



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 27th Legislature

Fourth Session

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DeLong  
Forsyth  
Groeneveld  
Johnston  
MacDonald  
Quest  
Taft

### Standing Committee on Community Services

Chair: Mr. Doerksen  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Hehr

Allred  
Anderson  
Benito  
Bhullar  
Chase  
Johnston  
Notley  
Rodney  
Sarich  
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### Standing Committee on the Economy

Chair: Mr. Bhardwaj  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Chase

Amery  
Dallas  
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Hinman  
Johnson  
Lund  
Taft  
Tarchuk  
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Woo-Paw

### Standing Committee on Health

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Deputy Chair: Ms Pastoor

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Sherman  
Swann  
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### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Bhullar  
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### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Campbell

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Bhullar  
Elniski  
Hehr  
Leskiw  
Mason  
Pastoor  
Rogers  
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Benito	Lindsay
Boutilier	McQueen
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Dallas	Redford
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Hinman	Taft
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Elniski	Xiao
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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 16, 2011

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us pray. As Canadians and as Albertans we give thanks for the precious gifts of freedom and peace which we enjoy. We give further thanks for the gifts of culture and heritage which we share. As Members of this Legislative Assembly we rededicate ourselves to the valued traditions of parliamentary democracy as a means of serving our province and our country. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mr. Stelmach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a man who has inspired millions of people with his courage and his vision. Twenty-five years ago his Man in Motion World Tour did what many people thought was impossible. He rolled his wheelchair around the entire globe to raise awareness of spinal cord injuries. He showed Canada and the entire world what can be done when someone has heart, determination, and courage to make it happen.

Over the past 25 years his foundation has helped raise money to fund important spinal cord research that is changing the lives of so many people. Now, 25 years later, he is planning another Man in Motion marathon across Canada. He is honorary chair of the Alberta Premier's advisory council for persons with disabilities and is here today to raise awareness of his upcoming relay. He is seated in your gallery. He's accompanied by Mr. Mark Aston and Nadine Jarry. I would ask Rick Hansen to give us a wave and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions to make this afternoon. First of all, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Brooks composite high school jazz band. They were in Edmonton this morning to compete in a jazz band competition and have taken the opportunity to come and observe question period with us here today. They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Brian Stone, and parent helper Mrs. Karen Peters. I'd ask them all to rise and enjoy the warm welcome of this Assembly. They're in the visitors' gallery.

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker, is to introduce southern Alberta irrigation districts representatives. They were in Edmonton this morning to provide the Premier with an educational video series called *The Story of Water Management on the Bow River*. They are the chairman of the Bow River irrigation district, Mr. Harold Unruh; the vice-chairman of the Bow River irrigation district, Mr. Ron Schlaht; the BRID manager, Mr. Richard Phillips; the chairman of the Western irrigation district, Mr. Dan Shute; a director of the Western irrigation district, Mr. Doug Brown; as well as the executive manager of the Western irrigation district,

Mr. Jim Webber. They are accompanied up there in the members' gallery as well by Mr. Mike Scarth, who is the executive director of the Alberta WaterPortal, and Mr. Jim Dau. They're all standing, and I'd invite you all to give them a warm welcome to the Assembly this afternoon.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me to honour a great Albertan who's actually joined my office for the short term of a week, filling in for another staff member. Sherry Wynnnyk works in the correspondence management unit at Housing and Urban Affairs, and tomorrow is actually her second anniversary with the government of Alberta. She's a strong advocate for animal rights, which makes for a lot of interesting conversation. I try not to hold it against her that she's a fan of both the Edmonton Oilers and the Edmonton Eskimos. Please join me in welcoming Sherry to this Assembly.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to introduce to you and to all members two new friends from Calgary, Christopher Tahn and Vivian Jones. In 2005 Mr. Tahn volunteered in relief efforts in New Orleans, Louisiana, following the Katrina and Rita hurricanes. That experience inspired him to pursue his dream of providing equipment and services designed to mitigate loss of life and property from natural and man-made disasters through his company, EnviroDam Canada, a made-in-Alberta emergency service solution provider. Ms Jones served first as a nurse and as an addictions counsellor at Alberta Health Services adult addiction services in Calgary. She personally assessed and counselled over 100,000 Albertans in her 30-plus years, focusing primarily on skill development, group therapy, and addictions behaviour. She has selflessly dedicated her life to the health and well-being of others, and we're grateful for her service. I'd ask all members to give them the usual welcome.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Eric Musekamp and Darlene Dunlop of the Farmworkers Union. As a paid farm worker Eric deserves the same protection from occupational health and safety and WCB legislation as all other workers in Alberta. I'm glad that they're here today to help us celebrate farm safety week. I would ask all members to extend the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members individuals representing the Alberta Federation of Labour: Joanne O'Hare, a member of the Canadian Union of Public Employees 3550; Xavier Cattarinich from the Calgary Workers' Resource Centre; Alex Shevalier, Calgary & District Labour Council representative. Our caucus had the pleasure today of meeting with these members to discuss women's equivalency and women's rights in the workplace. I can tell you that they are truly remarkable Albertans, and I strongly believe that as a result of their efforts we are moving towards our goal of greater labour equality for women. I would like all members of this House to extend the traditional welcome to the three individuals standing.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature members of the Nigeria Association of Alberta. The Nigeria Association is a not-for-profit group established in 1985 by Nigerian-Canadian professionals with the aim of providing a conducive environment for their generation and future generations of Nigerians who want to make Edmonton home. The association helps nourish a united community to promote Nigerian cultural heritage. I would like to welcome the members of the Nigeria Association of Alberta, who are seated in the public gallery, to the Legislature. I would ask that they rise as I read their names to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Dr. Mike Afara, Ikechukwu Okoro, Dr. Bede Eke, Dr. Patrick Iroegbu, William Nwaribe, Cajetan Ngede, and Dr. Eugene Nnamani. I apologize for the pronunciations.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature two representatives of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. We met today as part of the Alberta Federation of Labour's lobby day and, like the previous member, had a good discussion on issues around women's rights and equality. These particular members work in the building trades. I find it interesting that as we are talking about the need to increase the number of temporary foreign workers and foreign workers in the province and at the same time have a huge wage gap between men and women in this province, we haven't done more to increase the number of women in the trades. These women serve as a fabulous example. I would now ask Amber Gaddy and Robyn Schaapman, who are seated in the members' gallery, I believe, to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**1:40**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure and a surprise for me today to be able to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly a very good friend and colleague of mine that I notice is in the members' gallery. Mr. Tom Burton has been a very long-time public supporter from the point of view of municipal representation, worked in the fire department in the community of DeBolt, worked tirelessly in the recreation area with respect to that whole community around DeBolt. I'd ask Tom to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Water Management on the Bow River

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning a number of colleagues and I had the opportunity to participate in the premiere of a new educational video series, *The Story of Water Management on the Bow River*. This premiere is timely as this is Canada Water Week, when all of us are reminded of the importance and significance of water to the things we do every day.

Water is a primary resource in southern Alberta as it is the lifeblood of much of the economic and people activity in the region.

Mr. Speaker, it was an eye for opportunity that initiated the construction of irrigation infrastructure on the Bow River more than a hundred years ago and has resulted in the dynamic and balanced development of this region in the interests of agriculture, industry, and people, and it is opportunity that will continue that growth into the future. Innovative, efficient, responsible, and increased use of the precious resource, water, will make that growth possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Eastern irrigation district, the Bow River irrigation district, and the Western irrigation district for their foresight in producing this educational series of videos and the Alberta WaterPortal for agreeing to host it on their website. It highlights for all Albertans a better understanding of the important linkages between rural and urban Alberta created by wise stewardship of water and the many benefits that have occurred because of conservation efforts on the Bow River.

I would encourage all hon. members to visit [www.albertawater.com](http://www.albertawater.com) to view the videos and learn more detail about the story of water management in the Bow basin and trust you will encourage your schools and community groups to do the same. This high-quality video series very effectively links the proud history with the dynamic of today and a bright and optimistic future for residents of southern Alberta. I would like to table a copy of the video series if I could, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

#### Gender Equality

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Alberta Federation of Labour is making the government aware that Albertan women are falling behind in gender equality. This unfairness is felt at all levels of society as on average women earn 72 cents for every dollar that a man earns, and Alberta women with university degrees earn only 67 per cent of the wages earned by men with similar degrees. At the same time Alberta families headed by females alone are the most vulnerable, with the highest lone-parent poverty rate in Canada. Alberta is the only federal, provincial, or territorial jurisdiction in Canada that does not have any institutional voice for women on women's issues and gender analysis of policy. The Alberta government is lagging behind other provinces in acting to address gender inequality.

Mr. Speaker, our province needs to improve family leave benefits and child care spaces so that women and our mothers may have the freedom to choose to raise their families without negatively impacting their careers or the well-being of their children, our future. Women's voices must be heard if this unfair treatment is to end. We have a very distinguished history of women pioneers in this province from the Famous Five to the Hon. Lois Hole and many elected women in this Legislature today, some of them ministers.

Alberta used to be at the forefront of the fight for equality. It is time for Alberta to take that leadership role back in this nation. The Alberta Federation of Labour hopes that this government and all Albertans join together and take action now to end gender inequality.

Thank you.

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

### Nanotechnology Guinness World Record Achievement

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this moment to tell the members of this Assembly about a recent technological achievement in Alberta. More to the point, this achievement has earned a spot in the Guinness book of world records. Specifically, Dr. Robert Wolkow and his research team members, Dr. Mohamed Rezeq and Dr. Jason Pitters, at Canada's National Institute for Nanotechnology in Alberta have created the world's sharpest object. They achieved this milestone using patented fabrication technology.

Of course, we all know the importance of a fine edge on a tool. Well, Alberta really does have the finest edge possible on the smallest tool one could ever imagine. The world's sharpest object is a valuable tool in the specific scientific discipline of nanotechnology, where it allows for more accurate electron microscopes.

Many Albertans may be surprised to learn that nanotechnology research has been going on at our universities for decades. Alberta researchers were in on the ground floor of this new and emerging science, and to help us stay ahead of the pack, our government continues to support nanotechnology research and commercialization.

Mr. Speaker, the creation of the world's sharpest object is only one of the exciting projects going on in Alberta's nanotechnology community. Hitachi, the world's leading manufacturer of electron microscopes, is working with the National Institute for Nanotechnology and the University of Alberta to commercialize improved instruments using these sharper scanning probes. Acticoat bandages using nanosilver particles are manufactured in Alberta, and they are used world-wide. GE is working with Alberta researchers to use nanotechnology in applications that reduce the environmental impact of industry on our air and water. And right now students in Alberta universities and technical colleges are learning about nanotechnology and preparing for exciting careers in the field.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my thanks to Dr. Wolkow and his team. Finally, I would encourage all Albertans to learn more about Alberta's burgeoning nanotechnology community at [nanoalberta.ca](http://nanoalberta.ca).

Thank you.

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

### Immigrant Nominee Program

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week our government was proud to announce the changes to the Alberta immigrant nominee program. This change will not only make applying easier for temporary foreign workers with Alberta trade certification; it will also strengthen our province's workforce.

Each year the federal government caps the number of new AINP nominees to Alberta at 5,000. This relatively low number means that Alberta needs to make the most of our newcomers who want to live and work in this province. That is why foreign workers who are classified under one of the 31 designated optional trades in Alberta are now able to apply directly through the strategic recruitment stream without an employer's application. Previously optional trades applicants had to apply under the employer-driven stream.

This is a significant and positive change for temporary foreign workers in the optional trades. In the past these foreign workers would have to rely on their employer to apply with them for their permanent status, but the new change puts the future of the workers in their own hands. If the worker falls under one of the 31 designated optional trades, they can apply directly to the program

once they obtain certification from Alberta apprenticeship and industry training in their trade.

Mr. Speaker, this is good news for TFWs and a big win for Albertans, too. Labour groups have also been applauding the decision. I just spent an afternoon and lunch hour with some of the people from the immigrant service sector, and they're very pleased with the change. We are facing a labour shortage in the next few years, and making sure we have more certified tradespeople as part of the annual 5,000 Alberta nominees will help us stay competitive in the global market as we enter the next boom.

Details on the application process are readily available. Our Immigrate to Alberta information service can be reached at [www.albertacanada.com](http://www.albertacanada.com).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Patient Advocacy by Physicians

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. These Tories are not interested in truth or transparency. The list of damning allegations against their culture of fear and intimidation in the health care system grows daily. Today Dr. Abilio Nunes, a staff anaesthesiologist at the Grey Nuns, had this to say: I believe there needs to be a public inquiry, I have evidence that a culture of fear and intimidation does exist in the capital region, I personally have faced more than five years of intimidation for speaking out. End quote. When will the Premier finally concede that the only way to fully address this government's culture of fear and intimidation is a public, judge-led, independent inquiry, as called for?

1:50

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, if you want to see a demonstration of an organization's culture, you look to its leadership. There has been leadership through the three associations – Alberta Health Services, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Alberta Medical Association – who issued a joint statement in terms of how to support patient advocacy by doctors and other health care workers. Subsequent to that, there were bylaws that were agreed to by 90 per cent of the physicians. Over a thousand physicians replied to a poll in terms of the medical staff bylaws. It's all in the staff bylaws. There is ample opportunity for any doctor to come forward.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, we've gone way beyond a reassuring letter from Alberta Health Services.

Will the Premier ensure that Dr. Nunes receives complete immunity from any disciplinary action for his comments condemning this government's culture of intimidation, or will he allow what was done to me to be done to Dr. Nunes?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, further to what I just said, there is also a letter that was distributed, signed by Dr. Chris Eagle and Dr. David Megran and Dr. Francois Belanger, that very clearly identified what the processes are for physicians and other front-line health care providers to provide evidence and advocate on behalf of patients. I will table those documents at the end of question period.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier doesn't get it. He needs to take a reality check and realize that doctors don't trust Alberta Health Services to deal with these issues. They're not independ-

ent. Sorry, Mr. Premier. Calling the cops is an absolute farce, and the only way to restore confidence is through a public inquiry. When will you do the right thing, sir?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, when you see someone stealing a car in the back alley, you don't call for a public inquiry; you call for the police. If there's anything that's happening out there that is wrong, that's where it goes to. A public inquiry?

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

### Health Quality Council Review

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Health Quality Council review on wait times for emergency rooms and cancer patients is a necessary first step, but it cannot clear the air on the issue of intimidating doctors and financial misconduct. Only a full, public, judge-led inquiry can subpoena witnesses and provide immunity. Everybody knows this. The evidence of intimidation continues to grow, and Dr. Paul Parks said this today: the public have the right to fully demand we get to the bottom of this. Anything less is unacceptable. End quote. Will the Premier finally agree with the many medical experts and call a judge-led public inquiry and put this issue to rest?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, the Health Quality Council will have the opportunity to look at any accusations that come forward, any allegations, this allegation about two sets of books. We have an honourable group. Alberta's Auditor General has no evidence of any two sets of books. But if somebody has some hidden books somewhere in Alberta, man, we've been at this now – for what? – since November. You would think we'd be able to find them and bring evidence to the Auditor General or to the police.

**Dr. Swann:** How hard have you looked, Mr. Premier?

The Premier likes to call the Health Quality Council . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader has the floor.

**Dr. Swann:** The Premier likes to call the Health Quality Council independent. I'm sorry; we all know that isn't the case. Who does it report to but the minister of health? How can you be called independent if you report to the minister?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, again yesterday this hon. member asked us, the government, to then make public a disclosure statement that was entered into by the Alberta Medical Association and the physician in question. We're not even a party to that agreement, and he wants to give this government power to open up a personal disclosure document that we weren't a party to. That is absolutely ridiculous.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader. [interjections] Actually, here's how it works. When the Speaker designates someone and that person rises, the television cameras go directly to him, his microphone is live, and nobody hears anything else.

Proceed, please.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has just given all the more reason to have a public inquiry. Will the Premier stop playing word games with the public and agree to a public inquiry that can define its own terms of reference and that can report directly to the Legislature. That's what we're asking, Mr. Premier. Will you do that, sir?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as I said countless times, all of these matters will go to the Health Quality Council. This is a group of doctors and professionals in the field of medicine. They have tremendous respect in this province, have brought forward recommendations in many other areas that we've asked them to as the people of Alberta, and they'll continue to do that. This is the best opportunity to once and for all deal with some of the wait time issues and cancer surgery wait times and, most importantly, get to the bottom of these allegations that have been raised in the House.

**The Speaker:** A number of quotations were made during the exchange of these two first questions. I'd ask that the documentation be tabled this afternoon at the appropriate time.

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

### Settlement Agreements with Physicians

**Mr. Hehr:** Dr. Ciaran McNamee was let go from his employment as a surgeon and accordingly filed a lawsuit against this government. Dr. McNamee believed that he was let go because he was advocating for his patients and that this was making the government uncomfortable. As a result of calls for a public inquiry, the need for it backed up by Dr. McNamee, members of this government have given their interpretation of what a statement of claim is, what a statement of defence is, and so on. It's been a virtual law school class in here, Mr. Speaker. Continuing on that theme, I'd ask the Justice minister to tell this honourable House what a settlement is.

### Speaker's Ruling Legal Opinions

**The Speaker:** Look, you boys are both learned members of the Law Society of Alberta, and you lawyers like to do this sort of stuff. One of the things that is not part of question period is legal interpretation. If the hon. member who is a trained lawyer is asking another hon. member who is a trained lawyer for an interpretation, perhaps the two of you might just get together, have coffee, go for a walk in the park this afternoon, and we'll move forward.

**Ms Blakeman:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** I will invite the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General to respond if he wishes.

### Settlement Agreements with Physicians (continued)

**Mr. Olson:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could give just a general comment. In my experience people who make settlements are usually both unhappy. The person who received any kind of compensation feels they should have received far more because they were right. The person who had to give any compensation is very unhappy because they should have never had to pay anything because they were right.

**The Speaker:** That really clarifies government policy. You want to proceed with your second question?

**Mr. Hehr:** It's helping me a lot, Mr. Speaker. My question is again for the Justice minister. As a result of Dr. McNamee filing a statement of claim, a settlement was reached with him whereby



money was given to him to settle the lawsuit. Is that what happened?

**Mr. Olson:** I don't know.

**Mr. Hehr:** My final question is for the Justice minister. It's our understanding that a settlement was reached with monetary value. Is it standard practice of this government to settle claims where there's no validity to them at all?

**Mr. Olson:** As far as I know, the government of Alberta was not party to any such settlement.

### Agreement in Principle with Physicians

**Mr. Anderson:** Yesterday, when asked if the government's relationship with Alberta doctors had broken down, the minister of health said that

we now have an agreement in principle between the government, Alberta Health Services, and the [Alberta Medical Association that] is a very positive sign that we are moving forward and that there is a relationship that is beginning to work.

Mr. Minister, do you stand by that statement? Is the relationship between your government and our doctors a positive one?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if he quoted exactly everything that was there. I don't have *Hansard* just in front of me, but I believe what I said is that we have a working relationship and we're working toward improving it, or words to that effect. The fact is that we do have a relationship with the AMA. They have a relationship with us, but they're in the midst of negotiations right now. Neither I nor the president of the AMA, to the best of my knowledge, is at the negotiating table. There are issues there that are very serious. As we know with negotiations, they take them seriously.

