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Fourth Session

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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 27th Legislature
 Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 23, 2011

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. We give thanks for the bounty of our province, our land, our resources, and our people. We pledge ourselves to act as good stewards on behalf of all Albertans. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Allred: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 53 grade 6 students from l'école Father Jan school in St. Albert. These students are accompanied by their teachers, Julie Maisonneuve and Corinne Chan, and their parent helpers, Bruce Hoyt and Michelle Guest. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 26 students from one of my favourite schools in the Edmonton-Calder constituency, and that's Kensington school, one that I can virtually see from my house. With us today, in addition to the 26 students, are teachers Ms Keri Haskell and Miss Rebecca Yu. Of course, no mention of this particular class would be complete without mentioning my buddy Aziz. I'd ask them all to now rise and receive the traditional warm greeting of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege and an honour to introduce 80 guests that we have here today from Percy Baxter school. That's three classrooms that have travelled 200 kilometres to visit us today. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly nine members of CAUS, the Council of Alberta University Students. I had the privilege to spend a little bit of time with the students last night and to hear some of their issues and concerns. This is a bright group of students and very strong advocates for education in our province. I'd like them to stand as I introduce them, and then we'll give them the warm welcome. They are Hardave Birk, Keith McLaughlin, Nick Dehod, Lauren Webber, Taz Kassam, Aden Murphy, Zack Moline, Andrew Williams, and, last but not least, Duncan Wojtaszek.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that this is appropriate. Although the hon. minister just introduced my daughter, I

just want to introduce her once again. I feel like I have to. Not only is she the U of C Students' Union president; she is beautiful, and she has also just been awarded the 2011 student with distinction at the U of C along with her being the 2011 graduating class valedictorian. So I am quite proud of my daughter.

Members' Statements

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

Barlow Trail Underpass

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Next month when Barlow Trail at 48th Avenue N.E. closes so that a new runway and international terminal can be built at the airport, a whole new set of transportation issues will be faced by residents of northeast Calgary as well as all Calgarians.

It is estimated that the cost of the proposed underpass will be \$295 million. Of that figure, it is reported that Calgary will contribute \$25 million, and the balance, \$270 million, will come from other government sources. It appears, Mr. Speaker, that the bulk of that funding will come from this government through MSI funding. This government is producing results for the residents of northeast Calgary. Airport passengers also help pay for the runway and terminal improvements through a \$22 airport improvement fee per passenger charged by the authority.

The city of Calgary and the province are willing to do their part. It is the airport authority that needs to step up to the plate and make a significant contribution to this project, which benefits all Calgarians. Mr. Speaker, I understand that the airport authority and the city of Calgary have many differing opinions on issues such as compensation for the land. Media reports indicate that the airport authority wants \$24.6 million for the land for the underpass. That is land that sits largely below the runway. That doesn't make any sense to me. In addition, the authority wants to oblige the city to build interchanges and road improvements among many other matters.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage the authority to consider the overall impact of the closure of Barlow Trail and the need for an underpass for all Calgarians and, indeed, all Albertans. As elected representatives we all try to do the right thing and move forward on initiatives that are in the best public interest. I encourage the airport authority to do the same thing.

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

Health Services Financial Reporting

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In order for any government to retain the trust and confidence of citizens, it must keep accurate records of its spending. Each expense must be carefully accounted for so that taxpayers know their money is being used to benefit the public. Many Albertans are wondering if the government used taxpayers' money to silence doctors concerned by Progressive Conservative mismanagement of public health care. That's why it's more important than ever to ensure that public money isn't being used for nefarious purposes.

When hundreds of millions of dollars are hidden in mysterious and vague categories such as other expenses, taxpayers have a right to wonder exactly why the details of these expenses have been hidden. The books of the Capital health region, for example, show \$300 million in undisclosed expenses over seven years. I asked this government if any of that money was used to fund any of the settlements, lawsuits, or legal fees against doctors who spoke out about government mismanagement of health care. Naturally, these questions have been dodged.

Last year Alberta Health Services hid another \$42 million under the “other fees” category. What was that money used for? The government won’t say. Why were severance payments and out-of-court settlements hidden somewhere in government books rather than identified according to good, transparent accounting practices? The government won’t say.

Alberta taxpayers are proud of their public health care system. They want it to be there when they need it, and they want to be sure that they’re getting good value for every penny of tax money that funds the system. I’m sure most Albertans would be outraged if they were to discover that any of the tax money was being used to silence doctors who were only trying to do their jobs. It’s time for this government to come clean and provide truly open and transparent accounting for each and every dollar of funding that goes through and towards public health care.

Thank you.

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

Healthy Food Choices

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today thousands of Albertans will buy their meals from one of Alberta’s restaurants, bars, cafés, or delis. Just last week the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness pointed out that the food service industry in Alberta is a \$600 million a month business. Almost a quarter of Alberta’s youth are reported to be obese, Mr. Speaker. More than half of Alberta’s adults are overweight or obese. Albertans love to eat out, but how can we help families and health-conscious citizens make healthy choices when eating out?

The Heart and Stroke Foundation’s Health Check Alberta restaurant program is one answer to that problem, sir. The program uses the familiar Health Check symbol that appears on thousands of food products on store shelves and puts it next to menu items in participating restaurants that have been determined as healthy choices. Registered dietitians decide which foods get the Health Check symbol based on criteria set out by the Canada food guide. In addition to the logo the amount of calories, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and fibre are listed for each approved menu item. Already the Health Check symbol appears on menus of larger chain restaurants like Boston Pizza, Swiss Chalet, Pizza Hut, Second Cup, and the White Spot.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, I was happy to see two Alberta-based restaurants, SAGE Savouries and Husky House, join the program last Friday, and I hope that we see more restaurants join in the future. Ultimately, I hope that healthy meal options become something that Albertans ask for when they go to their favourite eatery. Putting the familiar Health Check symbol on menus across Alberta will go a long way in helping families make healthy choices when eating out. It will contribute to the overall health of Albertans and will help the sustainability of our health system in the future.

Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Lorraine Farmer
Mary Phillippo**

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a great pleasure and honour for me to rise today to recognize two ladies who were hospitalized recently and had nothing but positive comments about the treatment they received in our health care system.

The first is a brave and courageous Albertan, Lorraine Farmer. Lorraine was diagnosed with breast cancer in April of 2006. The treatment at the time resulted in an almost five-year cancer-free life. Unfortunately, the cancer returned as a walnut-sized tumour on the brain, and Lorraine was diagnosed and taken to hospital on March 4, 2011. She had surgery on March 6 and went home on March 9, 2011. Lorraine is a fighter, and she checked herself out of the hospital early and went home to convalesce. From her original diagnosis Lorraine complimented the professionalism and dedication of the doctors and nurses at High River and the Foot-hills hospital. Her entry and exit from the hospital was a very smooth transition. Lorraine believes that a positive attitude coupled with the best health care treatment in Canada contribute to her ongoing recovery. She commented: we are blessed in Alberta to be living in a province that places such a high emphasis on quality health care for our citizens.

