. The fact that we provided them with wheat and with assistance during times of natural disaster are things that the Chinese people and people in Asia remember well. That will lead us, actually, into a future relationship very well. A tremendous opportunity.

They recognize the high quality of education that we have established here in Canada, and they want to share and learn some of those education developments. I know that every year when we have the petroleum conferences, several delegations come here. They are interested in our agricultural products, and they are interested in our environmental stewardship initiatives. So there's lots of room for the exchange of learning, for development, for trade opportunities, and for cultural exchange and creation.

**Mr. Mason:** I want to congratulate the hon. member for her answer to my question. That was not a bad answer. But I want to ask her a question. Don't you think that it's really sad the way the minister has to put words in my mouth in order to attack my position?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does any other hon. member wish to use Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, before we continue, I just want to remind hon. members, when you speak, to look at the Speaker and that the microphone is on, so don't turn your back or your microphone cannot pick up.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie on the bill.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act. The government has announced its commitment to market diversification and, specifically, expand its efforts to further strengthen our partnership in Asia. Diversification means accessing new markets and forging stronger relationships with new trading partners. It also means strengthening our cultural ties and sharing knowledge and ideas by tapping into the brightest minds around the world.

Broadening our scope and taking a more global approach to our future will secure Alberta's quality of life and prosperity for generations to come. This is what Bill 1 is about.

If passed, Bill 1 will establish a council of 10 members who represent a cross-section of organizations and interests, including business, cultural, and academic communities. The members of this council would have expertise in Asia and insights that would enable Alberta to strengthen global ties and be more successful on the world stage. Specifically, the council would advise government on ways to advance Alberta's business and cultural interest in Asia, and it would guide our efforts to gain better access to key Asian markets, including China, Japan, Korea, and India.

These are regions that are so important to Alberta's future, especially at a time when the world economy is changing. With the U.S. economy continuing to recover from the global economic recession, Alberta needs to look to other markets. India is one of those markets, Mr. Speaker. With a population of more than 1 billion people India is poised to surpass China as the world's most populous country by the year 2030. India also has one of the world's fastest growing economies, with a middle class of 250 million people. This constitutes a large consumer market for Alberta products. In fact, between 2005 and 2009 Alberta's exports to India averaged \$98.5 million a year.

Like with other markets in Asia, Alberta has already begun making inroads in India to strengthen ties and forge new partnerships. Alberta and India share a history of resource development, and Alberta companies have over two decades of experience in the Indian oil and gas sector. A growing number of leading-edge Alberta companies like Niko Resources, Canoro Resources, GeoGlobal Resources, and Bengal Energy maintain offices in India.

4:20

There is also growing potential for Indian investment in our oil sands. As the fourth-largest oil consumer in the world India is producing less than a third of the million barrels a day it consumes. Alberta has the energy to help meet their demand, but energy development isn't all we share. In January 2009 Canada signed a first-ever memorandum of understanding with India to create a framework to increase agricultural trade between the two countries.

We also continue to grow our educational partnerships. As of 2010 the University of Alberta has agreements with the Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai, the Indore Indira school of career studies, the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore, the IILM Institute for Higher Education, Petrotech Society, Tata Consultancy Services, and the University of Hyderabad.

Alberta has been working to expand our relationship with India for a long time, from the twinning of Calgary with the Indian city of Jaipur in 1973 to last year's visit to India by the Premier as well. The Premier's mission included meetings with business leaders and government officials. His visit was positive in both an economic sense and in a cultural sense. While in India the Premier became the first Alberta Premier ever to visit the Golden Temple in the city of Amritsar and the Akshardham Temple in New Delhi. This mission was also particularly well timed. In November Canada and India announced the beginning of negotiations for a comprehensive economic partnership agreement.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, as you can see, Alberta has been working on establishing and strengthening the relationship with this important and growing market. Our efforts so far have laid the foundation from which we can build and flourish. Supporting Bill 1 will enable Alberta to capitalize on all of our good work. The expertise of the council will guide us in a focused and deliberate

approach as we open up new opportunities with India and other Asian regions. Passing this bill means further diversification of our export markets, stronger relationships with new and important partners, and continued economic prosperity for our province.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this Assembly to give their support to Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a). The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

**Ms Evans:** If I may, I wanted to just ask one question. It seems to me that there was never a more successful mission than what the Premier had with the members that accompanied him to India, and I'd just like to ask a question of the hon. member, one of the superb delegation that went on that occasion. Was there anything that we could have done further to advance our cause in the short period of time you had on that mission?