**Mr. Anderson:** A good relationship, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, why, then, in a letter released 48 hours ago does the president of the AMA say that during the negotiations for this new agreement that you're talking about, "for the first time ever – Government threatened the loss of programs and services to try and [threaten] physicians," and that doing so diminished the ongoing relationship with the medical profession . . .

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

**Mr. Anderson:** Minister, please explain the misinformation you gave . . .

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I want to call a point of order on that because I gave no wrong information yesterday whatsoever. What I'm going to be interested in is to see which parts he quoted and which parts he left out. That will be of interest, hon. member.

What I did say was that we do have an agreement in principle and that the rep forum recommended that or sent it out or whatever they did with it. They got it out to their members, and they're waiting for ratification for it. My position on this is that I support those programs. I support those benefits for doctors . . .

2:00

**Mr. Anderson:** Yeah. Right. You're on top of those things.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Let's get on with the question. There are no preambles. [interjections]

**Mr. Anderson:** I know. It is embarrassing. It is embarrassing for the government. I agree.

Will you now call for a full independent public inquiry, with full judicial powers to get to the bottom of what has become a complete breakdown in the relationship of trust between Alberta's health care professionals and this government? A total breakdown of trust, Minister, between the doctors and this government.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, there's no breakdown of trust. What there is is an agreement in principle.

I'll tell you that what I find shameful is for this member to stand here and pretend to be a defender of health care when their chief strategist is out of the country trying to somehow take doctors from here to support a private hospital elsewhere. Explain that one to the public of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. You're recognized. You're on TV. The mike is on.

### Patient Advocacy by Physicians (continued)

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You'll find it a little harder to use that dodge on this party, Mr. Minister.

The minister keeps referring to agreements with the Alberta Medical Association and Alberta Health Services as an example of the wonderful working relationship that this government has with doctors. But to quote from the same letter from Dr. White, the president of the AMA:

[The] Government threatened the loss of programs and services to try and intimidate physicians. And it repudiated the philosophy of collaboration and of shared responsibility and leadership that epitomize the current . . . master agreement.

So, Mr. Minister, how can you continue to pretend that you have a proper relationship with the . . .

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, what I'm surprised at is that that member doesn't understand how union-type negotiations can sometimes go. They can go a number of different routes. I'm not going to inflame the situation any further. I'm sure the AMA has its reasons for putting things out the way that they did. Unfortunately, we're not in a position where we can negotiate through the media.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the doctors are saying that you're intimidating them, the head of the Alberta Medical Association, and that the United Nurses of Alberta have added their voices to the call for a full and independent public inquiry and given that the president says that intimidation is not new to nurses and that pressure to keep silent about less than desirable patient care conditions is common, how can you say that you have the confidence of anyone in the health care system?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, what I can tell you is that Albertans by and large do have huge confidence. But I'll tell you where confidence breaks down. It breaks down when unsubstantiated allegations like this start to create fear, fear for patients who are out there with their loved ones waiting for some surgery. They're on a wait-list here, perhaps just like they might be in some other province. [interjections] If they would just shut up for a little

while and listen, that would be wonderful. [interjections] Well, Mr. Speaker, there are just so many interruptions.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Please sit down. I want to make it clear again. The way this thing works is that if I give you permission to talk, the light goes on. The mike is on. Nobody hears anything else. You speak to me. I like to listen. I'm actually a pretty good listener.

Continue, please, Minister.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the point here is that we have an independent review, which this hon. member who asked the question asked for just a week or two ago.

**The Speaker:** Unfortunately, we've now run out of the time allocated.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the current Alberta Health Services code of conduct explicitly prohibits health professionals, including nurses and others, from speaking out publicly against what the government is doing if it affects their patients' health and that it says specifically that they can be terminated for doing so, why won't the health minister admit that his government is responsible for creating a culture of fear and intimidation in the health care system that has affected patient care?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Simply because we're not. I don't discount that there might be a few people who feel differently; however, it's very clear here in the recently released Alberta Health Services medical staff bylaws, which this member should have a copy of, on page 38, where it says that "individual members of the Medical Staff have the right and the responsibility to advocate on behalf of their Patients." And I applaud them for doing so.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Tabling Cited Documents**

**The Speaker:** Okay. Before we move to the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, to the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Premier, the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and maybe the Minister of Health and Wellness: everybody quoted from documents. You've got about 35 to 40 minutes to have it all ready for tabling at the appropriate time.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

#### **Health Quality Council Review (continued)**

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Quality Council of Alberta, created by the government 20 years ago, a completely independent, self-supporting entity with a mission to promote the use of quality methods in both the private and public sectors, says that it is extremely concerned with the decision to charter the Health Quality Council to investigate recent allegations concerning the health care system. The QCA has reviewed the HQCA's research on two previous occasions and described the 2010 satisfaction survey and the 2009 ER patient experience report as junk science. I will table those documents. To the Premier: will he now do the right thing and call the full public inquiry that my colleagues in the opposition have been . . .

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

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as I have said countless times in the House and I continue to say, this matter is all going to the Health Quality Council. They will do a good job of evaluating all of the evidence and all of the allegations that are going to come forward once the terms of reference are set and the membership of that council is made public.

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given the QCA's charge that the Health Quality Council pretended "that a 38% response rate on a discretionary sample qualifies as a random sample. It doesn't" and that the 2010 report is "guilty of flagrant overreaching," can the Premier perhaps explain to a skeptical public why they should trust the results of a Health Quality Council review?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the Health Quality Council has the respect of Albertans. They've done very good work in the past, and they'll continue to do that. This matter is going forward to the Health Quality Council, and the sooner we can get it to the council, we'll resolve a lot of these issues and just settle down many of the allegations, all of which have been totally unsupported by any evidence.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the QCA says that it does not believe that these past efforts of the Health Quality Council have demonstrated the level of quality that would warrant entrusting it with this new and important investigation, will the Premier enlighten us as to how he expects this review of theirs to clear the air?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, in the direction that I gave the minister of health, I wanted him to ask the Health Quality Council to look at waiting times in emergency, look at waiting times in cancer treatment, and look at how best to ensure that those waiting times are reduced given the five-year funding commitment that's going forward, given the fact that we're training 2,000 more nurses by 2012, all of those huge increases in not only dollars going to health but also in staffing. On these other allegations that have been raised in the House, we're waiting for further proof.

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

#### **Water Quality Monitoring in the Oil Sands**

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last September Drs. Kelly and Schindler released a report that measured snow-pack depositions in the oil sands region and made conclusions that caught the attention of many individuals, organizations, and especially this government. All of my questions are to the Minister of Environment. How do the conclusions of Kelly and Schindler differ from the monitoring that has been performed by the government and other organizations?

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the most obvious difference is that the conclusions with respect to human versus naturally occurring contaminants were different. The report itemizes a number of reasons for that, one of which is that there were differences in sampling methods. There were differences in reference sites. One thing I would like to point out to the member, though, is that the report also points out that neither of the reports actually dealt with the actual concentrations or their effects on organisms.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Since these conclusions were so sweeping and significant, the Premier asked for an independent committee to be formed to review the data of this report along with that of the government's. Did this independent committee affirm the potentially significant conclusions made by Kelly and Schindler's work?

2:10

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the panel concluded that each of the studies presents some useful information; however, each also suffers from some limitations. It applies to both the government studies as well as the academic studies. For example, the panel found that Kelly and Schindler made assumptions that may be too simplistic and may not have enough data to determine the true impact of the effects of development in the region.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Suggestions have been made in conventional and social media, fuelled by opposition criticism, that the multidecade monitoring that government has conducted is invalid. Is this truly what the independent committee suggested in their report?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the report was to examine why there were different conclusions, not to come to some kind of a conclusion over who was right and who was wrong. As a matter of fact, yesterday I met with the committee, and they affirmed that, in fact, the historical data that has been developed by Alberta Environment and RAMP and others is based on solid science, but they pointed out that there needs to be an opportunity for that research to adapt and to be a much more co-ordinated system to answer the questions that are being asked.

#### **Settlement Agreements with Physicians** (continued)

**Mr. MacDonald:** During question period yesterday the minister of health suspected that there were severance agreements and payouts to some doctors. This was in regard to my questions about some of the doctors who stood up about the flawed health care system as promoted by this government. Now, to the minister of health: where in your annual reports can taxpayers find these severance agreements and payouts? Is it in book 1 or book 2?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I had no part in any severance agreements or settlements or whatever else he's driving at, but if he has something that qualifies for a motion for a return or something that qualifies as a written question and he wishes to submit that for that level of detail, we can try our best to find it or see if someone else can.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, taxpayers certainly deserve an answer from this government. Again to the minister of health. You, sir, are responsible. You're the one that signs off on everything. Why does this government continue to conceal the details around these severance agreements and payouts? What are you hiding from taxpayers?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, there are innuendos in that question which really don't even deserve an answer of any dignity whatsoever. The fact is that the Auditor General looks at all of these books. He indeed verifies them. The money is all accounted for. I would ask the hon. member to please clean up his questions

a little bit because you're heading into a very deep trough there, sir.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the minister of health to please read carefully the financial statements about who audits what and when in your own annual report.

Again to the minister: who ordered these severance agreements and payouts to silence doctors who stood up and spoke out? Was it the Premier's office?

**Mr. Hancock:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader has a point of order.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know what he's driving at. Sometimes he's 10 years ago. Sometimes he's 15 years ago. A few days ago you told him that he was going back to 1934. You know, if you've got a specific question about a specific time, about a specific case, then ask the proper channel, the proper authority. Okay? Nobody is hiding anything from anyone here. But information with that level of detail is not something that you carry around in your hip pocket.

**The Speaker:** That's the third point of order.

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

#### **Photo Identification**

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had a constituent express his concern over how the government issues photo identification. Before government-issued photo identification expires, either a driver's licence or an identification card, the individual must turn their identification in, at which time they're provided with a temporary ID without a photo while they wait for their new ID to be mailed to them. My question is to the Minister of Service Alberta. For Albertans who rely on photo identification for their livelihood or just the day-to-day activities of their lifestyle, this can cause a huge inconvenience or even impact their quality of life. How can the minister justify . . .

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has one of the most secure drivers' licences in North America, and we take identity theft and personal information very seriously. When an individual is getting a new driver's licence, they do surrender their old licence, and the temporary one is issued. It does not have a photo on it, and this is a further protection of their identity.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only and final supplemental is to the same minister. In a time of heightened security and more stringent measures undertaken to prevent identification theft and financial fraud, does the minister not think that it is, actually, a basic necessity for citizens of our province to always be in possession of government-issued photo identification?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the licences it's about a three- to five-day turnaround when the new licence is mailed out. In a rare case when an Albertan requires

photo ID during an interim period, we can provide a certified image from the motor vehicle database to use in combination with their ID. As well, it's always useful to have a passport. We have received very few complaints from the public about this process.

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

### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the past two years Alberta's minimum wage of \$8.80 a hour, the second-lowest in the country, has been deliberately frozen by Canada's wealthiest provincial government. Over 60 per cent of minimum wage earners are women while the remainder consists to a significant degree of seniors on fixed incomes and students helping support their families or saving for postsecondary. To the minister of employment: despite the Committee on the Economy's unanimous recommendation last October to raise the wage a measly 25 cents, why have you failed to act?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, to correct the member, the minimum wage is not paid by this wealthy provincial government. Wages are paid by employers and businesses and those who create jobs in Alberta. I don't believe there is any position within the government of Alberta that's anywhere near the minimum wage.

However, Mr. Speaker, there was an all-party committee that met and discussed what the minimum wage in Alberta should look like. They just very recently, a few days ago, reported it to my office. I'm reviewing the recommendations, and a decision will be made in due course.

**Mr. Chase:** Very recently. October, November, December, January, February, March: half a year, Mr. Speaker.

Given that according to a Stats Canada figure 78,000 Alberta children are living below the poverty line within primarily single-mother-supported families, how can the minister continue to fail vulnerable families?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, the report that was provided to me by the all-party committee gives some very good recommendations, and I want to thank all members of the committee. We will be making a decision on the minimum wage in due course. Let's not forget that minimum wage is earned by a very small portion of Albertans, and those who truly are vulnerable in our province have a whole array of social assistance types of benefits offered to them by this very ministry.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How long is this minister willing to sit on his assumption that market recovery is just around the corner?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister. Just before you do, I'm sure I'm going to get 25 more phone calls today telling me I should really, really discipline whoever speaks with such foul language in this Assembly.

The hon. minister. [interjections] The hon. minister. Fine.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** Sorry. I called on you three times, so now we're going on to the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### Slave Lake Community Building Assessment

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The town of Slave Lake in partnership with this government built a beautiful, one-stop shopping, government centre, and library. People love it, and it provides a great service. However, the town of Slave Lake has grave concerns with the property assessment placed on this facility creating a huge financial problem. My questions are to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Why did Municipal Affairs assessors reduce the assessment on this building to less than half the actual cost?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, Crown-owned properties are exempt from paying property taxes, but the province does pay a grant equivalent to those property taxes. When an application for a new property is received, a review is undertaken by professional auditors from our assessment audit unit. The assessments are based on market value. Current market information for the town of Slave Lake does not support the value put forward by the town.

**Ms Calahasen:** To the same minister: of all the facilities that we have a partnership in, why was this specific property selected to be reviewed?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, all new grants in place of tax applications are reviewed by the ministry to ensure the reported assessment is reasonable and equitable within the municipality that the property is actually in. The town was advised of the assessment prepared by my department, and they were asked to provide any market data that they may have to support a higher assessment. At this point none of that information has been received.

2:20

**Ms Calahasen:** Well, thank you. I'm sure they're listening to that.

Given that the town has no means to appeal and is requesting a review by an assessor, at least an independent body which will ensure fairness and transparency and be binding on both parties, will you agree to do that, Mr. Minister?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of adjustments made each year, and the adjustments may be increased or decreased. All changes and comments are reviewed with the municipality before they're made. Although there's no formal appeal mechanism, I'm prepared to review and consider any information the town may wish to provide.

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

### Land Stewardship Legislation

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've understood that the advocates of central planning always – always – have envisioned themselves as a central planner, but last night I learned this truism had a name, Kip's law. I spent last evening in Clyde, Alberta, along with 400 engaged citizens who learned of this and many other things about the case for repealing Bill 36, from Keith Wilson. Yesterday was a bad day for Bill 36. In the afternoon the government's own former Justice minister jumped on the bandwagon of repealing this central planner's dream, admitting that it was big mistake.

**The Speaker:** Okay. We've now reached the time to go. Some-

body's got to respond if they want to. A thirty-five second time limit, hon. member. You know that. Everybody else knows it.

Second question.

**Mr. Hinman:** Given that this government . . .

**The Speaker:** That's the second question.

**Mr. Hinman:** The leadership candidate from Calgary-Elbow, your Attorney General at the time, wants to repeal Bill 36 because of, as she puts it, its inadequate compensation provision, its failure to protect people's property investment, and its superseding of all other provincial regulations. How long will it be before you realize what everybody else in Alberta realizes? You need to repeal Bill 36. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Okay, okay. [interjections] Settle down.

We're now going to the third question. Would you kindly identify who the question is to?

**Mr. Hinman:** To the Minister of SRD: given this government's horrendous culture of intimidation that permeates through caucus and into many of their departments and given that the candidate for Calgary-Elbow wouldn't be taking this position if there wasn't support for it in the PC caucus, how many more government MLAs will have to stand up against this horrendous culture of intimidation before you follow the Wildrose lead and just repeal Bill 36? Why don't you stop the bleeding?

**Mr. Knight:** I'm going to relay to you, Mr. Speaker, to the members of this House, and to all Albertans a little lesson about regional planning, which is exactly what we're doing here. There's a regional planning process in place in the province of Alberta. We've gone out and consulted with thousands of Albertans relative to plans in the region of lower Athabasca and now in South Saskatchewan. We continue to do that good work on behalf of Albertans.

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

#### Residential Building Code

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Municipal Affairs suggested that building inspectors in Fort McMurray were responsible for identifying major structural problems at the Penhorwood apartments and recommending that tenants be evacuated. The building inspection, in this circumstance, failed to catch the problems, resulting in the condo board having to hire its own structural engineer. Is the minister now willing to acknowledge that this is the fact?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We certainly recognize that this is a difficult time for residents who've been affected by the evacuation order. The regional municipality of Wood Buffalo administers the Safety Codes Act in its jurisdiction and, as such, has the authority to address this particular case.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. Given that we now know there is no corrective legislation coming this session, can the minister tell Albertans in straightforward language if he believes that we have a problem with construction standards in this province?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that there are some issues around the province. Is it an issue that is major? For those individuals that are affected, it certainly is. When we look at the thousands and thousands of buildings being built, I would say that the majority are built according to the codes. There's no doubt there are a few buildings that need additional attention. But in this case we continue to work with the regional municipality. The matter, I understand, is under litigation.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. I believe the minister was trying to answer my third question. Will the minister exercise the authority granted to him by the Safety Codes Act and help straighten out the mess facing tenants of the Penhorwood condos in Fort McMurray and other Albertans who have been victims of shoddy construction practices and poor inspection?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, our government continues to ensure that Alberta's Safety Codes Act is amongst the strongest in the province. To go back to Fort McMurray, it's very inappropriate to comment specifically on that case as it's under litigation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

#### Affordable Housing

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Access to affordable or subsidized housing is an important issue in my constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods. My constituents are saying that they lack access to affordable housing units, especially the more than 14 per cent of single parents in my area. The minister is taking every opportunity to tell great stories about his ministry's progress on this issue, but my constituents say that they just don't see it. My first question is to you, Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs. What is being done specifically in Edmonton-Mill Woods for access to subsidized . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister. You're away.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You're quite right. We are awake on the job here today.

The hon. member has made an important point about access to affordable housing throughout Alberta. It's important to have confidentiality but also access to the four corners of this province. We are building 11,000 affordable housing units by 2012. We can't build them on every block. In the event that we don't have affordable housing in a particular area, we do have a rent supplement program, which people qualify for on an annual basis, and people in his constituency also can qualify.

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

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Your ministry has set a goal of establishing 11,000 affordable housing units in the province to serve all of Alberta by 2012. How close are we to achieving this impossible dream?

**Mr. Denis:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's anything but impossible, and it's anything but a dream. This year we're getting just over 10,000 affordable housing units built in this province. Next year we will have another open and competitive tendering process in which the private sector can partner with us. We've saved over \$1 billion

over the last four years through private-sector partnerships as opposed to government-subsidized housing.

**Mr. Benito:** My second supplemental is to the same minister. I need your policy confirmation, Mr. Minister. Is helping low-income families, seniors, and mentally challenged individuals your ministry's priority?

**Mr. Denis:** Well, Mr. Speaker, even though we have achieved a 36 per cent budgetary reduction since I took over, there is \$100 million still available in this year's budget for capital and for construction. I'm sure this member will agree with me that that deserves an award of excellence.

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

### Highway 63

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After another tragic fatality on highway 63 we have to ask ourselves why this road has not been twinned yet. This government has been at it since 2007 and over eight years later will still have not completed this essential project. To the Minister of Transportation: what will it take, sir, to devote the appropriate amount of resources to this project and finally finish?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member was first talking about a tragic accident that happened there a couple of days ago. I have to say that that is very, very tragic news, and our prayers and thoughts are with the victim's family.