The second one. I received an e-mail from, Mary Phillippo, a recent arrival from Nova Scotia. She says that

I have nothing but positive words to say about the Alberta Healthcare system. A few months ago I had to schedule a mammogram and ultrasound. To my surprise my appointment was scheduled for the very next week. Typically, a person could wait up to two to three months for this same procedure in Nova Scotia, which is where I’m from. I applaud the Alberta government for addressing the medical needs of Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Health Care System Strengths

Mr. Benito: Mr. Speaker, we hear that Albertans receive exceptional care in our health care system across the province every day, and that’s because we have talented and dedicated health professionals who are committed to delivering the best possible care right here in Alberta.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? Health professionals across Canada have recognized that Alberta is a great place to practise medicine. The proof is in the numbers. This province has had the highest percentage increase of physicians out of all the other provinces at 22.5 per cent from 2004 to 2008.

The government has also committed to funding 367 seats in the University of Alberta and University of Calgary faculties of medicine, a 62 per cent increase from 2005. Residency positions have also increased nearly 50 per cent in about the same time period, Mr. Speaker.

It’s not just physicians we are investing in; it is many of the front-line health workers such as nurses. Alberta Health Services has committed to hiring at least 70 per cent of our nursing graduates. About 1,000 more registered nurse graduates will have jobs when they are finished their programs. One of those graduates is my daughter, Mr. Speaker. The three-year collective agreement that Alberta Health Services signed with the United Nurses of Alberta last year will ensure that our nurses remain among the best paid in the country so that we can keep them close to home.

Mr. Speaker, we hear time and time again about the great care Albertans experience in our health care facilities. It is because these men and women love what they do . . . [Mr. Benito’s speaking time expired]

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Integrated Ambulance Services in Airdrie

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year Airdrie had one of the most effective and efficient integrated ambulance and

fire services in the country. It was a prized, life-saving jewel of our city. And then came the Alberta superboard. When determined by this government that AHS would manage provincial ambulance services, I was promised by the current Minister of Energy that this would not mean Airdrie would lose its integrated service. In fact, he said Airdrie would benefit from the province picking up the cost.

Well, it turned out that wasn't true. AHS, led by a reprehensible bureaucrat named Darren Sandbeck, would not enter into a contract with Airdrie unless it complied with a litany of expensive upgrades that made keeping the service financially impossible. As a member of the government I begged the now Energy minister to intervene. He responded by paying a former PC cabinet buddy to unsuccessfully mediate the dispute.

After leaving the PCs, I pleaded with the current health minister to intervene, as did the mayor, over and over again. We even had him down to city council to personally brief him on the situation. Nothing changed. After endless head-nodding, we were assured it would be dealt with. Nothing was done. So we lost our integrated service, and in came the white knights at AHS to run our ambulances.

Last night I received a call informing me that AHS is now reporting a 33 per cent increase in Airdrie response times since the takeover. This means that someone suffering a heart attack will wait almost three minutes longer for life-saving treatment than they did prior to the takeover, increasing the risk of premature death.

The centralized superboard experiment has been a complete failure, and I have no doubt that this government will receive this verdict from voters at the next election. But let me assure those involved with this Airdrie ambulance debacle that if we lose one person in my community to premature death because of this incompetence, I will personally ensure that those responsible are held accountable to the full extent of the law. On behalf of my constituents I demand that the health minister order AHS to get those ambulance response times back to where they were prior to his superboard's incompetent takeover. Failure to do so will have very serious consequences.

Speaker's Ruling Referring to Nonmembers

The Speaker: Hon. members, the chair does not intervene in members' statements, but, hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, did I hear you name a person who is from outside of this House and use an adjective, I guess, in this case: reprehensible?

Mr. Anderson: Absolutely, sir. And I stand by that comment.

The Speaker: Fine. I just want to caution all members that it violates the rules of the House when we refer to people who cannot defend themselves in this House. The hon. member might choose to wish to deal with this issue outside of the House rather than inside of the House. [interjections] Okay. [interjections]

Airdrie-Chestermere, would you just cool it, please? If you want to violate the rules in a member's statement – I provided my statement in here, have dealt with it in here. You can deal with it outside of the House now on your own.

We're going to continue with the Routine.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill Pr. 2 Galt Scholarship Fund Transfer Act

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to be able to rise and have leave to introduce Bill Pr. 2, the Galt Scholarship Fund Transfer Act.

The Galt School of Nursing Alumnae Society of Alberta has presented a petition requesting that the terms of the trust be modified and that the trust fund be transferred to the University of Lethbridge and that the Galt scholarship fund be continued under this act.

Mr. Speaker, this is some nurses from the Galt school of nursing who over a number of years have been putting money aside for scholarships. The scholarships now going to that particular group have been decreasing, and they in their generosity are going to turn over a substantial amount of money to the University of Lethbridge for nursing scholarships.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 2 read a first time]

Oral Question Period

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

Patient Advocacy by Health Professionals

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2000 Capital health region recruited top thoracic surgeon Dr. Tim Winton from the University of Toronto. Dr. Winton took over as director of thoracic surgery after Dr. Ciaran McNamee was pushed out of his job for speaking out for more patient resources. In turn, Dr. Winton is no longer the director of thoracic surgery and is now listed as a university course co-ordinator. To the Premier: can the Premier advise if Dr. Winton was pushed out of his position as head of thoracic surgery in circumstances similar to Dr. McNamee?

1:50

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, if any physician, including those that were named by the member across, feels that in some way they have been hampered in what they brought forward to the board or bullied in some way and weren't able to carry out their duties, feel free, if they feel that way, to bring the evidence before the Health Quality Council.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier take the necessary steps to grant immunity to Dr. Winton so that he can explain his position without fear of retribution?

Mr. Stelmach: One thing we know for sure is that anybody who appears before the Health Quality Council will have the protection of the Alberta Evidence Act, and anything that they bring forward to the Health Quality Council will be kept in strict confidence.

Dr. Swann: To the Premier: we'll never know the truth about why Dr. Winton left his position without an independent judicial inquiry, so will the Premier finally concede that it's time to call an independent judge-led public inquiry?

Mr. Stelmach: As I've said countless times, the Health Quality Council is prepared to hear from all physicians and even nurses and anybody in our health care system that feels in some way that they've been bullied. They can bring that to the Health Quality Council. It'll be held confidential. No one else will know in terms

of what evidence they have brought to the Health Quality Council, and that is the best place for that.

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

Wait Times for Cancer Care

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent medical journal article from *The Lancet* reports that the five-year survival rate for lung cancer in Alberta is only 15.1 per cent, the lowest of all provinces in the country. In response to the study a prominent thoracic surgeon from Harvard said, and I quote: this is irrefutable evidence by an impartial third party that Albertans suffer with cancer care. End quote. To the Premier: how can the Premier deny the connection between the country's worst lung cancer survival rates and the dismissal of these two prominent lung surgeons in Edmonton?

Mr. Stelmach: If the hon. member believes that that is the reason, then those two physicians that he named should appear before the Health Quality Council, and if it is true, what he said, then they should do it immediately.