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Well, thank you very much, hon. member. At the time we arrived in India, our Premier – and I think it was mentioned by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning – after travelling for 18 hours, I think, barely had a couple of hours of sleep, and then we were at the opening of Petrotech, where we had members competing on an international stage. In fact, one of the members leading the project was from Calgary, Alberta, and all three of us who were there – myself, the Member for Edmonton-Manning, and the Member for Calgary-Montrose – were there to cheer him on for the innovation side of it.

I think that if we look at the trade mission as a whole, our Premier was able to accomplish a great deal. He had a lineup of people waiting to see him. He met every single one of those. At the reception held by the High Commissioner of Canada in New Delhi, which the Premier attended, there were all kinds of people from the Indian business community, and a number of companies from Alberta who were present at Petrotech were also invited. They showed a huge interest both for the government of Alberta to be in India – very, very appreciative for the Premier to be there – as well as the willingness of the companies in India to come and visit Alberta and do business here.

So, hon. member, I think the visit of the Premier to India was just marvellous. It was very, very successful. Thank you very much for that question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for – I used to call you minister; now I have to check.

**Mr. Horner:** Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yeah. Okay. Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horner:** Just a quick question to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker. I know he represents an area of our province that has a fairly significant community of Indian-Albertans who have made their home here in Alberta. I wanted to ask him: how important is a trip to that country by our Premier to Albertans of that descent who are here?

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Well, thank you very much. Hon. member, there are over 100,000 people of Indian descent who call Alberta their home, so having the first Premier ever in the history of the province to visit the Golden Temple was huge for the Indo-Canadian community of Alberta. I think there were probably 30 to 40 media

outlets which were covering the Premier's visit live while we were at the Golden Temple. Of course, as a proud member of the Indo-Canadian community of Alberta we particularly felt honoured wherever we went in India with the Premier. They were so proud that the Premier was there in New Delhi when we visited Akshardham as well, the first time ever that an Alberta Premier was there. The Premier, of course, visited with us to lay the wreath at the Gandhi memorial as well. So I think, overall, to answer your question, it was a very proud moment for all of the 100,000 Indo-Canadians living right in the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. I'd like to ask the hon. member if he knows whether or not the invitation to attend as part of the delegation to India was extended to members of the opposition. I know that one member of the opposition is of Indian descent. I know also that in the past when Ralph Klein went to India, an invitation to Raj Pannu, who was our leader at that time, also of Indian descent, was not extended. So I just wondered, because of the comment that was made by me about it being political, whether or not opposition members were invited to participate.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Well, I don't know whether the invitation was extended to the hon. member or not. But to comment on some of the stuff, in fact, the hon. member and myself were together at the Republic Day of India, where he had a lot of positive things to say about the Indo-Canadians of Alberta and the Indian ancestry right here in the province of Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does any other hon. member wish to speak on the bill?

Hon. Government House Leader, do you want to speak on the bill?

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we adjourn debate. There are many other members who wish to speak to this bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, I had assumed when you were rising that you were going to call it 4:30. I would now ask that the House do call it 4:30 and adjourn till 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:29 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]



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

**Activity to March 03, 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)  
Second Reading -- 132-33 (Mar. 1 aft.), 189-95 (Mar. 3 aft., adjourned)
- 2 Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011 (Brown)**  
First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 133-34 (Mar. 1 aft., adjourned)
- 3 Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 2011 (Rogers)**  
First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 134-35 (Mar. 1 aft., adjourned)
- 4 Securities Amendment Act, 2011 (Brown)**  
First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 135 (Mar. 1 aft., adjourned)
- 5 Notice to the Attorney General Act (Rogers)**  
First Reading -- 18-19 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 136 (Mar. 1 aft., adjourned)
- 6 Rules of Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2011 (Olson)**  
First Reading -- 19 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 136 (Mar. 1 aft., adjourned)
- 7 Corrections Amendment Act, 2011 (Oberle)**  
First Reading -- 73 (Feb. 28 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 137 (Mar. 1 aft., adjourned)
- 8 Missing Persons Act (VanderBurg)**  
First Reading -- 73 (Feb. 28 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 137 (Mar. 1 aft., adjourned)
- 9 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2011 (\$) (Snelgrove)**  
First Reading -- 113 (Mar. 1 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 185-86 (Mar. 3 aft., passed)
- 10 Alberta Land Stewardship Amendment Act, 2011 (\$) (Knight)**  
First Reading -- 122 (Mar. 1 aft., passed)
- 201 Health Insurance Premiums (Health Card Donor Declaration) Amendment Act, 2011 (Sandhu)**  
First Reading -- 55 (Feb. 24 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 73-86 (Feb. 28 aft., passed)
- 202 Legislative Assembly (Transition Allowance) Amendment Act, 2011 (Anderson)**  
First Reading -- 55 (Feb. 24 aft., passed)

**203 Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act (Rodney)**  
First Reading -- 152 (Mar. 2 aft., passed)

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