Mr. Speaker, we're moving as fast as we can right now on twinning that highway with what our budget allows. We're spending \$190 million this year on that highway, and we're going to move ahead as fast as we can.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think we are moving fast enough on that highway. Given the latest tragedy why has the minister chosen the most delayed method of completing this project? How many more deaths have to happen before we speed things up?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, on any highway in Alberta one death is too many. I do have to say that we're going to move along as fast as we can. We're spending that \$190 million there. I don't know what the hon. member thinks. Money doesn't grow on trees, and we can only move as fast as our budgets allow.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think money has been growing on trees here in this province, and this government has been mismanaging our money.

To the minister again: will the minister commit to completing the twinning of highway 63 before 2015?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to commit that we're going to move along as fast as we possibly can on that highway, and that's as far as I can go.

### 2:30 Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, all of my questions are for the Minister

of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. In August 2006 it was announced that a beautiful area on the Bow River west of Calgary would be purchased and developed as a provincial park, and it was anticipated that public access would be allowed into the area within a year or so. The people of southern Alberta are still waiting patiently to use this park. Minister, spring is just around the corner. When are Albertans going to be able to access this new park?

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not at all surprised that the hon. member is excited about this park, the Glenbow Ranch provincial park. I've been hearing about it for the last two years. The number one question I get asked is: when will this beautiful park open? I'm happy to say that we are planning on opening it this summer, hon. member. We just need to make sure that it's safe, that it's accessible but that we also are protecting the important environment there and that we don't love this park to death. We've been working really hard over the last two years, but sometimes . . .

**Dr. Brown:** Will the minister assure Albertans that unlike the natural disaster of Fish Creek provincial park, there's going to be a proactive plan to preserve the grasslands in the new Glenbow provincial park?

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, Mr. Speaker, for the 3 million visitors a year who go down into Fish Creek, I don't think they think it's a natural disaster. I think they think it's a beautiful park. Since 1975 that park, actually, had been farmed, so it just had a few areas where fescue was left. This park, on the other hand, has some 3,000 acres of this very beautiful fescue grass. We've been working with the Foothills Fescue Research Institute and the park foundation to ensure that it's preserved. You'll see cattle grazing in this park.

**Dr. Brown:** Given the expanding environmental footprint on southern Alberta's natural areas, can the minister advise the House what plans she has for expansion of areas in our grasslands region?

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, Mr. Speaker. I think of the OH Ranch, which is a working ranch that we brought into the parks system since I've been parks minister.

As far as future opportunities, Mr. Speaker, that's part of the land-use framework. We are looking at new recreation opportunities and park opportunities, so we'll have to follow along with that process before we know where those new opportunities would be. But I would go back to the OH Ranch as a really great example also of a beautiful preservation of grasslands.

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

### Water Allocation

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. In 2006 Alberta Environment stated that no new water licences would be awarded in the south. But transfers of water for money? Those are just fine. Our watersheds cannot afford these delays in action while a mad scramble is going on to continue development and to buy water allocation for current and future use before the rules of the land-use plans get finalized if they ever do get finalized. To the Minister of Environment: does the minister not recognize that transfers will ultimately lead to higher levels of use?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what this member fails to ac-

knowledge is that there is only a limited supply of water, and there are ever-increasing demands for water. The good news is that at the same time technology is changing so that historic users of water can become more effective and more efficient with the use of that water. That's how we continue to have development in the area. That's why the Water Act, not in 2006 but long before that . . .

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much. Well, given that the allocation of water through existing licences is critical in Alberta, especially in the South Saskatchewan River basin, and will get worse as development pressure continues and folks race to get in ahead of the land-use plans, what specific action is the minister going to take over the next six months to address issues of overallocation in this river basin?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, the member is suggesting somehow that there is widespread abuse of the licences. The fact is that in case of a drought situation, where there is pressure that's on the system itself, we do have provisions to deal with it, and we have dealt with it in the past. So in direct answer to her question, over the next six months . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member has the floor now.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. Maybe you could share your listening ability with the minister.

I'll try for the third question here. This government and this minister dismissed, trivialized, and denigrated multiple calls for better monitoring in this province until outside pressure forced their hand. Will it again delay action on protecting our water as well?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, there is no one who is more committed to protecting our water than this minister, and I think that my track record is evidence of that.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, we have a very good system for water allocation in this province. However, we have freely acknowledged that we have to make some changes to that system on a go-forward basis, and we will do so.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### School Year Modification

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Alberta the school year contains two semesters, running from September to January and February to June. It seems inconsistent for examinations to be held in January, just a few weeks after a lengthy Christmas break. To the Minister of Education: is there any discussion with regard to changing the school year to align the mid-term examinations with the Christmas break?

**Mr. Hancock:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, there's been quite a lot of conversation over the last three years under our Inspiring Education program talking about any time, anyplace, any pace learning. With that comes the question of how you do assessment in accordance with that. There has also been specific discussion, brought up by a number of people, around the question of the appropriate alignment of the school year, of semesters, and specifically about the issue around whether semesters could end before Christmas.

In actual fact, the school year and the school day are in the purview of school boards, and they can do that. I can tell you that

there are pilot projects happening across the province now where school boards have made . . .

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

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. Given that June and July are probably our best summer months, if we ever get summer, would it not make more sense to have the school year start in August and go to the end of May rather than the present system?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'm not sure there is actually consensus about when the best months of summer are in Alberta, but the fact of the matter is that we have students going to school virtually every month of the year now. Modern students, many of them in high school particularly, are quite keen. You'll find, particularly in the urban areas – but I think it's also true in rural areas as well – summer programs where students are going to school. We really do need to look at the whole question of alignment because what's most important in the school system is making sure that the students are engaged . . .

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

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think my final question has been partly answered. It was with regard to school authorities having the discretion to set their own school year, but are there some that actually modify the school year other than having holidays in July and August?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said, the school boards do have the purview to set their own school years. We do have summer school happening a lot. What we have in this province, of course, the one issue that is difficult with that, is the alignment with the exam schedules, which is where the hon. member started. We have exams available in August, in November, in January, in April, and in June, but if we're going to go to an any time, anyplace, any pace learning process, we will have to try and develop flexibility in exam schedules. The problem, of course, is how you do that with security, how you do that with technology, how you do that in a way that is financially successful.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes Oral Question Period for today. Eighteen members were given an opportunity to raise questions. There were 104 responses and questions in all.

### Speaker's Ruling Decorum

**The Speaker:** I have received an inordinate number of notes here from members in the Assembly today, from all quarters of the Assembly, I might add. "Mr. Speaker, would you shut them up?" "It was my turn to raise a question, and there's nothing but a bunch of thunderous applause" or something else. "I can't hear myself think." I got it from all quarters. I want to make that very, very clear. This is not a singular thing. I do know that the lights lit up in my office as well today, and they're not kind compliments that come when phone calls come from the public.

2:40

This is the second time, in fact, this week that we've had an inordinate number of calls from people about language and attitude and heckling and other stuff. Some members think it's cute. Okay. Some places it happens. We've had a history of great decorum in the province of Alberta. I've been very proud of it in the past.

We'll continue with the Routine in 15 seconds.

Hon. members, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

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

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased today to rise to introduce 32 hard-working young students from St. Mary's school of Taber. These students have travelled about six or so hours on the bus to get here today. I'm really happy they could come here although I want to tell them that the decorum isn't always like this in the Leg. They are accompanied by some adults and teachers. They're accompanied by their principal, Mr. Ken Sampson; Mr. Patrick Pyne, a teacher; Mrs. Debra Brandics, an EA; Mrs. Jamie Rolfe; Mrs. Johan Muller; Mrs. Carla Gouw; and Mrs. Shawna Phillips. I would ask them all to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

### State of the Economy

**Mr. Vandermeer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak on an issue which all Albertans and indeed all members of the Assembly can take pride in, and that is the growing strength of our economy. The recession which began in 2008 affected many Albertans, many of my constituents. Some were affected in one of the most profound ways possible, the loss of a job. At the height of the recession there were 80,000 fewer Albertans working. Today we have recovered to the point where 2.06 million Albertans are at work. We're not quite back to where we want to be, but we are definitely on our way.

Mr. Speaker, a year ago the unemployment rate in our province was 6.8 per cent. Today it stands at 5.7 per cent, tied for the second-lowest rate of unemployment in the country and far below the national average of 7.8 per cent. Our province and its employers created 13,700 jobs in the last month alone. This accounts for 90 per cent of the jobs created in this country. This shows the strength of the economy, the confidence that Albertans have in their province, and the confidence of foreign investors in the future of Alberta. As our Premier has said on a number of occasions, Alberta will lead Canada out of the recession, and these numbers are certainly proving that.

The indicators on a number of economic fronts are promising, and this is good news not only for Alberta businesses and Alberta employees but indeed all Canadians as the economic benefits of a strong and vibrant Alberta economy are felt across the nation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Agreement in Principle with Physicians

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm certain all members of this Assembly want the best health care system possi-

ble in helping fellow Albertans and our constituents. Presently there is a dark cloud, we can all agree, looming over the very system we have here in Alberta. Yesterday in this House I was encouraged when the minister of health and Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek proclaimed – and I quote from the *Hansard* – that the agreement in principle between the AMA, Alberta Medical Association, the government, and the health superboard “is a very positive sign that we are moving forward and that there is a relationship that is beginning to work.” Again, these are the words from the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek in the *Hansard*.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a letter now from the president of the Alberta Medical Association dated March 14, just two days ago, that says the direct opposite, and I will table the letter at the appropriate time. The president of the AMA writes: “With Negotiations 2011 – for the first time ever – Government threatened the loss of programs and services to try and intimidate physicians.” And I repeat: intimidate. He also says, “In doing so, Government diminished the value traditionally attached to a constructive . . . relationship with the medical profession.”

Mr. Speaker, that does not sound like a relationship that is beginning to work. In fact, quite the direct opposite. I'm disappointed. The question is: who should Albertans believe, the minister of health or Alberta doctors? I know who I'll believe, and I think I know who Albertans will believe.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** First of all, we have a little homework to do, please. Hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, yesterday you were to return today with some documents with respect to a TV interview. Do you have them, sir, for tabling?

**Mr. Anderson:** No, I do not, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Will you have them by tomorrow?

**Mr. Anderson:** You need me to get a sworn affidavit that that's what was said?

**The Speaker:** Well, that's what I asked you to do.

**Mr. Anderson:** Yeah. Okay.

**The Speaker:** You'll have them by tomorrow, please.

**Mr. Anderson:** I will.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Okay. For today, then, is anybody tabling the documentation on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition?

**Ms Blakeman:** I've called again for it, Mr. Speaker, and I'm assuming it's on its way.

**The Speaker:** Is anyone tabling the documentation on behalf of the Premier? The hon. minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to table on behalf of the Premier a copy of a document on the letterhead of Alberta Health Services entitled Information. It's a letter to physicians, and it's signed by Dr. Chris Eagle, acting CEO and president; Dr. David Megran, executive vice-president, or EVP, and acting executive lead for quality and service improvement; and Dr. Francois Belanger, acting EVP and chief medical officer. The



context of the document is that doctors do have a duty and an obligation to speak up if they have concerns.

**The Speaker:** Okay. That follows through from today's question period.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness following through from today's question period, please.

**Mr. Zwodzesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table with you and for all members here page 38, which I quoted from, from the Alberta Health Services medical staff bylaws, specifically section 4(2)(3), patient advocacy, which states clearly in a single sentence: "Individual members of the Medical Staff have the right and the responsibility to advocate on behalf of their Patients." There it is, and I hope the opposition members will review it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere following through from today's question period, please.

**Mr. Anderson:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, first, I'll table the letter dated March 14, 2011, from the president of the AMA, detailing what was said in question period today; namely, that "for the first time ever," the doctor said, "Government threatened the loss of programs and services to try and intimidate physicians."

Then an additional tabling, five copies of the minister's statement in question period yesterday. He said earlier that I had misquoted him. In fact, I took it directly from the *Hansard*, when he said that the relationship is beginning to work. I quoted directly from the *Hansard*, so he can take a look if he would like.

**The Speaker:** Okay. So, Airdrie-Chestermere, we're clear other than the one that you have to return tomorrow with?

**Mr. Anderson:** Yeah.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, do you have a tabling on behalf of your colleague, which was referred to in the question period today?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, my colleague quoted from the document that was just tabled by the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**The Speaker:** But we will never know that for sure unless the document is tabled.

**Ms Notley:** Pardon me?

**The Speaker:** We will never know that for sure unless the document is tabled. Your hon. member quoted from it. We assume it's the same document.

**Ms Notley:** So you're suggesting that . . .

**The Speaker:** Well, no. We'll accept your word that that is the same document.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie as a follow-up from today.

**Mr. Taylor:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table here. The first is five copies of an e-mail from Robert Gerst, the chair of the Quality Council of Alberta.

Next is five copies of an accompanying document from the Quality Council of Alberta entitled Junk Science from the Health Quality Council of Alberta.

Thank you.

2:50

**The Speaker:** Okay. As of today we're only following through with one further documentation, and that comes from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Now, for today's tablings the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will also mention that one of the documents that the Official Opposition leader quoted from has indeed already been tabled. I understood that we were encouraged to not double the tablings.

**The Speaker:** Oh, no. Absolutely not. But if it's been tabled, somebody should mention that. I would not know that.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Again, one of the documents from yesterday was a newspaper article, which I again understood it was not encouraged for members to be tabling newspaper documents.

**The Speaker:** Nor quoting from them. But if they quote from them, they should table them.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you for the correction. That's very useful.

I have three tablings of my own. The first is from constituent Marymae Olds, a handwritten note with very nice script. It makes very clear to me that as a senior citizen of Alberta she wants a public investigation by a judge to deal with the Alberta health crisis of cancer patients. Very nice handwriting and very clear on what she wants to see.

The next two tablings – one from constituent Naomi Fridhandler and the second an e-mail from Amelia Ethier – are both from students. Ms Fridhandler is a fourth-year medical student at the U of A, transitioning into obstetrics and gynecology. Ms Ethier is a second-year medical student. Both are concerned about possible loss of funding for the Alberta Medical Association's physician and family support program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to table an appropriate number of copies of a letter from a constituent of mine named J. Rowan Scott, which is a very articulate advocacy for support for the physician and family support program. This is one of quite a number of contacts I've had on this issue.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the required five copies of a statement that I had made yesterday when I was quoting Jan Reimer, in which she had said that she has long been unhappy about the lack of consequences for abusers who breach emergency protection orders and, also, that she was hoping it would encourage the police to lay criminal charges when people do breach protection orders.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a letter that I received from the

office of the Minister of Finance and Enterprise. It is regarding capital cost allowances and how Imperial Oil calculates their costs for construction done in South Korea and how it affects the royalties schedule here.

The second tabling I have is a letter that I wrote on December 13, 2010, to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. I'm asking for more details on the external consulting costs. The ministry indicates there is \$5.5 million in consulting costs, but our research from the blue books indicates that, certainly, there is significantly more. In fact, there is \$6 million more than what has been reported.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling e-mails from the following individuals concerned about the fate of the Castle-Crown: Mary Ann McLean, Leanne Dalderis, Peter Lebitka, Katie Pearson, Andy Kitchen, Jacqueline Pollard, Ann McIvor, Rebecca and Martin Thouin, Michael Teetzel, Nicole Koshure, Rod Russell, David Boyd, James Ramsay, Ruth Anne MacEachern, Terri Robins, Xavier Smith, Blair Petrie, Jim Dutton, Tom Gray, Brian Cutts, Courtenay Kelliher, Marjorie Sandercock, Rosalinde Schulze, Frances Backhouse, and Sharon Lawrence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, I have on my list of those members wanting to table today the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Do you have something for him?

**Ms Notley:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings. The first tabling is a copy of the revised Alberta Health Services code of conduct, which, while not quoted by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood in his questions, was referenced. Within that document we see a section stating that employees are expected to not engage in public discussions or comments about confidential information relating to AHS business, that should they breach the code, they would be subject to discipline up to and including termination of their employment.

The second tabling is the appropriate number of copies of a letter received by the office of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood from Jim Eigner of Edmonton, in which he expresses his opposition to any provincial money being used to support the construction of a new arena in Edmonton.

The third tabling is the appropriate number of copies of a document produced by the Alberta Federation of Labour entitled Women's Equality in Alberta a Long Way Off. It cites statistics that show that on average women make 72 cents for every dollar a man does and that university-educated women earn 67 per cent of what men with an equivalent education earn, and it notes that Alberta is the only jurisdiction in Canada that doesn't have a ministry dedicated to supporting the voices of women.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I'll thank you for that. The explanation was very, very important and significant but just a little long, perhaps.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings. I wish to table the appropriate number of copies of the Alberta Liberal policy 2010 requiring MLAs to sit as independents after floor crossing until the next election.

Secondly, I wish to table the appropriate number of copies of two Wikipedia pages, the first containing the election results of an

independent Liberal candidate for Lethbridge District in the 1909 election. This was Archie McLean, by the way.

Thirdly, a biography of the same politician, Archie McLean, known as one of the Big Four who helped found the Calgary Stampede in 1912.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a signed letter from a widow, Ms Stephanie Grivicic, dated March 2, 2011, regarding the unfortunate and premature death of her husband, Mike, to cancer as a result of delays in care. She's applauding the article in the *Calgary Herald* for speaking up about public cancer cover-ups.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Others? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling the requisite number of copies of a letter to the ministers of Municipal Affairs and Employment and Immigration pertaining to my constituents, pertaining to a disaster relief request for the residents of the Penhorwood Street complex. It was truly a disaster for seven condominium complexes, where over 300 residents had to leave because of safety concerns. They are now homeless, and I'm asking for help from the government from the appropriate ministers.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of Dr. Sherman, hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, an e-mail message dated March 12, 2011, from Abilio Nunes to J. Sinnema, regarding fear and intimidation in the Capital region, including the Caritas Health Group and Covenant Health; and a newsletter dated December 2006 entitled The President's Letter, prepared by Dr. Mark Joffe, president, Capital Region Medical Staff Association.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, during the question period today three purported points of order arrived, the first from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. There was an exchange going on, and I asked you to take your place. I assume you wanted to raise a point of order.

**Ms Blakeman:** Yes, I did. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

### Point of Order

#### Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

**Ms Blakeman:** Mr. Speaker, this is under the citation of 13(2), the Speaker explaining reasons for decisions. When I look at yesterday's *Hansard* on page 358, so from March 15, 2011, I notice that the three questions from the Member for Calgary-Hays, who is a member of the government caucus, were as follows. "Can the minister explain . . . how any allegations of criminal misconduct should be dealt with and who they should be reported to?" Could the Minister of Justice "explain to the House what a public inquiry can and cannot do?" Finally, a question about: "Can the minister explain to the House what is contained in a statement of claim and what its purpose is?"

3:00

Today we had the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, who is a member of the Official Opposition and a lawyer – I do not believe the Member for Calgary-Hays is a lawyer – ask the Minister of Justice what a settlement is. I'm looking for clarification from the Speak-

er as to what in the Member for Calgary-Buffer's statement caused the Speaker to rise and intervene in the proceedings. To my mind, the only difference I can see in the questions is that perhaps it was because the Member for Calgary-Buffer is a lawyer and for some reason shouldn't be asking a question or because he's a member of the opposition. I don't know. Aside from that, we have four questions that are all asking the Justice minister on exact process. So if the Speaker would be so kind.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, well most surely and certainly it was not the latter of the two assumptions the hon. member had for herself.