Dr. Swann: Well, would the Premier agree with the assessment of Dr. Ciaran McNamee that the third-party review here shows irrefutable evidence that Albertans suffer with inadequate cancer care?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, as we've heard in this House, many Albertans have had excellent cancer care. There are others, in terms of waiting times, that I know we've heard can be improved. That's the purpose of the Health Quality Council, to see how we can further decrease waiting times in emergency rooms, improve cancer care in the province. We've come a long way, but there is always room for more improvement.

Dr. Swann: Given that the Premier has asked for evidence of unnecessary deaths and we are presenting it, will he finally acknowledge that there is enough evidence supporting the allegations from the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark to call for a full judicial inquiry?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, once again, as I said, these physicians that were named can go immediately to the Health Quality Council and present their evidence. That is the council that will hear the evidence and will make recommendations to the government. That report will be public. The first report will be released in three months, then in six months, and the full final report will be done in nine months.

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

Patient Advocacy by Health Professionals

(continued)

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These Tories talk a great deal about, quote, helping doctors advocate for their patients and turning the page. End quote. While it's nice to see their tacit admission that there was a culture of fear and intimidation in the past, there has actually been no improvement to the process by which doctors can speak up. As seen in the Alberta Health Services safe disclosure policy, every route for raising concerns ends up in the hands of their ethics and compliance officer. To the Premier: does the Premier see any problem with Alberta Health

Services' reporting measures being entirely internal, with no outside oversight?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad this member mentioned this because yesterday he gave out such an inaccuracy so as to almost mislead people here. The compliance officer who looks after these kinds of issues was an employee of the health system up until 1997, and then she left until 2008, so she was not there in the way this member suggested. But they do have a compliance and ethics officer who is doing a very good job looking into these matters. Any matters that come up that belong over at the Health Quality Council review will find their way over there.

Dr. Swann: Given that Dr. Maybaum was told that, quote, there were people high up in government who wanted his head on a platter, end quote, how would the ethics and compliance officer and the Alberta Health Services Board be able to do anything about intimidation directly from the government?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, we've made it very clear that we're encouraging doctors to speak out in this way, and I'm glad they're taking that opportunity. Now we're encouraging them to also take those issues to the independent review. I might add: an independent review that just named five very prominent people to its health advisory council, including the former Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, including two highly respected doctors, including a cancer specialist from Calgary, and including a former Chief Justice of this province.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Swann: Yes. Thank you. We're not talking about who's on the committee; we're talking about what their mandate is.

Given that Alberta Health Services' internal reporting has no external oversight, given that the Health Quality Council review is behind closed doors, will the Premier now allow a public inquiry to uncover the truth about intimidation of health professionals?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to make sure that any physicians that feel that they were intimidated in some way with fear of reprisal, whether it happened 15 years ago or it happened five days ago, take it to the Health Quality Council.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre do you want to lead a chorus? You keep singing a word.

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

Critical Electricity Transmission Infrastructure

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the last month we've been focused on what is likely the biggest ethical scandal in this province's history, the intimidation of health care professionals. But as this government ducks and denies while this issue burns, it's full steam ahead on what's surely the biggest financial scandal in Alberta's history, Bill 50 and the \$16 billion overbuild of our electrical system. To the Premier: given that this will surely tarnish your legacy, will you do the honourable thing and call for an independent needs assessment before sticking Albertans with a tab that will take them decades to pay?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, there was an independent review. The review began back in 2001. Over 300 meetings were held. Many Albertans presented evidence in terms of the need for transmission into the province of Alberta. We haven't seen any improvement for the last 30 years. In that 30 years our population

has doubled. As a result, the system is strained, and we have to improve the transmission system.

Mr. Hinman: Mr. Speaker, it's 2011, not 2001. Things have changed.

Given that the government nullified the real purpose of the AUC when they passed Bill 50 in order to eliminate the most important step, a needs assessment, will the Premier do the honourable thing and repeal Bill 50 and let the AUC decide just what size of power lines we actually need before it's too late?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, there is an authority that listened to Albertans and determined need. In fact, even during the recession they were out .1 per cent in their projections. We're seeing energy consumption, electricity, grow by 3 per cent a year. The first build-out will be about \$4 billion, depending on what the tenders will be. Roughly speaking, that's \$1 for every \$1 billion invested in the infrastructure.

Mr. Hinman: Completely out of touch and misunderstanding the situation.

Given that multiple studies and business groups like IPCCAA are telling you that monstrous overbuild will drive up electrical prices so much that Alberta will lose businesses and jobs and that voters are outraged about having to pay jacked up power prices for decades, why are you so stubbornly clinging to this untended backroom deal? It's just wrong, Premier. It's wrong.

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. In British Columbia B.C. Hydro is looking at increasing their electricity rates 30 per cent over the next three years and 52 per cent by 2015. That group over there is advocating us building more natural gas electricity generation. Sounds great at \$4 gas. But I can tell you that \$4 gas and today's coal-priced electricity are about the same. As gas increases to \$6, I wonder if they're going to stand up and defend Albertans for . . .

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

2:00 Health Care System

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much. Mr. Speaker, the health minister wishes the opposition would forget about the past and just look to the future. But, you know, those who do not learn from the mistakes of the past are condemned to repeat the mistakes again and again. This could be this government's motto. I want to ask the Premier: will he admit the PC government's responsibility for the health care mess we find ourselves in, including the culture of intimidation, and if not, tell us who is responsible? Is it doctors? Is it . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, once again, if there is any fear, if any physician feels that there has been some intimidation, then the door is open to appear before the Health Quality Council. Today we heard very eminent members from Alberta appointed as advisory members, a lot of experience in the law. It's not very often you have a former Deputy Prime Minister appointed to a committee or the former Chief Justice of Alberta appointed to a committee. That is simply outstanding.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that there's a whole string of former health ministers still sitting over

there on that side plus Gary Mar, who's seeking the PC leadership, who collectively bear responsibility for the culture of intimidation that we're now seeing, will the Premier please say whether or not this government accepts responsibility for the mess that the health care system is now in? If not, who is it?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, as we heard in the House from many of our members, our system is not in a mess. It is better funded than others in the province. We've attracted more doctors to this province than any province in Canada. We remain committed to train 2,000 more nurses by 2012, and we will meet that goal plus over 300 new physician positions in the province of Alberta. Compared to other provinces, we've taken a leadership role, and we're committed to meeting those goals.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, given that all of the indications are that the health care system is actually getting worse – waiting times are getting worse in a number of areas – and given the collective responsibility of this government for the culture of intimidation that we've seen, will he ask the former ministers of health, including Gary Mar, the leadership candidate, to appear before the Health Quality Council and give their account of what went wrong?

Mr. Stelmach: I guess he missed some of the latest interviews out there. Anybody that was asked by the media in terms of former ministers, anybody in government said: sure; if the Health Quality Council calls us, we'll be glad to give any sort of evidence that they wish.

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

Health Quality Council Review

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've been going over the terms of reference for the Health Quality Council's review. You know, maybe it's just because I can't get last week's charge that the council has engaged in junk science out of my mind, but I'm finding discrepancies. For instance, there's a promise to look into the possibility that the safety and quality of care of 250 cancer patients was seriously compromised by a delay in surgery "as alleged in a document tabled in the Alberta Legislature on February 28, 2011." Assembly documents and records show no such tabling.