I've made at least two interjections, perhaps three times, with respect to the question period. Yesterday's question period was one in which I think I could literally have ruled out every opposition member's question because it violated everything that we're supposed to be doing. Secondly, virtually every question contained preambles in the second and the third questions, a clear violation in terms of the paper that I have received with signatures from members in this Assembly telling me there would be no violations, none whatsoever.

Today when I interjected, I interjected basically and essentially with respect to *Beauchesne* 408 and *Beauchesne* 410, which basically say that legal opinions were not required. Most certainly – most certainly – if a member is a member of the bar, the chair would take that into consideration. If, in fact, the thing is, "I'd ask the Justice minister to tell the hon. House what a settlement is," I could perhaps understand, recognizing as well that I did give more leeway than I should have, and I will not in the future. I will not in the future deal with legal interpretations of questions, and if the point is raised here, it should not come from a government member who is not a lawyer. That definitely will be the rule henceforth.

I will start intervening on the preambles, so there will be no preambles in the second or the third. I will be very firm about the rules that we have with respect to this. In fact, I'm even going to do some reiterating. I've done this now twice. Or is it three times? I want members to read pages 403 in *Beauchesne* to at least 420. At least. In addition to that, the Canadian House of Commons book on procedure has multiple pages in there with respect to what the questions are and what the subject matters aren't.

By way of clarification I really appreciate the question being raised today because I think it's really important. I've said it now twice or three times. Inflammatory questions with language in them, questions that answer their own question, et cetera, et cetera, are all out of order – are all out of order – according to our rules. Hon. members, I'd be delighted, starting tomorrow, and I'll start intervening with the first one because that's where the first one is going to come. There will be no question period because all it will be – the Speaker's intervention period is what it is. I've said this before. Ask but hope you never receive is one of those truisms about history as well.

Let's go back to the rules. Let's all remember what they are. This is just a brief précis one more time, page 502 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Second Edition, 2009*.

In summary, when recognized in Question Period, a Member should:

- ask a question;
- be brief;
- seek information; and
- ask a question that is within the administrative responsibility of the government or of the individual Minister addressed.

Those pretty much sum up the four.

Furthermore, a question should not:

- be a statement . . .

Your opinion matters not.

- . . . representation,

What are you asking for?

- . . . argument, or an expression of opinion;

- be hypothetical;

We have no nuclear plants in Alberta, yet we have questions on nuclear policy. I'll tell you again. When I was Minister of Environment in 1986, I got up one Friday morning, and Chernobyl came across the world. That day I received over 500 phone calls in my office as Minister of Environment. Virtually every phone call said: shut down Alberta's nuclear plants. Not one asked if we had a nuclear plant in Alberta.

Should not:

- [ask] an opinion, either legal or otherwise;
  - seek information which is secretive in its nature, such as Cabinet proceedings or advice given to the Crown by law officers;
  - reflect on the character or conduct of Chair Occupants, members of the House and of the Senate or members of the judiciary;
  - reflect on the Governor General;
- i.e. the Lieutenant Governor in Alberta.

- refer to proceedings in the Senate.

Well, we don't have one here.

- refer to public statements by Ministers on matters not directly related to their departmental duties.

So if a former minister stands up and makes a comment, it says in here that it should not

- refer to public statements by Ministers on matters not directly related to their departmental duties.

If the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow has an opinion on something, that really has nothing to do with the question period.

- address a Minister's former portfolio or any other presumed functions, such as party or regional political responsibilities;
- be on a matter that is sub judice;
- deal with the subject matter of a question of privilege previously raised, on which the Speaker reserved his decision.

Once again, a question should not

- create disorder.

That's got two words, that one: should not "create disorder."

- make a charge by way of a preamble to a question;
- be a question from a constituent;

How often do members stand up and say, "My constituents have asked me to raise this question"? Well, it violates the rules.

- seek information from a Minister of a purely personal nature;
- request a detailed response which could be dealt with more appropriately as a written question placed on the Order Paper; or
- concern internal party matters, or party or election expenses.

Finally, all questions and answers must be directed through the Chair.

Now, these are honoured, well established. Okay. I guess that's the fourth time we've gone through them in – what? – 10 days? Oh, today is day 14. I'll keep doing this. If you ask, you'll get.

**Ms Blakeman:** Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Yes?

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. I'm just trying to get the specifics of the question that I asked regarding the Member for Calgary-Buffer. So three questions asked the previous day.

**The Speaker:** No, no, no. Please don't go that way with me. Please don't.

**Ms Blakeman:** One question asked today. Why?

**The Speaker:** Please sit down. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo was allowed to ask his questions today. He raised his questions. I gave the Minister of Justice and Attorney General a chance to respond. I also stated a little earlier that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo is a learned member of the bar. The Member for Athabasca-Redwater is not.\* I said that I also gave more leeway yesterday than I should have with respect to that question because I had done it earlier for everybody else, for everybody else. I could have ruled everyone out. If you want that adjudicated, I'll start it tomorrow. Member, I'm looking forward to the questions.

**Mr. Allred:** Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** On 13(2) as well?

**Mr. Allred:** No, clarification of what you just presented. I thank you for a very comprehensive clarification, Mr. Speaker, but I would request, if you wouldn't mind, your circulating those two pages you asked us to read and possibly those other pages which clarified what we should ask in question period. It would be very educational.

**The Speaker:** Well, the ones I just read have been circulated because they are now in *Hansard*. On the previous occasions when I've spoken, they're also in *Hansard*. In terms of the other books, they're located right over there in the library, in *Beauchesne*. They're available. All members and all caucuses have them. I've circulated multiple copies to the leaders you have in each of the caucuses. I assume the caucus leaders spend some time with their caucus members on an education process. In addition to that, when all new members became members, we had a session in this Chamber within two weeks after the day you were elected, in which we went over a lot of this. So, you know, okay? But I'm happy to re-educate again.

Okay. The second one was the Minister of Health and Wellness.

### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise under section 23(i) out of our own standing orders, which says:

A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member

(i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member.

I believe that occurred today when the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere somehow tried to infer or misportray something that I had said in *Hansard* yesterday. I'm sorry that I don't have the benefit of the Blues from today yet to be exact in what he attributed to me or not, but the tone with which he raised it and what sounded like an inappropriate or a shorted quote avowed to me, I thought, was something that needed me to rise and question that member.

3:10

I think that he inferred that somehow I suggested that the relationship between the Alberta Medical Association and the government or perhaps with AHS – I'm not sure; we'll have to check *Hansard* – was somehow misportrayed. I think he suggested that the spirit in which this was raised was other than what was intended, and I rise to set the record straight.

I believe he was referring to a question that was put to me yesterday in this House by the hon. Member for St. Albert wherein that member said on page 356 of *Hansard* yesterday:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. Has our relationship with physicians broken down in some fundamental way?

Mr. Speaker, I responded, and here is the full quote according to *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe so. I think the point that the Premier mentioned a little earlier, that we now have an agreement in principle between the government, Alberta Health Services, and the AMA, is a very positive sign that we are moving forward and that there is a relationship that is beginning to work. I just want to say thank you to the Alberta Medical Association and all of its members for recognizing our economic situation, the worst since 1930.

Then you, Mr. Speaker, recognized the Member for St. Albert again, and the Member for St. Albert said:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question, again to the same minister. The fact remains that some physicians are saying that our relationship with physicians does not work, and they feel that our government has dismissed their concerns. Have we?

I responded:

Well, absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. If we had, we wouldn't have an agreement in principle, obviously. I think what has happened here is that doctors more and more are finding Alberta to be a very attractive place to come and practise, and that's why we have had the highest growth rate in attracting doctors of any province over the past 10 years right here in Alberta.

That is the entire section from there.

Now, the fact that the member chose to perhaps use part of that but raised some innuendoes ahead of it or perhaps after it suggests to me that he was avowing false motives in my direction.

That's just one example, Mr. Speaker. This same member is starting to develop a pattern, and everybody in this House knows it. Let me just draw to your attention, to make my point, page 332 of *Hansard* from March 14, wherein, Mr. Speaker, you ended a statement by saying:

Hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, you have a point of order.

The Member for Airdrie-Chestermere rose and said:

Mr. Speaker, I shall be very brief.

The Speaker then said:

Oh, take your time.

Then the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere said:

Yeah, exactly. Shovel it under the rug, right?

We all heard him say that.

But then later, you spoke to me, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know what point you're rising on, but go ahead.

I said:

I'm not sure. I think at the very least we need some clarity because at the beginning of his point of order he,

meaning the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere,

made some innuendoes about the Speaker shoving something under the rug, and I think he should be held to account for that. I know we don't do points of order on points of order, but since there wasn't a point of order at the end – he's withdrawn it – I'm raising a point of order.

Then the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere stood up and said:

It's a very shameful comment. I didn't say anything to you about that, and he should withdraw that remark. He's being untruthful.

Well, who's being untruthful, hon. member? It's right there in *Hansard*, and I would encourage everyone here to take a look at the doublespeak of this member because it's becoming a pattern, which is my point.

\*See page 403, right column, paragraph 4

Now, we've been in this Assembly for some time, and we understand what it takes to be a politician in today's age. We also understand what it means to develop a thick skin and so on. But when people start underquoting, short quoting, misquoting, or using innuendoes to make a point, that is politics at its worst.

A simple apology would be in order. A withdrawal would be in order. In any event, I'll leave it to you, Mr. Speaker, to find what you feel is necessary to preserve the decorum that otherwise has come to characterize this House and what Albertans expect from here.

My last point is that it's not only today that he's done this but, again, a day or two ago, and it's now starting to rub off on his colleague from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo because again today he was quoting something or avowing a quote to me about something I said. I think the quote included the words "health superboard" or something to that effect. I'll have to check and see where that quote exactly exists because I've looked through *Hansard* from the last few days, and I don't ever recall using that particular phrase.

Similarly, a little while ago with respect to the Health Quality Council and me calling it in or not calling it in, he kept harping on the point "no," that I had said no – that I had said no – but he's not using the full quote. If you read *Hansard*, it says, "No, not at this time."

These are silly little things that they're playing with over on the Wildrose Alliance side, and I just think it's time for it to stop. I would ask you to review that and at the appropriate time make the appropriate decision that you feel is necessary, Mr. Speaker, under the circumstances.

Thank you.

**Mr. Anderson:** Well, 23(i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member," I think is what the beginning of that rambling statement was. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to reiterate what I told you both in the Legislature and privately afterwards. When I said "shovel it under the rug," I was specifically referring to the health minister for shovelling this controversy under the rug. I was clearly not impugning you as you, obviously, as Speaker have nothing to do with this health care controversy. So for him to claim that I was saying that is not just a stretch; it's a leap around the world. Anyway, this minister plays fast and loose with the truth. He's the biggest dancer in this Assembly, but, you know, I will leave Albertans to make the judgment on that.

With regard to the point of order the member has a problem with the statement. I don't have the Blues either, but I do have this, the question that I read from. First I say:

Well, Minister, why, then, in a letter released [less than] 48 hours ago does the president of the AMA say that during the negotiations for this new agreement . . .

and I quote from the document that was tabled earlier,

"for the first time ever – Government threatened the loss of programs and services to try and [threaten] physicians," and that doing so diminished the ongoing relationship with the medical profession.

So that's the president of the AMA referring to the negotiations that the minister of health and Alberta Health Services had entered into with the AMA, this tripartite agreement that they have just signed.

Now, in the *Hansard* the previous day the Member for St. Albert said, "Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. Has our relationship with physicians broken down in some fundamental way?" That was the question. The health minister replies:

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe so. I think the point that the Premier mentioned a little earlier, that we now have an agreement in principle

referring to the tripartite agreement,

between the government, Alberta Health Services, and the AMA, is a very positive sign that we are moving forward and that there is a relationship that is beginning to work. I just want to say thank you to the Alberta Medical Association and all of its members for recognizing our economic situation, the worst since 1930.

Okay. In this he clearly says, Mr. Speaker, that he feels that there's a very positive sign that we are moving forward and that there is a relationship beginning to work.

The same day that he gives this, I received a letter in the mail from a couple of doctors, actually, as did other members of our caucus, who had this letter from the president of the AMA. This is the same day that the minister said that – I'll use the exact wording – "is a very positive sign that we are moving forward and that there is a relationship that is beginning to work." The very same day the president of the AMA, who he refers to – now, he doesn't refer to the president of the AMA; he refers to the AMA and this agreement that they just entered into. The president of the AMA says:

With Negotiations 2011 – for the first time ever – Government threatened the loss of programs and services to try and intimidate physicians. And it repudiated the philosophy of collaboration and of shared responsibility and leadership that epitomize the current, eight-year, trilateral master agreement.

In doing so, Government diminished the value traditionally attached to a constructive and ongoing relationship with the medical profession, which has implications for the future. It brings into question the legitimacy and sincerity of statements such as, "The Alberta government is committed to working with its partners."

So that's what the president of the AMA says, obviously, Mr. Speaker, a total contradiction of the assessment given in this House by the minister of health, 180 degrees different.

3:20

So after quoting these statements, I asked the question: Minister, please explain the misinformation you gave to this House yesterday about the state of your government's relationship with our doctors. He said that it was about to get better or that it was improving, that it was about to improve. What's the exact quote? "A relationship that is beginning to work" is the exact quote. The president of the AMA says the exact opposite.

Now, if that isn't misinformation about the state of the relationship between doctors in this province and the minister of health, then I don't know what is. That is clearly a judgment call. We'll let Albertans decide. But, you know, for this minister to suggest otherwise is just completely out of touch with reality. Anyone who reads the two documents would come to that same conclusion if they had any rationality in them.

So that speaks to his first comments as well as to the comment suggesting that I had said to you that you wanted to sweep something under the rug, Mr. Speaker, which is just an absolute falsehood by the member opposite.

Now, with regard to his other comments that he brought forward . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere has the floor. There were no interruptions when I allowed others to speak.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

With regard to the other allegations that the member brought against me about, you know, my habitually not using parliamen-

tary language in this House and so forth, I think it's a real slight against you, Mr. Speaker. You've been very clear . . .

**The Speaker:** Hold on a second. Don't bring me into this. Bring me into this and you'll not like the answer.

**Mr. Anderson:** Okay. Fine. All right. Fair enough. Fair enough.

All I know is that I trust you and the points of order as you interpret them, Mr. Speaker, to make good decisions. I don't think I need this minister telling this House or telling anybody else about whether I use unparliamentary language or not. That's not his job, thank goodness. It's your job.

With that, those are my remarks. There is no point of order, in my opinion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Sir, you've already spoken on this matter.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** I'd like to speak again if you wouldn't mind.

**The Speaker:** But on what basis would that be? Please sit down. Points of order are not to be used to extend debate. They're to bring a grievance or something like it to the Assembly. I recognized you to do that. I recognized one speaker on the other side. We'll be here all afternoon on this. As I understand it, there's other business. Now, there are five House leaders on the government side. If somebody else wants to participate, I'll recognize them.

Anybody else? Okay. The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking here at the transcripts, and the minister of health says:

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if he quoted exactly everything that was there. I don't have *Hansard* just in front of me, but I believe what I said is that we have a working relationship, and we're working [to improve it],

or words to that effect. However, in his response the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere attributes comments that were made by the AMA representative to the minister as if the minister had said it. So what we're dealing with here . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much, hon. Deputy Government House Leader. As I indicated earlier, points of order are not to be used to continue debate. We're having a debate now. He said this. I said that. You said that. We said that. He said this. Maybe we said that. Oh, just a second; maybe we didn't.

Certainly, there was language here that diminishes the importance and the role of a Member of the Legislative Assembly in the province of Alberta. Very clearly, the Minister of Health and Wellness quoted from *Hansard* from March 15. It's very clear what it says to me. Then the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere today basically says: Minister, please explain the misinformation you gave to this House. The hon. minister interjects. We've had now a chance for exchanges back and forth. There was, quite frankly, a lot of tension in this House today. Actually, maybe even hostility, which is odd. It should be odd.

We've now spent 20 minutes getting an explanation back and forth. I don't think we're going to get any further ahead on this other than for me to say that the language is, I think, beneath the level that should be used, beneath the dignity that should be expected from honourable men or women, and I think we can do a lot better. The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness certainly was given ample opportunity to explain his position, his concern. We all heard it. We all understand it. The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere responded. Okay.

A little earlier this afternoon you said that you wanted no questions in question period that violated anything. The same thing

should apply to the language as well. You've all got 17 pages of this. So tomorrow it will be Mr. Speaker's intervention period. I doubt that we're going to get one question through. I doubt we're going to get more than a few answers. You asked for it. You want it.

The hon. Minister of Finance and Enterprise on behalf of the hon. Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Improper Inferences

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would quote section 409(3) in *Beauchesne*: "The question ought to seek information and, therefore, cannot be based upon a hypothesis, cannot seek an opinion, either legal or otherwise, and must not suggest its own answer, be argumentative or make representations." Section 409(6): "A question must be within the administrative competence of the Government. The Minister to whom the question is directed is responsible to the House for his or her present Ministry and not for any other decisions." I can quote more, but I don't think I need to. Also, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 503, "make a charge by way of a preamble to a question."

Mr. Speaker, very clearly the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar in his question to the minister of health asked the question or words: who signed the cheques to silence the doctors? Was it the Premier? Was it the minister of finance? That's abhorrent for a couple of reasons. To suggest that anyone in government signs the cheques to the doctors, which the hon. member knows is incorrect, and then to suggest that the Premier or the finance minister would sign a cheque to silence anybody, would indicate, you would expect, that they would commit a criminal act of bribery for silence. The hon. member may have got excited in his questions, may not like the answers he's getting, but the simple fact is that to accuse several ministers of that kind of an act is not only dishonest, but it's wrong, and the hon. member ought to withdraw that statement.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, I think this hon. minister of finance should withdraw that statement because that's certainly not what I said in this House. In response to the point of order, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also point out *Beauchesne* 410(5), which certainly indicates: "The primary purpose of the Question Period is the seeking of information and calling the Government to account." That's exactly what I was doing. Section 410(6): "The greatest possible freedom should be given to Members consistent with the . . . rules and practices." Brevity. Certainly, that was a very brief question. There was no preamble to that whatsoever.

I'm surprised that the minister of finance would indicate that I talked about cheques. I certainly did not. I certainly did not. I'm asking for that to be retracted from the official record. Clearly, this is what I said, Mr. Speaker: "Who ordered these severance agreements and payouts to silence doctors who stood up and spoke out" to be hidden from taxpayers? The Premier's office, the minister of health, or the minister of finance? The reason why I thought about asking the minister of finance is because, of course, the minister of finance was anxious earlier this week to participate in questions that I was directing to the health minister.

3:30

Now, the health minister said this yesterday. Please, sir, listen. This is on page 356 of *Alberta Hansard*, March 15. The hon. minister of health:

Mr. Speaker, if there were any kinds of severance agreements and payouts related to that – and I suspect there were – then they will be accounted for in the category for that.

That is what was said by the minister of health yesterday, so naturally I followed through today in question period asking for more details.

Now, also yesterday the Minister of Health and Wellness said this on page 356 of the *Hansard*:

But the fact is that the agreements were made. They are sealed in accordance with the nondisclosure agreements that were signed by the parties in question.