The Speaker: Okay. We need a question.

Mr. Taylor: To the Premier. Given the Health Quality Council's terms of reference refer to a nonexistent document, how can a skeptical public . . .

The Speaker: If you want to respond, hon. Premier.

Mr. Stelmach: I'm not quite sure what the hon. member is driving at, but as I said before, the Health Quality Council will listen to anyone who comes forward with evidence and ideas and maybe gives some history in terms of how we did operate in the past, how we can improve in the future in terms of new funding, getting better value for their dollars. All of that is on the table.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that the council's terms of reference limit the review to the years 2003 to 2006, when the period in question begins with Dr. McNamee's patients in 1999, how is the Health Quality Council going to adequately investigate these allegations in any depth?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the items referred to were those that had been tabled in this Assembly, and the tablings covered two essential areas. One of them was the impact of wait times on emergency care, and the other, which I think was a single document, was wait times with respect to cancer care. So based on what was tabled, that's part of what I assume governed the terms of reference that were developed independently by the HQCA.

Mr. Taylor: Well, Mr. Speaker, those documents certainly weren't tabled on the 28th of February 2011. Again to the Premier: given that the Health Quality Council is unable to even determine where it needs to look, will the Premier commission an independent, fully independent, judge-led inquiry into these allegations?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the Health Quality Council has very rigorous and robust terms of reference, and they can go back as far as they want. They can listen to any evidence that they want. They can call anybody to deliver the evidence. As I said, if some of these issues go back 15 years, come forward. If you've got some issue five days ago, come forward. They're there to listen.

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

Occupational Health and Safety

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Flint Energy Services has announced recently that they're looking for about an additional thousand people for their mod yard, so it looks like we're once again on the verge of the economy heating up. Considerable economic growth means more jobs, more work, and more money in the jeans of Albertans, which, obviously, is pretty good news. My questions are to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. What are you doing to ensure that the rate and volume of work increases and the workplace safety remains uncompromised?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, the importance of occupational health and safety and keeping our job sites does not fluctuate with economic activity. Our workers, our employers, and the government of Alberta are fully committed to making sure that no matter how busy or how slow our economy may happen to be, we will enforce safe workplaces in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elniski: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we recognize that it is in fact a shared responsibility, what specifically is occupational health and safety doing to prepare for the increased activity?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, as many Albertans may know, over the last year or so we have developed a 15-point plan on enforcing occupational health and safety, somewhat shifting the balance from education to enforcement. We have hired some 52 per cent more officers over this and the next fiscal budget, so definitely there has been a great deal of attention both on policy and on enforcement of occupational health and safety.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question. As much as I endorse the emphasis on northern Alberta, it's undeniable that the cost of living in Fort McMurray is extremely high, so specifically, Minister, what's being done to help the OH and S officers that are living there?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, as we realize, a great percentage of this economic boom that's definitely on the horizon will happen in northern Alberta. We have now divided enforcement of occupational health and safety into three zones, the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo area being one of them. We have also dedicated officers to that particular region. Not only will they become more acquainted with the industry, but they will develop better relationships with workers and employers, so their efficacy in enforcing occupational health and safety will be much improved.

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

Calgary Board of Education

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we learned that the Calgary board of education is facing a \$61.7 million budget shortfall and is looking to cut 172 support staff in addition to over a hundred more teachers. The Learning Commission's reduced class size initiative has become a rapidly fading memory. To the Premier: why did the province create tax room for municipalities by lowering the education property tax rate but won't return to school boards the autonomy to collect and locally determine how best to use their educational portion of the property tax?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, what the province did with respect to the education property tax is what we promised to do 10 years ago and have been doing consistently ever since. We've maintained the assessment for education property tax, increasing it by the amount of real growth in assessment but not increasing it by the amount of inflationary growth. So we've increased it annually from the amount that it was frozen at 10 years ago. We are capturing that across the province. As it applies to assessment bases in each individual municipality, it provides for some differences.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Education: will the minister cover the Calgary board of education's budget shortfall this year given that the province helped to close a similar funding gap last year?

2:10

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the difference between this year and last year is that last year I informed boards at the time of the budget they could expect the government to fulfill the commitment to the 2.92 per cent increase because it hadn't been known at the time of the budget that that was the amount, and we actually did that. The fact the boards went through a budgeting process, ignoring that advice, was not in accordance with the advice that I had given them. This year we put the 4.4 per cent increase to operating grants into the budget, but in fact there was not enough increase in the budget to cover all the issues that needed to be covered; therefore, I had to cut back on certain targeted grants.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Support staff, AISI, special needs: all gone. Given that the process of constantly underfunding school boards and then inconsistently bailing them out is counterproductive, hugely disruptive, and creates ongoing uncertainty for students, parents, and teachers alike, is your real plan this year to force all school boards to drain what, if anything, remains of their surpluses?

Mr. Hancock: No, Mr. Speaker, that's not the plan. But it wouldn't be a bad idea for school boards first to look at their accumulated operating surpluses. After all, that is money that was granted to school boards to fund today's education with today's dollars. I know the school boards have saved money for various purposes, but when they have money in an operating surplus account, and when we have a tough fiscal budget like we have this year, it is a very good year to look at your operating surpluses before you look at cutting staff.

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

Special-needs Education Funding

Ms Woo-Paw: Mr. Speaker, on June 11 last year the ministers of Education, Health and Wellness, and Children and Youth Services announced the Setting the Direction Framework: Government of Alberta Response. I was able to attend that event. Since I have heard from principals, teachers, parents, and community members that support and services are difficult to access, that schools have limited capacity to provide appropriate programming, and children and youth with some of the most challenging issues are compromised, my questions are to the ministers of Education and Children and Youth Services. To the Minister of Education: what progress is your ministry making in implementing . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Progress has been slow, but it's very important that it be done thoroughly because we're talking about a real culture shift in the way that we do this. First and foremost, we've worked internally within government, bringing together primarily the three departments of Health, Children and Youth Services, and Education but also other departments involved, to make sure that we align our approach within government. Secondly, we've now set up the inclusive education provincial advisory committee, that was part of the process. That will bring stakeholder groups together to provide oversight and advice on the implementation.

Ms Woo-Paw: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services. People in the system are telling me that one of the barriers to improving support for these children is around the lack of communication from Children's Services. Has the ministry identified this as a barrier? If so, what is the plan and current status for addressing the issue?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the success in school initiative for our children and youth in care, we have developed a new protocol, and that protocol ensures, as the minister had indicated earlier, that our educators, our caregivers, our caseworkers work together on behalf of our children and youth in need. The good news that we have about this and what's important that you know is that our children and youth are directly involved in developing their educational plans and that ensures their voices are heard.

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you. Back to the Minister of Education: what is your ministry doing to broaden community engagement and inform Albertans about its work so that we can engage sectors to work together to meet these children's needs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a very important question. I wanted to add to my earlier answer that while we're putting in place the oversight and the co-ordination, the project team is actually engaging in a number of pilot projects with divisions across the province and implementing on the ground. That's part of the story, to share that work with others across the province, to let people know what projects are on, to have them go to the website and see what's going on with it, and to send out communications to the people who are involved, the 7,000 Albertans that were involved in the consultation in the first place, to let them know that progress is happening.