So there's evidence that these deals were sealed by your own caucus colleague, your own cabinet colleague, no one else. Naturally, taxpayers want to know about the details of these payments, these severance agreements.

Now, I would remind all cabinet ministers, Mr. Speaker, of the accountability statements that each and every one of them makes in the front of their annual reports, that the minister's annual report was prepared in accordance with the Government Accountability Act and the government's accounting policies. So it's only fair. It's only natural. I'm not getting any information from this government on their severance payments, and when I do look in the annual reports, whatever, book 1 or book 2, what do I see? Well, it's very interesting. In 2008-09 I see \$22.5 million listed in severance on page 105 of East Central's transition and restructuring expenses. If that's where these payments were made, tell us.

Perhaps we should have a look at Capital health. Now, Capital health has been brought up here in the past. For Capital health, if we look at the financial statements, the chief executive officer, for one person, had a severance in 2008-09 of \$1.5 million. I don't think those are the settlements we're talking about, but if it is, then the hon. minister should tell us.

I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** No, you can't. As I pointed out several times this afternoon, a point of order should not be used to continue debate.

Okay. We've gotten real good clarification in there. Again, here is exactly what was said so that there is no misunderstanding.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the minister of health to please read carefully the financial statements about who audits what and when in your own annual report. Again to the minister: who ordered these severance agreements and payouts to silence doctors who stood up and spoke out? Was it the Premier's office?

And it continues, but that was the fruit of that.

Well, that definitely might get some people's hair up with respect to the tone of the question and everything else. I'm not sure that it violates too many of the rules that we have with respect to the question period. Some may argue that it creates provocation because you don't like the type of question, but it's not really so.

There's another great little chapter in the Canadian *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 497.

The Speaker has implicit discretion and authority to rule out of order any question posed during Question Period if satisfied that it is in contravention of House rules of order, decorum and procedure.

So if I rule a question out of order in the future and someone rises under 13(2), my response will be that it is a contravention of House rules of order, decorum, and procedure.

In ruling a question out of order, the Chair may suggest that it be rephrased in order to make it acceptable to the House. Or, the Speaker may recognize another Member to pose the next question. In cases where such a question has been posed, if a Minister wishes to reply, the Speaker, in order to be equitable, has allowed the Minister to do so.

The Speaker may also direct that certain questions posed during Question Period be instead placed on the Order Paper. These are questions which, in the opinion of the Chair, are not

urgent or are of such a technical or detailed nature as to require a written response.

Okay. We had a continuation.

One other thing, page 632 under Points of Order:

Although Members frequently rise claiming a point of order, genuine points of order rarely occur. Indeed, points of order are often used by Members in attempts to gain the floor to participate in debate; in such cases, the Speaker will not allow the Member intervening to continue.

Just a correction in response to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. There were two similar-sounding names. The questions raised yesterday were not by the Member for Athabasca-Redwater; they were from the Member for Calgary-Hays. So I want to correct that.\*

Secondly, to the hon. Member for St. Albert. By the end of the day the pages will place on your desk those sections from *Beauchesne* that I referred to for required reading, sections 403 to 420. Starting tomorrow, I can assume that every member of this Assembly will be rising virtually on every question to raise a point of order because you'll all have the stuff right in front of you.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 13

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

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments or questions or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. minister of finance and President of the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In response to some of the questions from opposition yesterday I think it's important to get them on the record. The greatest concern seemed to be about some money that was spent in 2008-2009. Its relevance to the spending proposed now I'm not sure of, but if that's what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar considered relevant, then it's just our public duty to respond.

The \$200 million was one-time funding that was a grant to the health authorities and was reported in the third-quarter fiscal update released on February 26, 2009. The \$200 million was reallocated from a number of Health and Wellness programs that had significant lapses that year, including health facilities infrastructure. It was a one-time support to help the regional health authorities address the significant deficits they were forecasting for 2008-09. It was not earmarked for specific programs, and it supported a variety of services.

The hon. member also questioned the need for more funding for the offices of the Legislature, particularly the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, which would clearly be to include material, supplies, and other such preparations for a full province-wide enumeration.

In another display of stunning irrelevance, he also questioned the appointment of the returning officers. They were listed in the *Gazette* by the Chief Electoral Officer on March 15.

Those appear to be all of the questions, relevant or not, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

\*See page 400, left column, paragraph 3

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's very kind of the President of the Treasury Board to stay. Since he's here, I have some extemporizing I can go on about, which he doesn't need to concentrate on, but I do have a couple of questions, while I do have his attention, that I've always been curious about.

3:40

The actual figures that appear in the Appropriation Act: I can't figure out where they come from. Is this a percentage of the budget? In past interim supply appropriation requests we've been told, for example, that this is 40 per cent of the budget even though it's covering time from the beginning of April to the end of June, which is not 40 per cent of the year. Evidently, there is some front-end loading on some of the summer programs, and that's why that much money was needed. I guess my question is: is the interim supply request essentially a percentage that is asked for?

Secondly, how are the amounts determined that have to do with the capital expense in each of the departments that are listed? Again, is that a percentage of anticipated capital investment over the year, or is it something specific? I guess I'm sort of wondering how much time the government puts into interim supply.

Those are a couple of questions that I'd like the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance and Enterprise to answer.

Two other things I want to raise while I have his attention. I'm finding that the current budget process is not very . . . [interjection] No, it's not. It's a terrible process. It's not giving good information. The minister and I have spoken about this before. Currently the information that's available in the budget books is minimal. Budgets that used to be expanded out quite a bit so that you could actually tell what programs are being funded under a given category are now so rolled up that you get a budget vote. I spend a lot of time in departmental budget debates asking what programs are funded and for how much, which is not an incredibly good use of time, but I have no other way to get the information.

Now, if I go back and I look at the previous year's annual report for a given ministry, I can sometimes sort of figure out what's being funded under a given vote line. If he's looking for an example, look under the Culture and Community Spirit budget under AFA, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and he'll get a sense of what I mean. Or even if you look under a budget line. This got moved, but major exhibitions and fairs used to be a vote line under community development and now it's under Agriculture, I think, or maybe Municipal Affairs.

Anyway, you know, we get this very short description, and there are millions, sometimes billions of dollars. AHS, Alberta Health Services, appears as one line in the health department budget, and it's billions of dollars. We don't know what's in it, and there's no way to find out. You can go back and look at the previous year's – it's actually at that point almost two years ago that the annual report applies to – and try and figure out if the programs that are talked about in there are turning up under a given line.

I just don't understand why we have to spend so much time – and it's not just members of the opposition; it's members of the government caucus – trying to figure out what the heck is there. I just don't find it a good use of time. It's not talking about why the government made certain choices or why they've identified these as priorities or what they'd like to do differently or what they think they're doing particularly well. It's almost strictly an accounting gesture.

The entire budget process. We have, basically, three responders to the budget speech. The budget speech itself is delivered. You have two members of the government caucus move and second it,

and then you have a response from the Leader of the Official Opposition, and I'm pretty sure that's it. Then we go into the actual estimates debates for each ministry. So, really, our opportunity to talk about the overall direction and choices of the government is by doing it through the appropriation budgets, as I'm doing right now, for interim or for the Appropriation Act for the actual budget itself, which comes at the end of all of the supply votes.

It does occur to me that I don't get a real opportunity to talk back and forth with the government about why they've made the choices they have. I'm looking again for the plan, and what I'm getting is: boom, bust, pray; boom, bust, pray. I don't have any other way to get a sense of this. You know, we get a boom, many things happen, then we get a bust, many things go wrong, and then we all pray. The government leads us in prayer in the hope that we get another boom, and then we go into another boom cycle.

Already people are talking about: employment figures are up; housing starts are up. They're talking about another boom starting to happen in Fort McMurray. Activity is going up in the support services around Edmonton. People in Calgary are looking happier every day. I'm thinking: yeah, here we go one more time. All of the world-wide indexes and the Canadian indexes are saying: okay; our recession was officially over I think it was the third quarter of 2009 or something. Truly, in Alberta, because we are so blessed here, I think it could be argued in many ways that we hardly had a recession. We sort of had a hiccup.

I thank the chair for allowing me leeway to broaden the discussion during this appropriation debate in Committee of the Whole, but I am looking for those plans. I would like to know whether there is a plan, after the prayer, that is being considered by this minister. Is there a plan that we're going to come out of this and devote a certain amount of resource revenue to endowment and savings plans that would in fact fund postsecondary education 15 years down the line? What is the plan around revenue from the government in the future?

I talked about a white paper and developing a white paper and leading a couple of years' worth of discussion with the public about how we feel it's appropriate. Should we be dumping income tax completely and going to a consumption tax system? Should we be freeing up that educational property tax to the municipalities, leaving it to them? Fine, but then how are we going to fund education? Those kinds of discussions never seem to happen, and I wish I could spend less time prying for details and more time looking at those larger discussions.

I'm quite concerned that we take nonrenewable resource revenue and apply it directly to today's budget. It came out of the ground yesterday, and essentially we're spending it through the government coffers today. This resource belongs to all of us, including future generations. Well, really, can I say that we've had the benefit of this for two generations, to be on the positive side of that? My father comes from Black Diamond, a mile away from Turner Valley, the original site of the gas in Alberta. He's now in his 80s. That stuff was happening when he was a boy. He was on the derrick that left Leduc, and the next crew in was the crew that was there when Leduc No. 1 went. In his lifetime he's seen, really, the beginning of that natural resource revenue come in and subsidize the government. When he dies, which I hope is not soon, will his grandchildren or his grandchildren's grandchildren still be able to benefit from that?

3:50

I can see the government going forward with a deliberate strategy to say: building assets is always a good place to spend your resource revenue because you have an asset. Building bridges and roads and opera houses and – I better not say sports arenas – recr-



educational facilities, curling rinks in rural Alberta: those things are assets. They're tangible. They're worth something. I think that is a reasonable place to spend that money, never to spend it on operational money because operational money, as the minister well knows, is gone. It paid for a service, and it's gone, and that service is not here now. It's been consumed; it's over.

I'll just close by gently – no, not gently – kind of whacking the government a bit about why you cannot get your timing better. This is my 15th budget. This is my 14th interim supply request. So there was only one year in the 14 years I've been elected and have served where the government has been successful in bringing in a budget and passing it before the 1st of April. The government is in complete control of when we are called in, when budgets are due, when all of this is produced. I mean, you can say that it's the opposition's fault if you wish, but really you've got all the cards. You choose the game. You choose when it's played. So why are we so unable to do that?

I realize now that some of your revenue is intricately tied to the federal government, and you're waiting for federal government amounts on certain programs. But, sorry; that's not enough to be an excuse for why 14 years out of 15 we're looking at interim supply in a province where, you know, you've been in control for 40 years. Really, your track record is bad when you look at it that way. You should be able to do better, and I don't understand why you choose not to because you have all the cards to be able to choose to do it.

I've given you a whole bunch of stuff to talk about. I'll sit down and let the minister respond to me. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to the hon. member. I'll try and cover it. If I miss some, she can send me a note, and we'll do it. By and large, most departments would be a percentage of their operating. If it's for a quarter, it would be that way. If it's for a month, obviously it would be reduced like this one. But some of the departments have front-end costs, just exactly what you've suggested, and some of them have agencies that also have front-end costs that they need to move. There is no hard-and-fast rule that says: that's what it is. It really is just working from experience and working backwards, to a certain degree, and saying: we know that that particular department will need that many dollars before this particular time. It's different for several of the departments; for most of the departments it's not.

On the right department for reporting, we've moved up, as you'll know, the business plan reporting, consolidated and complete disclosure, to June. We used to not get the final numbers for a year out until September or October, so you're half a year behind. We've asked and expect all of our departments to be able to have final year-end in June of this year, which will allow you to see the reconciliation between what we said and what's there. I know it's kind of closing the gate when the horse is gone, looking backwards, but that does give you an indication of where exactly we hit our target and where we may have missed, and then that may explain changes in the coming year's budget if you actually have that document close enough to budgeting.

We've tried to make our budget document more readable. We're here all the time, and it is still a difficult document if you don't understand or if you're looking for more detail than a budget would contain. I will make the very sincere offer to sit down – and I know we have shared with the opposition – about the new format we've taken. I don't have any problems, hon. member, if there is a better way to display the numbers, even to go to more columns as

opposed to just out-years. What was last year? Comparable? What do we need to do? I'm absolutely open to suggestions from you about how the document becomes not only more readable but, in a kind of capsule, more understandable for Albertans. We do get paid all year long to look on an ongoing basis at it, and we have relooked at our Measuring Up documents, too. I think you know that I just don't believe you set a target that you can get just because it's an easy target.

That document has been shared with other provinces. In my opinion – and I think you would agree – there's more to a budget than simply aligning money with the issue. If you don't have that other document that says, "Yeah, yeah, you spent your money," did you actually get anything done? So the two documents need to be worked together.

On the detail level that we go into, I know you've seen our blue book. You know, that is probably six inches or eight inches thick at the end of the year. I know that can be transferred into computer language that might make it far easier for people to look into a category where they want to look without thumbing through it.

Somewhere between the blue book and this book we can come to an understanding about what it is. I know you're not suggesting anything different, but there are legal and accounting principles that we must adhere to to do it, and if we can achieve those and if there's a more clear way to get it across, then I'm all ears. I mean, I've had to deal with accountants for close now to 35 years in my business life and this thing, and it's not quite as simple as we'd like it.

Obviously, I agree. I think the ideal time is to have the budget completed before year-end, no question, but, you know, when so much of our budget is based on outside activity – what's the dollar going to do? what's oil going to do? – you really do hate to go in and make decisions that are unrealistic. When you see oil activity coming back so strong in Alberta and you see what the dollar is doing, in many ways you want to get as close to the date that says: well, we can't wait any longer. But we need to be fair to Albertans, to not lowball, highball, or manipulate the numbers for price and volumes of oil or bitumen and to keep an eye on natural gas.

I know that with some of the extreme weather that was happening in the States, maybe in a selfish way from a Treasury point of view we had anticipated a little greater movement in natural gas. We used to see real volatility. When the cold blast hit the east coast, it would go up two bucks. You think: "Well, we know they've got the shale gas. We know it's not all in production. We know it's maybe not quite as easy to produce as it might be in areas that aren't populated." So you watch these events.

We start our budgeting from the expenditure side in June, basically. To the process, we meet with dozens and dozens of groups: nonprofits, chambers, unions. We have a list. I think it's over a hundred representatives from different groups through the spectrum of nonprofits right up to the Canadian federation of businesses. Anyway, it's as thorough a consultation process as it could be.

I hope I've answered your questions. Thank you.

4:00

**The Deputy Chair:** Laurie, go ahead.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks. Sorry. The one piece that the minister didn't get to was the longer range shape of things and what might be considered, since we're talking about interim, looking into the future. What are some of those larger pieces that the government is looking at? Would they consider something like producing a white paper on government revenue, or are they committed to the revenue stream that they have currently?

I mean, there's a lot of talk out there right now about different ways of raising money to operate government that are fairer. It seems to me we've just added on and added on and added on to a system, and it's very convoluted and filled with, in some cases, dumb rules and overlapping programs. Maybe it's time to stop and take a step back and clean it up and start over.

If he can give me a little bit of time talking about what he thinks he sees for the future shape of revenue gathering and whether he is content with continuing to use nonrenewable resource revenue to supplement today's budget – if we took that out of the budget, we'd be running one-third of a deficit, which is a big chunk of change – I'll let him talk about that.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** You have to come to Treasury Board estimates.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. minister, do you wish to respond?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** No. Mr. Chairman, I'd just invite her to the Treasury Board estimates, that will be coming soon.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I listened with a lot of interest to that last back and forth. A lot of good information there. I know that one of the things I respect about the Member for Edmonton-Centre is that she always wants to know what the details are of these vast amounts of money that we approve in these interim supply acts, these appropriations acts. I don't think that's too much for her to ask. Frankly, I think that it's just basic, you know, transparency and accountability.

There's a lot of money, a lot of huge dollar amounts, in this act: Municipal Affairs, \$100 million; Seniors and Community Supports, \$400 million. I don't even want to see what Health is. What's Health here? Health, \$2.2 billion. Just huge, huge amounts of money.

I think that we could cut down on a lot of the waste in government. Governments are wasteful. Most governments, if not all governments, are wasteful. One of the ways we can cut back on waste is to ensure that we have very transparent and detailed documents of what money is being spent on. When, for example, we have, you know, monies going to movies about the oil sands that paint the oil sands in a bad light that cost the government \$50,000, well, those type of things could be eliminated very quickly if there were very detailed numbers in advance of approving that kind of money. I would really like to see more effort in that regard.

Now, I do want to say, though, that there's no doubt that the books – I've compared many of the government of Alberta's fiscal updates and their fiscal plan and their budget plan that they release at budget. It is better than a lot of provinces, more detailed, and that's good. That's a good start, but it isn't detailed enough.

If we want to get rid of some of the waste and have a real discussion about how to balance the budget without affecting core programs, doing so in a way that we can still build priority infrastructure and so forth, it would be a lot easier to have that debate. The debate would be a lot more thorough and effective if we had a very clear breakdown of all the different expenses, all the different programs, all the different subsets of programs that go on in government, a detailed breakdown of which roads are being paved. Which roads are we planning to pave with this money? Which roads are we planning to widen?

I was talking with a constituent after the budget was introduced by the Treasury Board President. He lives out in an area where they're expanding the road in rural Alberta. It's a huge project. It's expanding highway 9 over to Drumheller, and that goes right

through my constituency on its way to Drumheller. He said: "Why on Earth? We had a pretty good road there. Clearly, it needs some upgrading, but why would we do that this year, when we have such a huge deficit number?" And I said, "Well, you know, there's a line item, billions of dollars on road infrastructure, and that's kind of all we hear until it's actually paved. Once you start repaving something, it's kind of hard to stop, obviously, because they've torn up the whole road." And he said, "Well, why are we doing this when we have a \$7 billion cash shortfall and a \$3.7 billion deficit?" I forget what the actual number is off the top of my head, \$3.7 billion – that's right – and a \$6.2 billion cash shortfall. And there is no good reason.

You know, when all of a sudden the economy tanks and we have this boom-bust cycle, if we had in these types of acts, Bill 13 for example, a detailed list of what was included to Transportation – what's included in this \$160 million of expense, you know, \$151 million of which is capital investment? Which roads are we talking about here? Which ones? Can they wait? Can we forgo that project? Can we do without twinning that bridge for another year? In some places you can't. In some places it's got to be done right away. In some places you can delay.

I'll give you an example out of my own constituency. In Airdrie eventually we're going to need another overpass on the south side. We're at 43,000 people now. We're going to be at 75,000 within the next 10 to 15 years. We're going to need an overpass there, but we can do without it right now. We don't need it today. We can certainly spread it out and do it, you know, three, four, five, six years from now as we get close to that time when traffic congestion just is about to start to get really tough.

I know we want to plan ahead, and we want to do that. I get that. But when you have a \$6.2 billion cash shortfall and a \$3.7 billion deficit, you have to delay those things even if it means a little bit of annoyance. That's just the way it goes. You've got to deal with that traffic light for another year instead of having an overpass.