Health Services Financial Reporting

Mr. MacDonald: Over a seven-year period between 2003 and 2009 Capital health listed under other expenses in their annual reports over \$300 million. I asked questions to the minister of health on this two weeks ago, and I'm disappointed, Mr. Speaker. I have yet to receive an answer. My first question is to the minister of health. What efforts has the minister made in the last two weeks to provide a detailed list of all those expenditures that went out under other expenses?

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, the first effort I made was to appeal to this member to put this question to the proper process, which he knows very well. There is a thing called Motions for Returns, and there is a thing where he knows very well that he's allowed to put a question forward through his own group, that he chairs.

Mr. MacDonald: Point of order.

Mr. Zwodzesky: But the point here is that the Auditor General has indicated that the predecessor organizations to AHS had their own individualized accounting systems. That resulted in some classifications of their own unique findings. That's the answer.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, yes, I did raise a point of order.

Again to the same minister: why did the government allow Capital health to hide \$300 million in expenses when other regions were required and did on a voluntary basis list all their expenses? What is this government hiding?

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member will read what he just said because I'm sure he didn't mean it.

Nobody has hidden anything. The fact is that the Auditor General has audited all of these findings. Let me just quote to you what the Auditor General said in the October 2010 report that he issued: "The predecessor organizations had different policies and processes for their financial operations. AHS staff identified some of these areas, such as capital assets and financial instruments, and made conforming changes." There you have it.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: will the minister list for the interest of taxpayers the complete details of the \$300 million that Capital health spent between 2003 and 2009 and conveniently hid in the Other column of their annual report? List it.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, again I say that that is a very offensive allegation. Nobody hid anything. The monies are all there. They were properly accounted for. The Auditor General himself signed off on it. If there are more details, he's got Written Questions and Motions for Returns, and he also has the Public Accounts Committee through which he can ask those detailed questions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Aids to Daily Living Program

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that our government has a number of programs that provide support to Albertans with disabilities and to seniors. My constituents are asking me about the assistance the government provides for other necessities. My questions are to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. It appears that the budget for the AADL program has increased. Does this increase translate to more support for the average Albertan?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, the AADL program helps approximately 85,000 Albertans to obtain health-related supports such as hearing aids, medical and surgical supports, wheelchairs and mobility aids, and respiratory equipment. The budget is \$124 million. It's an increase of \$5 million over last year, and most of this money goes to the caseload growth that we will see in AADL. These health-related benefits assist people who have a long-term disability, a terminal illness, or a chronic illness to receive the supports that they need to maintain their independence.

Mrs. Leskiw: To the same minister. My senior constituents want to stay in their homes longer. Is there anything in her department budget this year that supports this?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, our ministry's budget this year included increases to maintain programs and services that help seniors in their home. Programs like the Alberta seniors' benefit, the education property tax assistance program, and special-needs assistance for seniors help them to remain as independent as possible. Funding for these and other seniors' programs has increased this year in my budget by \$15 million.

Mrs. Leskiw: My final question to the same minister: does her department's 2011 budget provide any additional benefits for dental and optical needs for my seniors?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, the total budget for Seniors and Community Supports is \$425 million. That does include an increase to the seniors' optical and dental program to assist those that are coming into the program. As you know, there are 2,000 more seniors in Alberta each month, but more than 209,000 low- and moderate-income seniors are eligible for this assistance for dental supports and for prescription eyeglasses. I'm proud to say that Alberta is one of the very few provinces that has this sort of program for our seniors.

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

Minister of Health and Wellness

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, on this beautiful spring day. When asked if he would resign from cabinet and announce a bid for the PC leadership, the health minister said that there was too much going on his portfolio to announce. Indeed, there's lots going on in health care. So far, though, the health minister has utterly failed to do anything about any of these issues. He won't dismantle the failed superboard, he won't discipline health officials for threatening doctors and nurses, and he won't call a public inquiry. To the minister of health . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:20

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I think the record will show very clearly that I as minister of health with the support of the Premier and all of these colleagues have done a great deal to improve health outcomes in this province. I think the record will also show that we have demonstrated that in a number of ways: for example, the first province ever – ever – to have a five-year funding commitment; the first province ever to have a five-year health action plan; the first province ever to have a suite of 50 performance measures to help hold the system accountable.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that nonresponse – and there is a difference. Given the fact the minister of health said, "I'm going to take a walk in the snow," there's a difference between taking a walk in the snow and a head in the snow. To the minister: will he resign and get on with what he's really doing today in seeking the leadership?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Oh boy. I can see where this would-be leader is going with his own party. That's very, very clear. I think your own leader is probably a little bit nervous about your aspirations, hon. member, not to be outdone by Airdrie-Chestermere, of course. I think I'll just leave it there for now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, given the nonresponse and given the fact the minister clearly has his eye on other things than health care, will he do the right thing for the benefit of all Albertans and officially resign his post so he can officially run for the PC leadership, like others are doing, and not collect the cabinet salary?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I've indicated very clearly that I am focused and riveted on health care. We have a great health care system. My job is to make it better, and I'm getting good help doing that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Penhorwood Apartment Evacuations

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Shoddy construction practices have consequences. The residents of Fort McMurray's Penhorwood condos were not only forced out of their homes in the middle of the night and given 15 minutes to collect their belongings, but many are now homeless. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Homeless evacuees are now relying on Children's Services for support. Would the minister agree that having some building regulations beats providing emergency housing?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, we are in constant touch with the municipality of Fort McMurray. I want to indicate that they've established a task force, and they are dealing with individuals there. Those individuals that have had some issues in terms of finding additional accommodations or financial support, if they require help, are being helped through the offices of the Ministry of Employment and Immigration. So they are being looked after.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The help is not coming fast enough.

To the minister again. Forty per cent of those Penhorwood residents bought these condos confident that this province has

standards and that the standards are enforced. What would the minister advise these owners about losing their homes and their savings?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there are 52 condo unit owners. Those individuals are being given similar assistance as renters. There is a legal action that has commenced, and this is in the courts. I would suspect that the courts will make those decisions as to who might be liable in this case for additional support.

Mr. Kang: You know, that's very good help, Mr. Speaker. Condo owners suffer while they go through a legal process.

To the minister again. Municipal Affairs is responsible not only for building standards but also for emergency management. So how is the minister assisting the municipality in helping the victims in this emergency?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, the Safety Codes Council is responsible for accrediting municipalities, corporations, and agencies that sell permits and carry out work under those particular permits. The municipality is at liberty to choose those individuals that will do the inspections on their behalf. They indicate to me that they've got a better reach and they can do more inspections. They're closer to development issues, and they are closer to residents. So the municipalities themselves are managing the inspection process.

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

Protection against Discrimination

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government prides itself on promoting equality, fairness, and an atmosphere where people of all backgrounds feel welcome, safe, and respected. Unfortunately, not every visible minority in our province experiences such an environment. My questions are to the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. What measures does your ministry have in place to ensure that the rights of minority are protected and will continue to be fully protected?