That's just the way it goes sometimes, whereas in Airdrie – same issue – our need for schools this year, for the last several years, is literally a crisis. They've actually partitioned my little boy's library at Nose Creek elementary in Airdrie and turned it into two classrooms. There's an hour, essentially, where the kids can go in and get a book. They can't stay there because there are classes going on, but they can get a book and go out. It's that serious. I mean, it is nuts. My little guy is in a class of over 30, but there are some classrooms of over 40 kids. It's just unbelievable. We've put on all the portables that the facility can hold. There's no room for portables anymore on the core. The core can only support so many portables, and we can't even put any more portables on our schools.

We have this need, and we need that money now, and we're willing in our community, in Chestermere and Airdrie, to forgo any other planned projects, road paving, anything. We're ready to forgo that for another year or two years if it would mean getting those schools built.

That's what I mean by prioritizing, but it's so hard – so hard – to prioritize when you don't know what the \$151 million under Transportation for capital investment is being spent on. So, you know, we have a debate about all these different programs and all these big numbers, but we don't really have anything to debate at all. I mean, how do I know it can be deferred under Employment and Immigration? Maybe there's a program that we could do without this year to help decrease the amount that we're being asked for. Maybe there's something in Culture and Community Spirit. Maybe we're spending too much money on those anti oil sands videos. We can cut those out.

4:10

You know, there are all kinds of different areas where if we could see the line by line item in the document here, we'd be able to say: "You know what? We can do without that. Look. We can save \$5 million out of that program, or we can save \$10 million. We don't need to twin that road or whatever." So that's the biggest frustration I have, and I really would like a response from somebody over there, from the minister, hopefully, on what exactly these amounts are for.

Particularly under Transportation, I'd like to know how much of the expense here under capital investment – I'd like to know which pieces of highway this is slated to pave, what projects this is supposed to deal with. Same with Education. I would like to know how much of that \$300,000 capital investment – what exactly is that for? That would be helpful to know as we go forward.

Anyway, I said I would keep it to only 10 minutes today, so I will, but, you know, I'm trying to have a debate here. I hope somebody from the opposite side can explain to me if there's any way that in the future we could have more detail on this appropriation bill and what specific projects are under this that we're paying for when we pass this huge amount of money, a total of \$4.9 billion, that we're approving today. And it's this thick. That's what we have approving \$4.9 billion. That thick. That's a very thin piece of paper. Not very helpful.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I find the discussion that's gone on interesting, and it's somewhat encouraging in some areas to hear the minister of finance say that he'd be open to some different ideas and some formats, more years being shown in the columns and those types of things, which is encouraging for myself to think of. Sitting on other boards and going through budgets, I just find it very frustrating to have a \$4.9 billion budget that we're supposed to vote on and say: yes, we'll go for that. It's six pages with, you know, just a few numbers on those pages, totalling \$4.9 billion. So I, too, want to put my request to the finance minister that we need to change this process.

It was also encouraging to me because I've asked many times: "Why do we have to spend this time on interim supply? Why don't we just have a budget come out on time?" It was encouraging to know that, actually, 1 year in 15 they did that, so the precedent is there that we could do it. I would encourage the government for next year: let's do it. Let's get in the House. Let's have the budget and vote on it so that we don't have to go through interim supply.

It's interesting also, though, that it was mentioned, again, by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre: where do these numbers come from? You know, where's the \$160 million in expenses for Transportation going? Where's the \$150 million in capital investment actually going? In question period we never have enough time to actually ask those questions, so I'd like to ask it again, and it's been brought up now by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Again, it's been a long-time problem for me. Where is the list? How can we do it? There's nothing that I would like more than to help the government as opposition members, to say "yes, this cut could be made," and they'd know that we're not going to sit there and argue and debate and squeal about it. "Oh, you can't cut there. You can't cut there." We don't know where we can cut because there is no list. I mean, it's so frustrating to have a line item or a number, and you're supposed to vote for it. This is Education.

Okay. They say: oh, you can't vote against that because we're going to lose teachers. Well, is that the only place where money goes? "Oh, you can't vote against that for Justice. It's going to go to defend those who need the help."

There is nothing in this. I will also argue that in our full budget there's nothing other than line items and numbers. What we need is a plan. What we need is a list that says, you know: "Here are our top 15 infrastructure projects. This is the one that's carrying over, and this is what we need in this interim supply for the first 30 days." Whereabouts is this \$1.5 billion in capital that we have here going for expenses in Transportation? Are there not areas where we can cut? We in the opposition have said: yes, there are, but we need a list.

We truly believe that if the government was to give us a list on these things, we could sit down and prioritize and agree on what we could do to reduce our deficit. We don't need to spend \$4.9 billion in such a short order of time and not have a really good debate on what the priority is. Is it to bring in the arts and to have a couple of films that are filmed here in Alberta? Is it to study the caribou so that we can't proceed with highway 63 and we've got to have two more years? What is the list? What is the line item value?

I also found it very interesting that the minister of finance said: well, we'd like to hold off to the very last minute if possible so that we can be as accurate as possible. That's great, and it's wonderful, but the fact is that we have that dilemma every year. So why hold off? I know that Albertans would not be upset if, in fact, we made the budget in February and the price of oil was to go up in the spring. We'd say: oh, we have a surplus. I just don't think there are going to be too many Albertans that are going to be pointing their fingers at this government and saying: what poor planning. No. We had the plan. Things changed.

The hon. minister of finance says: well, you know, when that cold snap hits in the eastern U.S., we used to see a jump of \$2. That isn't what the budget and the planning are. What was dismaying to me, though, was that it sounded to me like the government was actually planning on the budget and on this interim supply: we want to wait to the last minute so we can spend absolutely every last dollar that we think is going to be coming in. It's just not the proper way, when we're running a huge deficit, to be looking at that. What we should be looking at is: what are our priorities? What's actually in this interim supply of \$4.9 billion that we really need to press ahead with? For example, some of these overcrowded schools, whether it's Fort McMurray, Beaumont, Airdrie: we know that. I am very confident that Albertans would say: that should be higher up on the priority list.

Highway 63 and highway 3 to Medicine Hat are areas where the government department has said: "These are areas that need to be upgraded. We should be going there." Is that where this \$1.5 billion is going? I don't think so. For the last two years there hasn't been a ton of pavement going on highway 63. So what are the priorities? Is it a back road going between two cities that already have an adequate road, or is it a main corridor that we need to upgrade and see that it's working there?

I just want to go over the format for a minute. Again, the hon. minister of finance talked about: do we need more years in the columns? Yes, we do. Do we need more details? Absolutely. He talked about the blue book and the necessity of it being six inches thick. It's nice that we have it electronically now, but I must say that it's much easier for me to sit down and flip through the blue book. Looking through there – I don't know – it just pops out more to me.

**Ms Blakeman:** That shows your age.

4:20

**Mr. Hinman:** Yes, it does. I just don't try to hide it. I'm not going to do anything fancy. [interjection] Sorry, Mr. Chair. Sometimes it is entertaining to get sidetracked on the little humorous things that we do here in the House.

To get back to the problem of this interim supply, number one, we shouldn't be doing this. We should be actually going over the budget. We need more detail. It is just so critical. If, in fact, we want to balance the budget, if we want to do a better job, it means we have to have better information. We need to have more detail. It's very difficult to make a decision, to vote on something and say: "Oh, yes, the Treasury Board needs \$62 million. Municipal Affairs needs \$1.04 billion." What for? How can you vote against or for something when there are no details in it and it's just supposed to be *carte blanche*? "Here it is. We need \$4.9 billion. Let's rush this through so that we can go on with running our government."

All of these things are alarming to me. It's concerning to me more so than ever. When I was first in this House, gratefully we were running a balanced budget or a surplus. The last two years that's not been the case. We need to do our due diligence. We need the information, and it needs to be public so that we can go back and say to those we represent, to those we are collecting tax dollars from and spending on: "This is where it is. You know, if you're not happy with this project – it's not going to the southwest ring road or the southeast ring road. We don't want to spend it at this point. Let's save it, then, until we can do that."

The bottom line, Mr. Chair, is that we need better information. We need more time to go over that in committee, where we can ask the details, make an informed decision, and not just simply a yea or a nay for a one-line item and say: well, that's good enough.

I appreciate the time to speak on this. I hope that going into next year we will not see an interim supply, that we will not need the Appropriation Act because we'll have it done. That will be exciting to me. We can just get right into the budget. I hope we change that whole format, how we're doing that, so that it's more functional, that we can actually look at and make some good, sound decisions on how we're going to prioritize and spend the tax dollars here in Alberta for the betterment of our whole province and not just for some different areas.

I appreciate that time, and I'll look forward to any more discussion on Bill 13.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak?

Are you ready for the question on Bill 13, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2011?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 13 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

## Bill 2 Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is a privilege here to speak in favour of Bill 2. I know the sponsor of this bill, the MLA for Calgary-Nose Hill. I'd like to thank him for bringing this bill forward at this time. I think it's a measure that goes a long way toward increasing the protection for individuals and families affected by family violence by holding accountable those who violate protection orders and makes Alberta's penalties for these violations stronger than they were. Again, I'd like to commend him for bringing this bill at this time.

Alberta has higher than average rates of family violence. There's no doubt that we need to do everything possible not only to crack down on family violence but at the same time to support families in that we have mechanisms in place so that people are hopefully living caring, sharing, productive lives. If the government could do that through this bill by having a little bit more authority with the penalties that are out there, that is excellent.

The nice thing, too, about this act is that it amalgamates a couple of processes here. The legislation will make it clear what the penalties should be when an emergency protection order is breached by a respondent or an abusive family member. Prior to this, a breach of an emergency protection order was dealt with under civil contempt proceedings or under section 127 of the Criminal Code. This stated it was an offence to breach an order of the court. These two avenues do not specifically address family violence, and there was a wide variance in what penalties were used for breaches of emergency protection orders. This bill will clarify that and allow for a more streamlined process or allow for these types of things to less easily fall through the cracks.

The bill also clarifies that evidence which a Court of Queen's Bench judge must consider when reviewing an emergency protection order that was granted at Provincial Court. These are two different levels of court that maybe in some cases weren't seeing the same evidence, or the judges weren't seeing what the standards were from other levels of court. This makes the process a lot better and a lot easier for practitioners who are out there trying to enforce emergency protection orders.

Like I said at the beginning, the emergency protection order is a tool that can be used immediately to address the safety of victims of family violence. It can provide that the abuser have no contact or communication with the victim, that the victim can stay at a residence while the abuser is not able to, and other conditions that can provide for immediate safety of the victim and the family members. You see, it's very important for people who are suffering from family abuse to be able to go to our court system and have an emergency protection order put into place quickly.

Without that mechanism or having that ability, people are going to be out there suffering the vagaries of an abuser. If they can't get to our court system and use it effectively, well, then, we haven't done our job. This, hopefully, will enable fewer people to become abused, and we're hopefully going to be able to separate the abuser from the victim and then get them into some support systems to rebuild their lives. That's the other arm of this picture that we've got to work on, too.

Nevertheless, this is a good bill. Like I mentioned earlier, we have a large volume of domestic violence cases here in Alberta. It's something we should be continually striving to lower. In fact, the latest information from Statistics Canada showed that Alberta was the third highest in proportion of spousal violence, right behind Nunavut and Quebec. It's not really a pleasant picture. Nevertheless, this should hopefully bring in some rules that maybe provide a little more safety for individuals.

Looking at the bill as a whole, this is a good measure to try and provide victims of violence with an ability to get to court, an ability to separate themselves from an abusive relationship, an ability

to find, hopefully, for themselves and their children protection. That's what our court system is there for, to protect people from unwanted and hurtful situations.

Again, I'd just like to commend the hon. member for bringing this forward. It moves our legislation in a more streamlined fashion as well as in a fashion which will go quite a way to protecting more individuals.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this, and we'll hear some other members speak on this.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

4:30

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm going to speak in favour of Bill 2, the Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011. It's an important bill, I think, that adds stiff penalties for those who ignore protective orders issued by the courts. I think that we can all agree in this House that actions certainly speak louder than words, especially with people who have broken the law. When a court issues an order, it must be respected, with no ifs, ands, or buts about it, because it's the law.

I'd like to commend the hon. member – as I always say in this House, one of my favourite members of the Legislature – the good doctor from Calgary-Nose Hill, for bringing this forward. It's a very good act, and I really liked the way that this member went about it, too, Mr. Chair. It deserves recognition that he always goes out of his way to do a briefing with members of the opposition or to answer any questions that we may have about the bill. At least, that's been my experience. I find that it's just very refreshing. I actually feel that this member takes very seriously bringing a bill to the Legislature. He only brings bills forward that he believes in and that he thinks are appropriate, not just ones that are stuck on his desk by some minister. I really do appreciate that very much. He's a good example of a parliamentarian.

Back to Bill 2. As I said earlier, when a court issues an order, Mr. Chair, it needs to be respected, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. The situation as it stands with regard to this is certainly not good enough with regard to the penalties for those who ignore protective orders issued by the courts. If a fearful wife and mother, a fearful woman, a fearful anybody receives the protection order from the court, there are almost no meaningful consequences for ignoring the order. This is unconscionable at the present time. A violator can be found in contempt of court, but there are no specified penalties for that contempt of court. It's a civil offence.

Someone that intimidates children – it has been well documented – receives nothing more than, really, a slap on the wrist. This clearly is not good enough. It's obvious that if you want to protect children in general, you take family violence seriously, and you do something about it. Based on police-reported data, when a child is physically or sexually assaulted, it's by someone they know 85 per cent of the time. I just shake my head when I hear statistics like this, when I learn of statistics like this. This is based on police data and investigated cases.

Based on our most recent data, from 2007, 53,000 children and youth were victims of assault. Has it gone up in 2010? It probably has. Thirty per cent of those perpetrators were family members in this province. The message is clear. The family home must be a safe place, a refuge from harm. Usually in the vast majority of circumstances parents are caring. They're loving. They would do anything to protect their children. Their rights to be parents and their ability to be parents are not in any way being questioned by this bill, but there is that percentage – whether it's 1 or 2 per cent, it's far too large – where the abuse happens.

Tragically, sometimes it's sexual abuse, which is just beyond anybody's comprehension in this House. Oftentimes it's verbal abuse and physical, violent abuse. It does happen, and many of us, I think, have seen what happens. I don't think many of us have seen it actually happening in front of our eyes although I'm sure some of us have. But all of us have seen and known victims of the abuse, and it is just heart wrenching to see.

If someone is brave enough to say, "Enough; that's gone too far," to step forward and get a protective order, it must have force and real consequences for disobeying it. I generally like the penalties included in this bill. I like mandatory minimum sentences. Surprise, surprise. Albertans need assurance that broken laws have real punishments, real consequences. Wrist slaps don't count. They're not good enough.

A first offence will allow a judge to levy a fine of \$5,000 or up to 90 days in jail. On this I would like to see a mandatory minimum. All I see is a maximum. On the second offence there's a minimum jail sentence of 14 days, for a third offence 30 days. Although these penalties are a step in the right direction, I think they still could be stronger. I do think that we're moving in the right direction here, but these are very serious. I think that when these protective orders are violated, the consequences should be very serious in virtually all cases, with very little discretion given.

Although these penalties are a step in the right direction, I think they could be stronger. Someone that repeatedly ignores court orders, for example, should be treated harshly, especially when it comes to family violence. I really do like the upper-end punishments in this bill. A second offence could land you in prison for 18 months. Very good. A third would see someone behind bars for 24 months. This is very good. We all know that violence, if left unchecked, will escalate. A threat will lead to an assault, and an assault can lead to a death or a child being exploited and harmed and victimized for all time that they're on this Earth.

Forty-one per cent of child and youth homicides were committed by a family member. It's usually the people children trust most. It's usually parents. It's usually, unfortunately, the father or the male figure in the house when it does happen. Again, I want to repeat that the vast majority of fathers out there would step in front of a train for their kids if it meant taking care of them and keeping them from harm. But for some reason there's an insidious population out there that feels that they have the right to abuse the people that are closest to them.

Another 27 per cent of these acts were committed by someone the minor knew, and that's a big warning for all parents out there to make sure that they are aware of who their children are associating with. Whose house are they going to? Who are their friends? Who are the parents of their friends? We need to be careful with that because it's incredible how sneaky and conniving some of these individuals are. That's not to say that we need to be suspicious of everyone. We just have to do our due diligence and make sure our children are hanging around good people.

I think this government could be doing more on the family violence file, though. There is more that they could do. For example – and this is a big one for us in the Wildrose – the government has dragged its feet on proclaiming the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act, that the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek proposed. It was passed last year. We have begged this government over and over and over again to put a date for implementing the bill into effect and to announce it, to make it not only law but completely in force. There has not been any action on it, and that is unacceptable. The Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act: there's just no acceptable reason why we haven't proclaimed that bill. Surely, the members opposite and the members running for leader of the PC Party and so forth will find it in their hearts to

proclaim this bill and make it mandatory to report some of the most disgusting abuse that happens in our society.

**4:40**

There is also a motion before the House, Motion 503, that urges the government to create a task force to reduce the exploitation of children. The motion isn't a government motion; it's a private member's motion. I think it's great that that member is putting the motion forward, but this isn't being put forward by the Minister of Children and Youth Services. It would be good if that minister would look into the creation of that task force, and I urge her, as someone who I know obviously cares very much about the protection of children, to do that.

I like the progress that this bill will make, but it's obvious to me and to Albertans that the safety of families needs to be a higher priority of this government. It's not that they're not doing anything on it, but they're not doing enough. I assure Albertans that to ensure the protection of children and youths in any place that they are is an absolute priority for the Wildrose caucus and will be a priority of our government if we are elected thus in the next election.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to get on the record in Committee of the Whole on Bill 2, the Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011. To my reading of it this is the "we really mean it" amendment bill.

As a bit of an historical vignette, this piece of legislation has a really interesting pedigree to it. The original version of the bill was introduced by Alice Hanson, who was then the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly and sat in the Official Opposition at the time, which was a Liberal caucus then as well. It is one of the very few bills ever brought forward in this Assembly by a member of the opposition that passed second reading.

There was a great deal of emotional investment in the act. There were some really amazing speeches from various members of the Assembly, and it's worthwhile to go back and have a look at that. It's very revealing how many people had family members who had been victims of spousal abuse or family violence, may themselves have been in that situation. Very, very interesting. This would have been about 1995, '96 maybe, and the bill passed second reading.

The member, Alice Hanson, who's now passed away but was then the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Beverly, did a number of consultations over the summer, brought the bill back in the fall in Committee of the Whole to do some amendments. Through the use of a procedural parliamentary process – it was perfectly legitimate; at the time I remember thinking it was a dirty trick – in Committee of the Whole there was a motion to have the chairperson leave the chair. The chairperson left the chair, and therefore they had to rise and go back into the regular proceeding of the House. The bill literally disappeared into ether because it had not been passed. Nothing had been done with it. It hadn't been reported. It was nowhere. It literally disappeared. The motion was brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Then when I was first elected, in '97, I reintroduced a version of the bill. It didn't get up because I think my number pull was so far back. Then in '98 or '99 the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek brought it forward again under her name, and the bill passed.

It has come back to us, I think, once for sure for amendment. We strengthened a number of the things that had been identified as

problematic, particularly around giving more weight to kind of not abusing the victim further. In situations, for example, where the police intervene, they're taught, they're trained to move the easiest person. So when you've got a combative father and husband and a victimized wife or spouse, they tend to get the wife to leave. Well, now you've uprooted the wife and the kids, and they're gone. They don't have their toothbrushes, their teddy bears, their pajamas, nothing, and they go and stay at a friend's for the night or go to a shelter. What the legislation was trying to do was give the police more teeth and more options to legally say: "Nope. Sorry, buddy. It's you. The law says that you're the one that should be out of here." And it worked with a number of other processes.