The Speaker: Minister, your estimates are up in about 35 minutes from now, so stay away from budgetary answers. Just deal with policy, please.

Mr. Blackett: Mr. Speaker, we have the Alberta human rights act, that protects minorities against discrimination for employment, for accommodation, for government services. We have the human rights, citizenship and multiculturalism fund that funds organizations who help educate organizations and different community groups as well as employers on their rights and their rights to one another. Mr. Speaker, this is something the government can't do by itself. We need partnerships like CMARD, the Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My next question to the same minister: in what ways do programs specifically educate youth on the harmful effects of racism and discrimination?

Mr. Blackett: Well, Mr. Speaker, a program was developed by the Alberta Somali Community Centre and supported by our department, the Alberta Culture and Community Spirit's human

rights branch. This involves 10 to 15 individuals from the Somali community receiving training and leadership development and monitoring skills that support community involvement, civic participation, and academic excellence. In essence, they're being taught to be leaders. They're going to go back into their community and help those other individuals become better participating citizens and feel more inclusive in their communities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: what concrete measures has your ministry taken at reducing discrimination and encouraging a diverse and inclusive society?

Mr. Blackett: Well, it's always hard to quantify that, but I know from the performance measures that we looked at a year ago, 89 per cent of the people of Alberta say that they feel that they are protected against discrimination. That's something that we all have to work on, Mr. Speaker. That's something we all have to be vigilant on, not just government. Those are individual Albertans, those are the private sector, those are our organizations that we support, and all of us in this House. We have to be vigilant on that.

Speaker's Ruling Anticipation

The Speaker: Hon. members, one of our traditions is that we don't really ask questions of a minister if his department estimates are coming up that particular day, and in this case they are. That was very close to the edge. I feel rather uncomfortable about that, so I will intervene in the future.

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

Provincial Environmental Monitoring Panel

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The Environment minister insists that the appointment to the water panel of a self-described best friend of the Prime Minister was based on expertise, not political connections, but it is difficult to find confirmation that this individual had specific expertise on water beyond his part in helping to create the Canada School of Energy and Environment and his subsequent appointment as head of that school. To the minister: can the minister point to any actual working expertise in water matters of this person?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, the representatives that are on that panel bring a number of different skills and assets to the panel. We have scientific expertise; we have people that have a business background that have been involved with the business side. In this particular case, as I've indicated, in his capacity as executive director of the Canada School of Energy and Environment, Mr. Carson brings to the committee his knowledge and expertise with working . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Ms Blakeman: He has no direct water experience.

Back to the same minister. If there was a background search done prior to this person's appointment to the water panel, then how is the minister unaware of both a criminal record for fraud and a professional disbarment?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, let me once again remind this member that the purpose of this panel is not water. This is to be bringing

forward a world-class monitoring system that will bring all media together: water, air, land, and biodiversity. Each member of the panel is expected to bring various forms of expertise to bring all of this together.

2:30

Ms Blakeman: Back to the same minister: why hasn't this government proclaimed the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act as this act would likely have excluded this same panel member from ever being appointed in the first place? He has no expertise in these areas.

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ. I believe that the people that are on this panel were brought into the panel for different expertise in different areas. Some have a scientific background, some have a business background, and some have a background in being able to liaise and bring forward complementary research in other areas. So I disagree with the premise that the member brings forward.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Grants and Bursaries for Postsecondary Education

Mr. Allred: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With the cap on tuition fee increases at Alberta's postsecondary educational institutions several institutions are getting around the cap by imposing noninstructional fees for such ridiculous things as snow removal and registration services. To the minister of advanced education: what plans do you have to limit the imposition of non-instructional fees by postsecondary educational institutions?

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

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank this member and others in the House for meeting with members of CAUS this week and hearing some of their concerns. This is one of the concerns that the students have brought forward, maybe their most important concern, that some schools are looking at opportunities to go around the tuition fee cap by imposing other fees. We believe that this is a very serious issue. We're going to continue to work with the students and look for a solution to this.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Allred: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that student debt has increased dramatically in the past few years, how are students expected to manage their growing debt?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The good news is that student debt last year for graduating students averaged about \$16,000 per student for government debt. This can be an amount that's difficult to manage, but we do have programs in place for remittance. Loans are offered at prime rate of interest for students. There's a six-month period after they graduate before they have to start paying. For students that are in really difficult positions, we have a RAP program, which allows them to negotiate a better payment schedule to allow them to be successful.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Allred: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following that, to the same minister: will the minister be reinstating grants and bursaries once the economy picks up?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, last year we did reduce the number of grants and bursaries and put that funding towards loans, which would allow us to increase the number of student loans. That number has increased to almost 58,000 students, or 30 per cent of our student body, receiving loans last year. We do believe that bursaries and grants are important to the system, and we would like to continue to look at ways to increase scholarships, grants, and bursaries.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Residential Building Code

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's often been said that during boom times builders will pretty much hire anybody who can swing a hammer. Consequently, many people believe that as the economy ramps up, residential construction quality tends to diminish. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: given the oil patch's propensity to draw away those who might otherwise consider working in the construction trades, particularly during boom times, can the minister guarantee that new residential construction is always being done by properly trained tradespeople?

The Speaker: Normally questions that have the word "guarantee" are ruled out, but proceed.

Mr. Goudreau: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to work with industry, and I guess there are a number of different ministers that are working with that particular industry to ensure that individuals are qualified. There's the minister of advanced education, who is responsible for some of the trades that come through. We are responsible through the building codes to make sure that certain things are met. There are a number of individuals that do work with industry and trade to ensure that the construction . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Apparently, it's not really that successful.

Given that a key recommendation of the ministry's April 2008 Building Envelope Survey was that the government should enhance consumer protection and recourse relative to the building code, why is it that Albertans are still having to cope with inadequate protection? I think Fort McMurray is a huge example.

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, we continue to take steps to improve both residential and industrial construction. We are working on an approach that includes enforcement, education, consumer protection, and recourse to deal with concerns about buildings and building envelopes.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you for that, Mr. Minister. What other changes is the minister contemplating that would better protect Albertans from shoddy construction practices but also address the unique challenge of anticipated overheated-construction employee shortages?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, we recognize that buildings are often the single biggest investment that most Albertans make. We want to make sure that they are built to the standards that Albertans expect and deserve. As I indicated in my previous answer, we will continue to take the steps that are needed to improve construction practices.

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

Women in Postsecondary Education

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lately we've been hearing about the underrepresentation of women in our workplaces and in positions of power. We've been hearing about inequities and barriers that continue to hold many women back. As a mother of four daughters my questions today are for the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. Postsecondary education can open so many doors. Can the minister tell us: are women also underrepresented on Alberta's campuses?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to stand and answer the member on this. Right now in our institutions 6 out of every 10, 60 per cent, of all certificates, diplomas, or degrees are granted to women. They are having a significant impact. In the fields of engineering, medicine, and science we have more women registered than men in these programs, so it's a great step forward.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. I'm glad to hear that. Can you also tell me: are women making the same progress when it comes to pursuing apprenticeships and careers in the trades?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to say that we are having some impact on women in the trades. Right now almost 10 per cent of our tradespeople that are in apprenticeship are women; however, it's not as much as we would like. The numbers have grown. In 2005 there were 3,900 women. Now we have 5,600 women registered in apprenticeship training.

Mrs. McQueen: Finally, to the same minister. You've got some good news there, but you've got a whole lot of work to do on that. What is your ministry doing to increase the number of women in Alberta's trades?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is true that there is a long way to go to make sure that our young women are aware of the great opportunities in trades. There are wonderful jobs. We have a program available called women building futures, and this gives women a chance to try the trades, to understand what's involved in the trades. It does help people to select what they would like to do. We'd like to continue to work with our young women and create opportunities in the trades.

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

Municipal Funding

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipalities are responsi-

ble for providing core services for their citizens, and the province provides them with many levels of support. My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: to this point in 2011 how much MSI funding have municipalities received?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, since 2007 MSI has provided \$2.2 billion in long-term funding to help municipalities meet the demands of growth and sustainability. Again, those numbers constantly increase. The allocations are based on a formula developed in consultation with over 450 municipal representatives.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you again. Some municipalities claim that they are receiving less MSI this year than last. What are the criteria for funding each municipality?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, first, each municipality receives the base funding of \$120,000 per year except for summer villages, which receive \$60,000. Also, there's \$15 million per year in sustainable investment funding, and that's divided between municipalities with populations below 10,000 and limited local assessment. The vast majority of the funding, 48 per cent, is allocated on a population base, 48 per cent on the education tax requisition, and another 4 per cent on kilometres of local roads. So it's meant to address the needs of all municipalities.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Well, thank you again. My last question to the same minister: do MSI amounts in all municipalities increase at the same rate?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, decreases or increases are due to annual changes in the municipality's proportion of population, education tax requisition, or kilometres of road compared to the provincial total.

In addition, some communities may see changes in their assessment base, again in relationship to the provincial average, which could in turn reduce the sustainable investment funding that they receive. This sustainable investment provides additional support for those with a low property tax base in relation to their population. This funding is then redirected among those municipalities that are eligible for sustainable investment funding.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 19 members were recognized today, with 114 questions and responses.

In a few seconds now we will continue with the Routine. We are at the Introduction of Bills stage.

Introduction of Bills

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Bill Pr. 3

Auburn Bay Residents Association Tax Exemption Act

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 3, the Auburn Bay Residents Association Tax Exemption Act.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 3 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Bill Pr. 4
Cranston Residents Association
Tax Exemption Act

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 4, the Cranston Residents Association Tax Exemption Act.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 4 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Bill Pr. 5
New Brighton Residents Association
Tax Exemption Act

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 5, the New Brighton Residents Association Tax Exemption Act.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 5 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Bill Pr. 6
Tuscany Residents Association
Tax Exemption Act

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 6, the Tuscany Residents Association Tax Exemption Act.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 6 read a first time]

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

Bill Pr. 7
Hull Child and Family Services
Amendment Act, 2011

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill, that being the Hull Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2011.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 7 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table with you for the Assembly the requisite number of copies of the following two reports. First, the 2009 annual report from the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, titled Good Medical Practice: It's What We're All About.

Secondly, the 2010 annual report from the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta, which I will add, Mr. Speaker, is their 60th anniversary report. Congratulations to all of you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of today I will have tabled approximately one-fifth of the concerned Castle correspondence that I have received. If the session continues to June, as proposed, I might finish. The names of the concerned Castle individuals today are as follows: Mary Jane Phillips, Jenni-

fer McGowan, Karen Leask, Clayton Baumung, Craig Murray, Cindy Cox, Franziska Nonnenmann, Crystal Van Lare, C. Cummings, Christine McLaughlin, Brice Peressini, Jeremy Nathan Marks, Darlene Varaleau, Jessica Warner, Jane Keast, Joshua Cornfield, Agata Bedynski, Roger Short, Marilyn Harris, Diane Poloczek, Jannie Mills, Caitlin Beresford, Linda Gearing, John Dale, and Marian Veasey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have tablings today, and I want to put them all in a package. The first is a letter that I received – and I appreciated receiving it – on January 21, 2011, from the Minister of Employment and Immigration. It outlines the number of occupational injuries and diseases in Alberta, the stop-work orders that have been issued, and a number of other very interesting facts.

I also have included in this tabling some fine research done by the Alberta Liberal caucus researchers regarding the percentage of occupational health and safety inspections resulting from this order from 2002 to 2009. The handwriting on there is mine. It was done outside, and it was a very cold day when I did it, so that will explain that.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to table the requisite copies of two letters, the first from a constituent of mine by the name of Victoria Morgan writing to express her concerns regarding some proposed changes to the education act in relation to lowering the required age for grade 1.

The second is from another constituent of mine, Allison Humphreys, writing to express her concerns regarding the impact of the recent provincial budget for the Calgary board of education's 2011-2012 funding.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. One is from Myrna McDonald, a constituent. She has been waiting for a response from the minister of health for a while now. Essentially, I'm not going to read a fraction of the letter, but I've promised her that I would mention this: it has been five months since I wrote to the Premier and the health minister, and I asked for an apology, if not an assurance, that women and men are treated with the respect they deserve in a hospital and not have to share a full bathroom and room with both genders. This is humiliating, to be standing in a glass shower and using the toilet and have someone of the opposite gender walk in on you. Patients are suffering enough after surgeries and should not have to put up with such indignities and stress for weeks thereafter. I would table this and ask that the health minister have someone in his office please contact this individual and speak to her concern.

The Speaker: This is tablings now.

Mr. Anderson: The second tabling is regarding my member's statement that I made earlier today. I mentioned in it an Alberta Health Services report that was presented to the city of Airdrie showing that response times since the takeover of the Airdrie integrated service by Alberta Health Services in Airdrie have

increased by 33 per cent, or about three minutes, for serious situations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. deputy Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings to do today on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition. The first is a document from Alberta Health Services listed as policy EC-01, established on January 14, 2009. It's titled Safe Disclosure, and it falls under ethical conduct under the Alberta Health Services Board. The leader referred to that in his question today.

The second tabling is from *The Lancet*, which is an article entitled Cancer Survival in Australia, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the UK, 1995-2007 (the International Cancer Benchmarking Partnership): An Analysis of Population-based Cancer Registry Data. He referred to data from this report, which is peer reviewed, I'll make a note of. The leader had referred to statistics here which showed that Alberta has the lowest survival rate for lung cancer in Canada.

Thank you.

The Speaker: We have a point of order that was raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. Let's be very succinct, okay? I think I understand what has happened here.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, proceed with your point of order.

Point of Order Clarification

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on this point of order under 23(h) and (i), "makes allegations against another Member" and "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member," and also (l), "introduces any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly."

Certainly, in question period earlier today the minister of health suggested that, well, these are matters that could be dealt with at Public Accounts. The minister of health knows full well – he has been there as a minister. If he hasn't had an opportunity to attend, certainly, there has been correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee to the minister's office regarding how the process works. The minister was also a member of this Alberta Liberal caucus in the late '90s, and he sat on the Public Accounts Committee, so he should know the rules.