I'm very pleased to support this bill. I'm very pleased to see that the main thrust of the bill is to establish that offence and penalty provision inside of the legislation for breaches of emergency protection orders. Someday I'll give you a little historical vignette on the whole history of emergency protection orders and all the different grassroots movements that brought that one into play and eventually got it sort of legitimized and legalized through legislation. Others have talked about exactly what the act does, so I won't go into that.

I think that the points that I want to bring up specifically here are my overall concerns about our failure as a society and as a generation to have been successful in minimizing the severity and the number of family violence incidents. I honestly don't understand why. I've been working on this issue for almost 40 years, and I'm baffled. We should have been on top of this one. We've poured money into education. We've poured money into and made it a requirement that people that are in front-line service delivery – dentists, dental hygienists, doctors in emergency, nurses, EMTs – anybody that saw something they thought might be spousal violence, was to report it and, you know, move generally a woman but sometimes a man into assistance. We have shelters. We have support programs. And guess what? We turn more women away from shelters than we are able to serve, and we have a fair number of shelter beds in this province now. Granted, you know, our population has increased as well, but we've been utterly unable to get a handle on this.

My concern is that when you escalate to a level of severe violence, you are still in this case where we're talking about an emergency protection order. You still – put this image in your head – have a woman standing on the street with a piece of paper going: "Please don't hurt me, shoot me, knife me, club me. I have an emergency protection order. You can't do that." Not very effective, is it? That's the bottom line. You do have a legal piece of paper, but it really only works if the person that is coming to attack you believes that they should cease doing something because of that legal piece of paper.

What we have now is a legal piece of paper that contains clauses in it that have very, very specific punishments involved, you know, financial punishment with fines that are now going to range between \$5,000 and imprisonment, starting with the first offence, of not more than 90 days; then a second offence, 14 days to 18 months; and the third offence, not less than 30 days, not more than 24 months. So, you know, serious stuff. But still, a piece of paper when you're standing on the street and somebody is coming at you with a knife or a shotgun or a club, a tire iron . . .

**An Hon. Member:** A golf club.

**Ms Blakeman:** A golf club. Just about anything you want to imagine that could be used as a weapon or even just somebody's fists.

This is the real problem, that we still have those situations. And if anybody is reading this or listening to this online and you're in that kind of difficulty, if you're in that kind of fear, please contact the police. Ask for very specific help to get a personal safety plan put in place.

4:50

Now, I will acknowledge here – and you guys hear me talk a lot about the differences between rural and urban and how we're not paying enough attention to urban issues – that in this instance there's a real difference between the resources that are available to urban people that are victims of family violence and rural victims. In the urban areas there are more resources. There are police officers that work in special units that know exactly how to work with someone to develop a personal safety plan so that they do not become a crime statistic as a fatality from spousal abuse. They work with prosecutors in the Justice department. It's a whole team that will come out and work with women. If anybody is listening to that that needs that kind of help, get it. It's there for you. We fund it. That's why it's there.

If you're trying to avoid somebody or not be noticed or hide, it's a little easier to do in a city. There are more people around. It's easier to not get noticed, right? If you're in a rural area, it's easier to get noticed. People instantly start going: "Who are the new people in town? Who moved into that house next to the Johnsons?" You get noticed a lot more when you're in a rural area. You could be much more isolated. It's more difficult for you to get help. You could be dealing with police forces or law enforcement that don't have that kind of specialty training, so it is more difficult to get that kind of direct help. Frankly, there are more guns because it's much more a part of a rural or farm life where you would have guns on the premises for controlling . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Gophers.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, no. I'm just thinking about predators and varmints and things, coyotes and stuff. [interjections] I'm getting help from my farming friends here.

There is a difference there about what's available, and it's simply about numbers. It's about an ability to deliver that service efficiently and effectively in rural areas. So there is a difference there. Definitely, the women that are in urban locations have access to better resources there.

The bottom line is that we still have too many families out there that are dysfunctional to the point where somebody is beating the tar out of somebody else or, worse, they're killing them. That costs all of us. We all pay for the ambulance, for the emergency services, for the court processes, for the rehabilitation processes, for the lost productivity, and, frankly, for the screwed-up kids that are going to be coming out of that family. It costs every one of us real money, bucks on the barrelhead here. This is not a victimless crime. This is not a cheap crime. It's expensive.

I can't tell you what it is we need to do to solve this. I wish I could, but I can't. I don't know why we have utterly failed to raise the next generation to not beat on the people that are closest to them. I don't know how we failed to do that, but we did because the statistics are even worse.

One of the things that this government stopped doing – and I understand why they stopped doing it. It was embarrassing. Okay. Fair enough. But you know what? Woman up here. There are all kinds of analogies and rude things I could say about – find some courage. For heaven's sake, get over it. I don't care if you're embarrassed about publishing annually the statistics of the numbers in the shelters. I can't even remember how long ago it was that the

government stopped publishing the numbers of women who are turned away from the shelters.

We know now – you can dig it out from places if you're determined enough, but that shouldn't be how it works – that we turn away more people that come to shelters than we're able to find space for. I know that's embarrassing for the government. Tough, because the rest of us need to know that. We need to know what those numbers are and how many of those people are out there and looking for assistance because it reflects on us. It gives us all an out. It lets all of us off the hook because: hey, they're all looked after, right? No, they're not. I think we're somewhere in the tens of thousands range of women that are turned away from shelter spaces in Alberta at this point. I don't mean 30,000. I mean 13,000, if I remember the last statistic that I heard, but I'm out of date by a couple of years there. I think we all need to know that information to understand how large the issue is in our province and in our cities and in our communities.

The other thing that happens there is – and I just have to speak out on behalf of women who don't have children – that the women who get accepted into the shelters first and get space looked after are women with children, and you can understand why that happens. It makes perfect sense. They've got little kids. You can't leave a kid out on the street. You can't say: "Well, go couch surfing at a friend's place. Go and sleep at a friend's place for a couple of nights." You can't do that if you've got a couple of kids with you. So women with children get admitted to these shelters, and they will be taken care of. Women that turn up at a shelter without children: those are the statistics of women that got turned away.

So we have to discriminate. There is discrimination there, and the discrimination is against battered women who don't have children. It's not that we want to do that, but that's the way it works. That's tough. I mean, the idea, the thought behind that is that, well, they can find some other kind of help. They could find a friend to stay with for a couple of days and then move on to another friend and work something else out.

To me it's still a reflection of how we make excuses and how we deal with what is a really insidious and pervasive crime against our society. I'm offended when a woman is beaten because she's a partner to someone that thinks that it's okay to beat on her. That's an offence to me, it's an offence to every person sitting in here, and we need to think of it that way.

This bill is a good step in the right direction to show we really mean it and here's the punishment if you don't obey those protection orders, but we still have a heck of a long way to go on this whole issue. We've actually gone backwards, and it may be that we've managed – you know, way back when, when I first started working on this, I remember doing a project when I was at the Advisory Council on Women's Issues. I tried to figure out how much money a battered spouse – and that can be a man, by the way. Don't think that doesn't happen. It exists in gay and lesbian relationships as well. Nobody gets off the hook on this one. Nobody gets to be proud and say, "Not in my community," because that's simply not true.

I shouldn't get so far off on tangents. I forget. The train leaves the station, and I forget where I was. So no one gets off the hook. The number of people: oh, I don't know. It's totally gone.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak in favour of this bill. I do think that it's a symptom of a much larger problem that we have.

Oh, the statistics. That's what I forgot. I'm sorry. I sat down, and people laughed at me. They hooted with laughter when I phoned and said, "Well, how much does it cost to send a police car out on a call?" and phoned emergency rooms and the AMA

and all of these other places going, "Well, how much does it cost, you know, to pay an ER doctor for a year, and how many visits do we know of that are women going into emergency?" I was trying to figure out how much this could possibly be costing us.

I came out with this figure, and everyone went: "Oh, that's preposterous. That's outrageous." I now know that I was way under. But we weren't keeping statistics like that then. We didn't pay any attention to that kind of thing. At the time we started to say that we think 1 woman in 10 is a victim of spousal abuse, and the reaction was total outrage and negation. "Absolutely not. Where did you pluck that number from? Out of thin air? There's no possible way that 10 per cent of the women in our population have experienced some kind of spousal abuse."

5:00

Well, as years went on, we were able to gather the statistics. We knew we needed to speak the language of the people that held the money and held the power, and that was all about statistics. It was all about showing how many people were affected, how many times the police were called, how many times there was an admission into the ER. It was all the stuff that I was trying to do at that time 30 years ago. By building those statistics, we were able to start to figure that out. What we found out was that it wasn't 1 in 10. It wasn't even 1 in 5. It's much closer to 1 in 3. That's how much it pervades our society.

Now, it depends on how you're going to give a definition of abuse or violence, you know, but generally what we do know is that men have much more ability to inflict much more serious harm on women than the other way around. So even where you have statistics that show that battering goes both ways – and we certainly have those statistics – the damage that is done is far more serious and long lasting and lethal to women than to men. That's not an excuse. That doesn't say that it's okay to beat your spouse because it's a man. That doesn't make that acceptable in any way, shape, or form, but it does tell you how serious this is and how much it covers our whole society.

I've been really interested while I've been speaking to see how much other chit-chat has gone on and other conversations and other attention being directed away from what I'm saying and toward other things.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 2, the Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011. This is an important bill. Many, many individuals in Alberta have looked forward to an increased protection against family violence. It truly is shameful in this day and age that family violence is still such a pressing need here in the province. That's why I'm pleased to support the government on this bill. Hopefully, they will take a few more steps forward in ensuring that those who commit family violence are treated properly and that those who have the offence committed against them are protected properly.

Family violence is still a serious issue in Canada. I found a shocking statistic from the Minister of Justice in Ottawa, that nearly 2.5 million Canadians over the age of 15 have been stalked in the last five years. That truly is just an unbelievable number to me. Millions of Canadians are being harassed and tormented by people they are close to. Spousal violence itself is almost 15 per cent of all police-reported crime. It's a known fact that family violence is vastly unreported. They estimate that 30 per cent of

spousal abuse victims report their crimes to police. It's not a confidence in the system to realize that such a low percentage are willing to come forward. They truly feel that the system will fail them; therefore, they won't come forward.

To quote Edmund Burke, as I often do: all good people have to do is nothing in order for evil to flourish. To me this statement is true here. Too often evil people do something and good people do nothing to protect those who have been victimized. It's also the situation as it stands with protective orders. When children are harassed and spouses are under threat, victims get a court-approved protection order. There are no specified penalties for violating protective orders. Most often offenders are dealt with in a civil court, where they are found in contempt of court. Contempt of court is handled by the court itself with no set penalties. There's also the option of charging an offender with criminal charges, with breach of conduct.

With over 1,000 charges filed every year, 70 per cent of these charges are dropped. This is an alarming number to me. Are there that many charges that are inappropriate that have been filed? I don't think so. To think that with 70 per cent of those charges we are not able to follow through with prosecution is a real concern. Abusive spouses and parents have received the message loud and clear: protective orders don't mean much. Abusers are fearless. It's time that we change that. We need to have those who are known abusers held accountable.

Changes to the Protection Against Family Violence Act are a good step in the right direction. Minimum sentences are going to be put in place. A second offence will lead to 14 days in prison, no questions asked. A third offence will see an offender spend 30 days in prison.

We're falling short, though, on the first offence. One of the problems, I believe, and why we see that 70 per cent of the charges are dropped is because these people are getting off. The repeat offender is the problem. Someone has gotten away. They understand the system, they have that fear and intimidation, and they bully on. The victim, once again, doesn't see any action happening. It reduces the rates of phoning in. The calls, the cries for help aren't put in there because the abuse has escalated. The intimidation goes on there. I truly hope that this bill will take a step forward in helping that.

I think it's appropriate that there are maximum sentences as well. A first offence can lead to 90 days in prison, a second leads to 18 months, and a third means 24 months in prison. These are serious penalties, and I'm glad they're being proposed.

The part that concerns me the most, though, is the big picture. This is a small piece of a bigger puzzle. Protecting children, especially the vulnerable children, is important. My caucus colleague brought forward the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act. That was passed, yet it's never been proclaimed. That's a real concern for us in the Wildrose. Why do we pass acts like this, that have actually passed in this House yet are not proclaimed? What is the message that we're actually sending to Albertans about this?

I really have a serious question. How many children would be saved if, in fact, that act was passed, if there was mandatory reporting of child pornography? This is a problem. Again, when we catch somebody and they can get off, where do we go? Only downhill. What we want to do is to raise the bar. We want to protect the children. We want to protect the abused spouses and go forward.

This act, again, is an important act. It's taking one or two steps forward, which to me is very important. I'm sure that because this is government sponsored, there'll be a much higher chance that this will in fact be proclaimed, yet it still astounds me how many



bills have been passed that have not been proclaimed. Mr. Chair, there are so many things that we need to do.

I like it when a government gets tough on crime. The question is: who are we being tough on? It's shameful, though, when we don't have the proper tools to enforce the laws we already have. Crown prosecutors and judges are extremely short-staffed and overworked, and this has created a backlog in our justice system. As far as I'm concerned, justice delayed is justice denied.

Mr. Chair, I personally know of cases where parents – and this is the most appalling to me – use their children to victimize the other spouse. Again, it's because of the backlog and the lack of social workers and those proper assessment tools that we have way too much abuse going on with children. There's nothing more appalling than parents that are actually using those children to try and hurt the other spouse.

I appreciate the sentiment of this bill. I appreciate the content of this bill. The question is: is it enough?

I just want to read a few other things. How often does a vindictive spouse use and punish the other one unjustly? How often do they use the children to do that? Again, we don't step in and have enough protection in the courts, and the judges are often left in the position where they don't have the time to hear the full case. They have to err on the side of safety rather than on the side of justice to find out: are these allegations just or are they not? Again, it's a two-edged sword, where the children are hurt, are abused, where the spouse is abused, or where the innocent is being accused falsely and can't get a fair day in court because of the backlog and the months that it can take before the air can be cleared or we can come to the truth on these things.

The failing to comply with a protection order is definitely a weakness that we need to address.

5:10

The bottom line is that we have some important initiatives. We need to increase shelters for both women and men but definitely for women and children. Too often they look at that, and literally in their minds they do not see a way out of the trap. "What can we possibly do to get out of here?" They say, "You know, we just need to carry on" because they haven't seen the successes of other abuse victims getting out.

Providing safe visitation sites in the province is huge, where children can actually have a safe environment to be visited in when we don't know the situation and how it's going. There are so many areas that we need to do a better job in. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act: we need to have this bill passed and proclaimed. It will do us a great favour because we are truly judged as a society on how well we protect those who can't protect themselves.

Again, you know, I don't question any member in this House that we want to be able to say that we have the most just society of anywhere in the world. The only way we can have a just society is when we stop those injustices that occur to our victims. The repetitiveness of crime is known. We know that it goes on there. It's critical that we get these people, that we record them, and that there is mandatory sentencing as it escalates so that there is an actual price paid when these awful acts of violence occur.

With that, I'd just like to say that I support this bill and look forward to it being passed and proclaimed. My heart goes out to all those victims that have suffered in the past because of the inadequate tools that we've had in order to protect those victims.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to speak to Bill 2, Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011. I just want to indicate that we are supportive of this approach. I just want to focus on a couple of things; first of all, the purpose of the bill, which is to set out clearer consequences for those who breach protection orders by adding an offence provision for breaches of protection orders. This bill, we understand, aims to decrease violations of protection orders, thereby decreasing family violence, which is highest in Alberta. Across Canada it's highest here.

You know, right now a breach of a protection order can only be pursued in a couple of ways, whether there's a prosecution under a civil contempt or, alternatively, under Criminal Code section 127, which is a general provision for breach of any type of court order and which carries a maximum sentence of two years' imprisonment. Currently under this act perpetrators and victims have little certainty that there will be consequences or even outcomes when the law is breached, and they do not know under what law the perpetrator would be prosecuted. There's also no way to collect data on the type of breach; that is, a civil contempt or a general section 127.

Now, I think that the proposed amendment purports to set out clearly the consequences for breaches of protection orders and to increase the punishment for second and subsequent offences. I just want to indicate that those provisions, I think, will improve the situation. For a first offence a guilty person is liable to a \$5,000 fine or no more than 90 days in jail, for a second offence to a term of no less than 14 days and no more than 18 months, and for a third or subsequent offence to imprisonment for a term of not less than 30 days and not more than 24 months.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say that in general we are supportive of the provisions of this bill and supportive of the intention of the government to provide greater assurance that protection orders are obeyed. I think that it will have the intended effect of increasing the protection available to women and children from people who want to harm them.

I want to ask a few questions about this because I think we need to ask the government why there isn't more support in this province given to women seeking shelters and to provide social assistance and other things for them. In 2007, Mr. Chairman, 12,000 women and children were housed by Alberta women's shelters while 14,000 were turned away. Clearly, the 1,569 shelter beds have not been sufficient to meet the needs of women and children in crisis. This government funds less than half of the shelter beds that are in operation.

I think there are some other questions. I hope that someone on the other side, the minister or the proponent of the bill, could answer in what way this legislation is preferable to section 127 of the Criminal Code. What are the advantages of bringing it in under the Protection Against Family Violence Act? For example, when a woman leaves the province, how will the protection order information be available in other provinces, and will they be able to ensure that a perpetrator has a protection order or that it's ensured? I'd like to know how the police forces in Alberta will be properly resourced to deal with breaches that they'll need to investigate and address. I'd like to know from the hon. Solicitor General, perhaps, if additional resources are going to be provided to our police in order that they can effectively enforce the provisions of this act.

Mr. Chairman, I have to say that violence against women and children is a very, very serious problem in this province, and the responses have been inadequate. One of the things that I think we really do need to address is how we provide the supports for women to look after their children when they're faced with a

spouse or a former partner who's inclined to abuse them or to use violence, how we protect them. That's more than just toughening the sentences, although this is part of it. It's also making sure that they have the financial resources they need. It's ensuring that they have access to social services, that they have good, safe housing, and that there are sufficient shelters available to them when they need them.

In these areas the government has fallen short by a long shot, and I think that anyone that talks to people who work in shelters for women will tell you that they struggle very hard, and it breaks their heart when they have to turn women away who desperately need the shelter beds because there are far less in this province than actually needed. So I would urge the government, in addition to passing this act, to get serious about providing adequate resources to the women and their children who are in threatened circumstances, and that includes housing. That includes financial support as well as it includes stronger protection from individual perpetrators of violence and abuse.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will take my seat and indicate that we do think this act is part of the solution, and we will be supporting it. Thank you.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 2, the Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act. As other colleagues from my caucus have indicated, we'll be supporting this. Several members have spoken before me, and I don't really care to repeat their comments, most of which I thought were quite valid. There's no question that we are addressing a serious issue with this bill, that it's a step in the right direction, that there are widespread problems with family violence, and that this is only one part of a broader approach to addressing family violence. Every member of this Assembly will condemn family violence.

5:20

I thought I would take a chance here, Mr. Chairman, to just get a little bit of evidence on the record. I'm going to quote primarily from a report that comes from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, which is under Statistics Canada. The report is titled *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2008*. It's a fairly extensive document about family violence, and it draws heavily on police databases. It compares incidents and rates across Canada and among age groups and across genders and so on. Just to reinforce with members of this Assembly and with anybody who may be reading *Hansard*, I thought I would take a moment to get some of the information from this report into the Assembly's record, so I will quote here, starting from page 6, which is part of the highlights of the report. I'm only going to select a few.

The first one I'm going to quote I want to discuss briefly. It says:

Females continue to be the most likely victims of police-reported spousal violence, accounting for 83% of victims compared to 17% males. This holds true for every province and territory across Canada.

Clearly, we all perceive family violence as visited more frequently and more seriously on women. That's the stereotype, and that's the stereotype backed up by the evidence. I don't want to lose track of the fact, though, Mr. Chairman, that boys and men can also be victims of family violence, and my suspicion is that the balance may not be quite as distorted as the statistics indicate. I think there is at least a plausible possibility that men are more reluctant to come forward as victims of family violence, so I think that we need to be careful in our own minds to not fall into the stereotypes.

I remember in the 1980s, when family violence and violence against women were first really becoming part of the public agenda, there was an education campaign funded by the government of Alberta. They had big posters up in the bus stations and other places, and they actually defined family violence as – this was striking to me – violence by men against women. I'll be honest; I took some offence to that because it isn't quite that one sided, so I want to drive that home. Without diminishing the terrible number of women who are victims of family violence, I do want to make sure that we don't just assume that it's always women.

Here's another quote from page 6 of that same study.

Male victims of spousal abuse were nearly twice as likely as female victims to report incidents of major assault (23% of male victims vs. 13% of female victims). One possible explanation may be that while male spousal abusers are more likely to use physical force, female abusers tend to rely on weapons.

It goes on in the detailed notes of this report to speculate that because of differences in average strength between men and women, women may rely more heavily on weapons, which seems reasonable to me. Those situations can be complicated. They may well be women defending themselves, but I think we need to remember that that's not always the case.

The study then goes on, and I'll quote again.

Charges were laid by police in three-quarters . . . of all police-reported incidents of spousal violence in 2006. Incidents involving female victims were more likely to result in a charge being laid than those involving male victims.

I think it's worth exploring this a little bit. I'm going back to my comments about stereotypes. Are police more inclined to brush off a complaint brought forward by a male than by a female? I don't know, but that's a potential explanation here.

I'm skipping over various other highlights, but I think it's important to draw on the data, Mr. Chairman, because we want evidence-based law as much as possible.

I want to talk a little bit about family violence against children. It says in this report:

About 4 in 10 child and youth victims of family violence sustained a physical injury in 2006, compared to 5 in 10 when the perpetrator was a non-family member. The majority of injuries sustained were considered to be minor injuries requiring no professional medical treatment or only some first aid.

Then it goes on in the next line to say:

Boys were more likely than girls to sustain physical injuries resulting from family violence.

I think we need to keep that full picture in mind, Mr. Chairman, about children, boys and girls, too often being victims of family violence.

This study also looked at older members of family and how often older adults were victims of violence. Again, I'm just continuing to stretch out the stereotype here. This is interesting to think about. I quote here from page 7 of this study.

Police-reported data consistently show that seniors (aged 65 years of age and over) are the least likely age group to be victimized. In 2006, the rate of violent crime committed against seniors was 16 times lower . . . than the rate committed against 15 to 24 year olds, the age group at highest risk.

Then it goes on to say, specific to family violence and seniors:

Senior victims were more likely to report being victimized by someone they knew . . . than by a stranger.

I think that's generally true. They were most likely to report being victimized by an adult child or current or former spouse.

Mr. Chairman, there's a lot of useful information in this document. There is, perhaps, occasionally some cause for hope in these grim statistics. I will quote from the bottom of page 7:

Over the past decade (1997 to 2006), the rate of firearm-related spousal homicides decreased by nearly 50%.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I'm a supporter of the gun registry, and I suspect that this is one effect of tightening controls on firearms. When we see a 50 per cent decline in the rate of firearm-related spousal homicides over 10 years, it's reasonable to think that some of that has to do with guns being locked up, with guns having to be registered, perhaps with unregistered guns being turned in under amnesties, and so on. I think there's no question that that's a healthy trend.

**Mr. Hinman:** That's a bit of a leap.

**Dr. Taft:** The Member for Calgary-Glenmore, who I guess opposes the gun registry, thinks I'm making a leap there, so I'd be interested to know what his explanation would be. It seems a plausible coincidence there.

**Mr. Hinman:** It could be stricter gun laws.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, stricter gun laws would be a good idea; I don't doubt that.

There was one other statistic in here that I wanted to quote that was also encouraging, Mr. Chairman, but I am afraid that in all the pages and numbers I've lost it. Oh; here we go. Not quite the bottom of page 7:

Overall, rates of spousal homicides for both male and female victims have been declining over the last 30 years (1977 to 2006). The rate of spousal homicide against females has been between 3 and 5 times higher than the rate for males.

The second sentence wasn't quite so encouraging, but the first one indicates that over the last 30 years rates have been declining. [interjection] In fairness, the Member for Calgary-Glenmore is pointing out that the beginning of that period was before the gun registry.

5:30

I just wanted to take the time of the Assembly to get the evidence that would support this bill on the record, to quote from a much more extensive study, and to just keep reinforcing two or three points. One, spousal violence is a serious problem. Two, there is some cause for hope. Three, let's not fall into any stereotypes, Mr. Chairman, that it's men who are always the perpetrators and women and children who are always the victims. It goes all ways. It can be children against older parents. It can be women against men. It can be mothers against children and fathers against children. Whatever the case, there are too many victims, too many crimes, and if this bill does a little bit to lower that number, then it's well worth supporting.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much. I just wanted to say a few words. Very good to hear the words of the opposition on this, the awareness that family violence is family violence and comes in different forms.

One of the things that you might have also added on this whole issue is that if you look at family violence as just something that men do to women, then there is no solution. If you just say that this is because men are bad and it all has to do with men against women, you know, if the wife who has been abused is given that as a solution, then you're essentially saying there is no solution aside from changing one's sexual orientation. So in terms of coming forward with good solutions, if one looks at this in a gender-neutral way – okay? – then solutions do come out of it.

This is something that I have been working on internally, within the government, for many years to ensure that all of the publications that come out, including our legislation, of course, are gender neutral. I just wanted to thank the opposition for bringing this forward.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to speak on Bill 2, the Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011, in Committee of the Whole. I'd again like to acknowledge the Minister of Children and Youth Services and her department for their ongoing work to reduce the incidence of family violence in the province. I do appreciate the positive comments made by 11 other members of the Assembly, including members of the Official Opposition and the third party and the fourth party.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 2 is for the first time adding offence and penalty provisions for breaching protection orders. Just in response to a couple of the comments that were made regarding section 127 of the Criminal Code, I would like to say that the statistics that refer to 70 per cent of the prosecutions not having any conviction or penalty: we don't know how many of those prosecutions were protection orders. They could be anything from a failure to produce evidence in a court or failure to appear in a court proceeding. We just don't know. That's one of the side benefits of having the penalty provisions right in this legislation. We are going to be able to track those statistics henceforth with the amendments because we'll know how many are prosecuted under this legislation and how many are convicted. So there will be statistical information that will be forthcoming, and we'll know, you know, how the courts are treating these particular offences.

A remark was made by the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere regarding the fact that we don't have any mandatory jail time for the first offence. There are reasons for that, including the fact that sometimes a breach of a protection order is not necessarily an assault, not necessarily a failure to keep weapons away, or anything like that. It could be something as simple as a telephone call in breach of a protection order. So once that first offence is, well, a breach and there is a conviction, I can assure you that the attention of that person is going to be directed to making sure that that kind of a misdemeanor doesn't repeat itself because there is mandatory jail time required for a second offence.

Some remarks have been made by several of the members regarding the fact that this is certainly not the solution, that there is an ongoing problem. I think that the department and the minister acknowledge that fact. In addition to the strengthening of the legislation that's happening in this bill, there are a number of other measures that are ongoing, including addressing the need for more emergency shelter spaces for women, the fact that we have specific domestic violence courts and police teams, safe visitation sites that are now available in the province, victim support outreach projects, and the family violence information line, incidentally, and I'd like to mention that on the record: 310.1818. That's the number where help is available any time in 170 languages throughout the province of Alberta.

Just in concluding, Mr. Chairman, it's certainly our sincere hope and expectation, in fact, that Bill 2 is going to strengthen this important piece of legislation, that it will help to protect Albertans who are affected by family violence. I would thank the members for their support, and I would urge all hon. members to support the measures and to speed this bill through the House.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak?

Are you ready for the question on Bill 2, the Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 2 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

### Bill 3 Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 2011

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I spoke at some length on this in second reading. We've not heard of any concerns with this. It seems like a fairly straightforward piece of legislation just to update some terminology, not that that's insignificant. The change in terminology reflects the advances in engineering, in geophysics, in geoscience. We see nothing in here that is a concern, so I will take my seat, having stated that we will be supporting this legislation.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to respond briefly to a few questions raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in second reading. The hon. member raised some questions that in her understanding there was some question regarding TILMA, the trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement, and the licensing of professionals from other provinces when they come to Alberta. It was her contention that APEGGA, the regulatory organization for engineers, geologists, and geophysicists in Alberta, was in some way concerned about the quality of potential transfers of professionals into this province. She was also concerned that in some way the private sector was playing a bigger part in the licensing of professionals across the country, taking the control away from the public sector.

5:40

Mr. Chairman, I can put the hon. member's fears to rest right now. The role of Bill 3 is simply to align the wording of professional legislation in Alberta to be in harmony with other provinces which have already consolidated their geological and geophysical professional licensed categories into one. Bill 3 is really all about smoothing the way for labour mobility, not impeding it in any way.

The proposed amendments to the existing Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Act that are included in Bill 3 were requested by the members of APEGGA after its members voted in favour of them in 2009. Professional geologists and geophysicists in Alberta have themselves asked for these proposed amendments, which include a consolidation of their classes of licensure into a new single class to be known as a professional geoscientist. These proposed changes, Mr. Chairman, are in keep-

ing with what many other jurisdictions have already done and will harmonize our professional geoscience legislation with theirs. By passing these proposed amendments, we will be living up to our labour mobility obligations, which are to foster the movement of workers across the country.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman, there's no cause for alarm or concern that APEGGA is losing control over the quality of professional geoscientists who come to Alberta. Quality control over the professions of engineering and geoscience is, of course, the primary concern of APEGGA as the professional regulatory organization for engineers, geologists, and geophysicists in Alberta. Its role, first and foremost, is to ensure that its professional members serve the public interests by meeting APEGGA's practice standards.

Mr. Chairman, APEGGA works closely with the academic community and with its counterparts across the country with respect to education and experience requirements for professional certification. These organizations have established high standards for anyone seeking a professional licence to practise. The reason for these high standards is simple. They are needed to ensure safety and the protection of the public.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would invite, if there are no other hon. members who wish to participate, that we would call the question. I thank all members for their support.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are you ready for the question on Bill 3, the Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 2011?

[The clauses of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

**Mr. Dallas:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 13, Bill 2, and Bill 3.

**The Acting Speaker:** All those members who concur with the report, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed, please say no. So ordered.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 4 Securities Amendment Act, 2011

[Debate adjourned March 15: Mr. MacDonald speaking]

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me that we get

securities amendment acts before this Assembly fairly frequently, annually almost, which reflects, I suppose, in part an industry that's changing very, very rapidly through forces such as globalization and advances in technology and, of course, as a result of the sometimes criminal and often immoral activities that led to the financial collapse of so much of the world's banking and finance system in the last few years.

Luckily, in Canada we were spared most of that direct pain anyway. I think it's a really good example of how important good public policy is. The Canadian financial system has stood strong when those of virtually every other developed country and many developing countries collapsed. I think that we as legislators should always remember that whether we are enthusiastic about it or not, what we do in here can be very important.

Bill 4 wades into an issue of some national debate, and that's the role of provincial versus national regulators in the securities industry. This is not an easy issue, and I won't profess to have any great expertise in it. When I was Leader of the Opposition, I spent some time with various people trying to understand it, and as a caucus we came out supporting provincial regulation. That being said, I will acknowledge there's a case to be made for a national regulator as well. This is going to be a tough one, and it's going to get solved in the courts because I believe the government of Alberta, among a few other provincial governments, is challenging the federal government's initiative to bring in a national securities regulator.

I think it's worth pausing for a moment and just reflecting on federal-provincial relations not only in this field but in this Assembly. The case that the Alberta government is taking forward concerning securities regulators is that it's none of the federal government's business, that it's not federal jurisdiction to wade in and govern provincial securities. But it's interesting that this same government with wholesale support yesterday brought forward and passed with enthusiasm a motion that actually wades with great enthusiasm into federal parliamentary activity. In fact, it's quite explicit with Motion 11 that this Assembly is eager and enthusiastic to meddle in the affairs of the federal Parliament, urging the federal Parliament to take particular activities.

Yet when it comes to securities amendments and securities regulation, which is addressed in Bill 4, oh, heaven forbid; we don't dare tolerate the federal government meddling in our business. I think it's somewhat of a double standard, Mr. Speaker, if I may say so.

**Ms Blakeman:** Not somewhat; it is.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, I am being urged on. It's not just somewhat of a double standard; it is a double standard. Either we welcome levels of government meddling in each other's business, or we don't. We can't just choose: it's good to meddle when it's an issue we agree with, and it's bad to meddle when it's an issue we don't agree with. I think that comes to the point here.

**An Hon. Member:** What's your point?

**Dr. Taft:** Well, if we are masters of our own house, then we need to recognize there will be masters of other houses.

Anyway, this particular piece of legislation, Bill 4, is designed to smooth over and improve the operation of the passport system, which is the response that the various provincial regulators have come up with to counter the move towards a single national regulator. It does generally seem to work pretty well. I will admit that there are major players, particularly in downtown Calgary, who would love to have a single national regulator, and I'm sure that

many members of this Assembly have heard from them. I'm sure the minister of finance and the Premier have as well.

5:50

But we are going to stick to our guns here, Mr. Speaker, and support provincial regulators. This piece of legislation is intended to facilitate the operation of securities regulators not just in Alberta but, frankly, across the country by standardizing some issues. As long as we are going to have provincial regulators, we want that system to work as smoothly as possible. We want the provinces to be co-ordinated, and we want investors in one province to be very confident that securities issues being managed by another province are being managed effectively.

If you're an investor in Saskatchewan buying securities traded in Alberta or an investor in Alberta buying securities traded in Quebec, you want to be confident in how that securities management is going. Likewise, if you're trying to raise capital as a business in Alberta and you're trying to attract investors from across the country, you don't want to have to go through 10 different approval processes, with 10 different sets of regulation; you want co-ordination. I believe this piece of legislation is going to help that.

I will listen with interest as the debate on this legislation advances. I may change my mind because of the power and the information and the general usefulness of debate in this Assembly, or I may find that that just reinforces my position. But right now, Mr. Speaker, my position is towards supporting Bill 4.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone wishes to comment or question. The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Mr. Anderson:** Sure. Well, I just wanted to ask the hon. member – I just couldn't quite understand. You're saying that you support this, which, obviously, strengthens the passport system which deals with trading securities. So we're dealing with a quasi-federal area that's in our interest. It's quasi-federal, right? They regulate, for example, certain things in the securities system. We regulate most of it. But I guess I'm just trying to figure out why you feel it's not a good idea for us to urge the government of Canada to pass a bill that would see us have the ability for our grain farmers and barley farmers to have the ability to sell the grain to whom they want? If you could just clarify that for me. How is that related?

**Dr. Taft:** Try to bring it back to Bill 4, Mr. Speaker? Is that the challenge you're laying before me?

**The Acting Speaker:** Please. Please.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, my point is that, actually, despite the comments from the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, securities regulation has long been provincial jurisdiction, that we are trying to assert provincial jurisdiction there, and we are arguing that the federal government should stay out of our business. If we are arguing that the federal government should stay out of our business, then I would suspect that the argument is that we should stay out of their business as well. The Wheat Board, which was set up 70 years ago, which covers half the country, is a federal issue.

More to the point, Motion 11 doesn't just generally support the idea of disbanding the Wheat Board; it actually goes to the specific matter of wading into the business of Parliament. I think that we as an Assembly would probably take offence if Parliament in Ottawa specifically came in and urged this Assembly to do X, Y,

and Z. We'd say: "Hey. Buzz off. That's not your business." And I think they would have every right to say the same to us.

So I don't know if that helped the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere. I suspect I did not change his mind, Mr. Speaker, but I will keep trying at every opportunity.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is still available. Now, we're talking on Bill 4.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Well, I can't respond to what he just talked about? I don't like the federal government in my business, so is it just Parliament, or can they still rule on my private business because I have to deliver grain to the Wheat Board?

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, do you wish to respond?

**Dr. Taft:** Well, I'm going to just take a little different approach here, Mr. Speaker. I had breakfast about a month ago, as I was telling this member, in the old hotel in Nanton. They serve a darn good breakfast there. I happened to run into, I think, the cousin of this member.

Now, let's imagine that the people who operate that business want to expand their business and raise some capital, and they want to issue shares. They're going to want, as they do this, to have a smoothly functioning securities system. In the case of Nanton they'll probably go to Calgary, and they'll hire a broker there and some lawyers and so on and try to issue securities. You know, if they did that, I might even invest. I don't know. I'd look at it carefully. The point I'm trying to make here, in trying to keep in the spirit of the Speaker, which is to stay focused on Bill 4, the Securities Amendment Act, is that this piece of legislation would make it easier for the Nanton hotel to raise capital should they ever want to do so.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members who wish to speak? The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Mr. Anderson:** I would like to speak to Bill 4, Securities

Amendment Act, 2011. I'd like to say that I support this act. I support the former minister of finance's very clear and concise arguments for why we need to keep securities regulation provincial in nature and protect our jurisdiction over it.

You know, I find that the Canadian government just seems to continue to try to find excuses to get involved in areas of provincial jurisdiction that I just don't think is their business. For example, education. Education is clearly a provincial jurisdiction, yet they have all kinds of programs, student loans programs, all of these different programs that are run federally for the provinces. Why not just transfer the tax points to the provinces and let us administer all of the student loans, for example, and all of the different funding for these types of things? So that's an example.

Another example is health care. Why does the federal government have any right whatsoever to regulate . . . [interjection] Well, the British North America Act doesn't give them the right to do that. They've assumed that power, and they've just kind of filled the space that I don't think they should have the right to fill. I think that areas of health are a provincial jurisdiction. That will allow provinces to experiment with different forms of health care delivery and so forth and make sure that we can have best practices instead of being tied to the whims of a federal Parliament that has no business dealing with health care legislation. That's not their purview. It's not what they should be dealing with.

There are all sorts of different areas where the government of Canada has encroached upon the provincial jurisdiction of the provinces: health care, education, and many others. I would say, too, that, you know – well, I guess that's a separate example that I talked about yesterday with regard to the Canadian Wheat Board, but I just find it amazing that we can't sell our wheat and barley in western Canada.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but the time is now 6 o'clock, and the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

The policy field committee will reconvene here tonight at 6:30 for consideration of the main estimates of Children and Youth Services. This meeting will be video streamed.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m. to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

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