The rules are this, Mr. Speaker. It's quite explicit. We are only dealing at Public Accounts with the previous year's financial statements, in this case 2009-10. The questions I asked earlier in question period dealt with the period between 2003 and 2009 and, specifically, the amounts that were spent at Capital health and then put under the other expenses column without an explanation. Now, the Government Accountability Act, I would note, gives the minister complete responsibility for his department.

I would like to note in this House that as chair of the Public Accounts Committee I no longer have the right to set the schedule for the meetings; that's done by the committee. That was one thing that was made quite plain to me by the government majority on that committee.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. minister to withdraw the reference that this issue could be dealt with at Public Accounts. It cannot. The rules of this House are quite clear. They're quite plain about that. I'm disappointed that the minister didn't remember that during question period. So I would with all

respect ask him to withdraw that suggestion that these questions should be directed to Public Accounts because certainly they cannot, and he of all members, with his past experience on this side of the House with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre and his many years as a government minister, should know that.

Thank you.

Mr. Zwodziesky: Mr. Speaker, there may be a difference of opinion here, obviously, which we'll await your ruling on. However, the simple fact, as this member obviously knows, is that matters of financial recording are accounted for through a system called Public Accounts. Now, whether that was for the immediate previous year as has just been alluded to or not – it's sometimes difficult to understand exactly which year this member is asking about because he has gone back as far as six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 12, 15 years. Nonetheless, I accept the clarification that he has given.

What I would ask is that this hon. member remember that Written Questions and Motions for Returns are adequately described as places where detailed questions that would require instant recall over a period of many years could better be placed. If he'd be willing to do that in the future with his questions, I'd be willing to withdraw the point that I made earlier.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there always is a difficulty with, I guess, when a question is asked and the time frames related to it. We without any doubt have a situation called Written Questions and Motions for Returns. Traditionally, if you look at all of the questions in the Order Paper, the requests for information can go back two years, four years, six years, eight years, 10 years.

Whether or not a minister has that kind of finite information in front of him when he answers a question in the House is quite questionable, I would think. Some ministers may have a photographic memory and be able to carry all of this in their minds, but I suspect the norm is that very few of us in life actually have a photographic memory beyond what's happened in the last year or two as opposed to X number of years.

Secondly, what was really stated in the Blues – and I listened very attentively to the question; I do to all members. The minister of health:

Mr. Speaker, the first effort I made was to appeal to this member to put this question to the proper process, which he knows very well. There is a thing called Motions for Returns . . .

Okay.

. . . and there is a thing where he knows very well that he's allowed to put a question forward through his own group that he chairs.

I actually thought that was what the point of order was going to be, but it didn't actually come up that way.

There is a tradition that goes back – and it's certainly followed in most committees but not all committees – that, in essence, the chair does not ask questions. The chair does administrative things. However, there always has been a provision that if the chair of a committee chooses to want to ask a question, he simply leaves the chair, asks the deputy chair of the committee to serve in that capacity, and then he can ask questions. I do not believe this has been the tradition of the Public Accounts Committee. I read the minutes, but I don't follow that, specifically.

If, in fact, the point of order was going to be that "I can't raise a question," I think that the hon. minister of health would probably not necessarily know that because why would any minister, if they appear before Public Accounts once a year, actually know that? So we certainly had a point of clarification.

I don't believe this is a point of order. It's one of those little things that can cause some real, real frustration if one member

raising a question says, "Well, I know I can't ask a question at that committee," and somebody says, "Well, why don't you use your job at your committee to ask the question?" Yeah, okay. We're going in two different directions in here. So I hope there's a bit of a clarification.

Members might want to take a look at *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 504. They might also want to look at sections on pages 1031 and 1039 with respect to this. It's certainly not often the case where the chair would leave and the deputy chair would come in. I certainly indicate that for the Members' Services Committee for the years that I've been on that committee, which is almost 30 some-odd years, that's never been the procedure that we've followed in that committee.

3:00 Committee of Supply

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Main Estimates 2011-12

Culture and Community Spirit

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, do you wish to open this?

Mr. Blackett: Yes, Mr. Chair. My officials will be in momentarily.

Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here today with key ministry staff to review the 2011-12 Alberta Culture and Community Spirit estimates. I will be joined by my deputy minister, Lois Hawkins; Assistant Deputy Minister Tom Thackeray; Senior Financial Officer Pam Arnston; the acting director of planning and performance measurement, Brad Babiak; the director of lottery funding programs, Carl Royan; and the communications director, Parker Hogan.

Through one-on-one meetings of our regional dialogues Albertans from the arts, cultural, heritage, not-for-profit, voluntary, and diversity sectors have shared ideas on how we can best achieve our shared goals to give every Albertan the opportunity to express their cultural identity through improved access and increased capacity, every opportunity possible to develop as artists and performers, and to explore and experience our rich and varied history from people to paleontology, give them new opportunities for creative, innovative ideas to take shape on the stage or the screen, in print, or in digital format and the encouragement to be involved in their communities.

This year's budget reflects the realities of the economic climate that we are living in today. We must be prudent to ensure that our recovery and our growth are sustainable. In this budget we are holding a responsible line on spending while looking for opportunities to make strategic investments that will build on the strengths of Alberta and Albertans. We see these opportunities as we see the strengths of our cultural industries and our arts and heritage communities and our not-for-profit and voluntary sectors. This work enhances the quality of life for all Albertans and pays dividends and even greater economic, cultural, and social returns.

For 2011-12 the total budget for Culture and Community Spirit is \$225 million. Within this budget we are able to maintain the same level of operational funding as we had last year at \$174 million. It is important to note that while Budget 2011 shows a net reduction of \$35 million in my ministry's funding, this is related to capital funding, not the operating budget. As we complete the 2010-11 fiscal year, we've also completed \$35 million in capital funds commitments for major projects like the Go Community

Centre and Citadel Theatre renovations in Edmonton and Canada's sports hall of fame in Calgary.

We are projecting expenditures of \$58 million in support of the arts and cultural industry sector. Of this, \$30 million will support artists, arts organizations, book and magazine publishing, and the sound recording industry through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and direct department funding.

In film and television throughout the realm of digital media Alberta's star is on the rise. During my recent tour to Los Angeles with Alberta producers, directors, and union and guild representatives my message was that Alberta is home to some of the best talent in performance, technical production, and locations in North America. I'm pleased to say that most studio heads echoed those sentiments.

With this budget we are committing nearly \$21 million in support to our creative and multimedia industries. Included in this total is a \$2 million increase in base funding for the Alberta multimedia development fund, bringing the value of the fund to a total of \$18.3 million.

The stories of Alberta will continue to be told for the benefit of the audience and the teller alike. The stories of our past and present will come to life for visitors to provincial heritage sites and museums, and young Albertans will continue to have access to programming that meets curriculum standards through direct visits and distance learning via video conferencing or web-based conferences.

Within Budget 2011 \$47 million is assigned for heritage programming, including support for the Royal Alberta Museum, the Royal Tyrrell Museum, the Provincial Archives, and our provincial museums and historic sites across Alberta. This also includes \$8.2 million for the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation and for the preservation and maintenance of historic sites held privately or by municipalities. This investment will ensure that all Albertans have the opportunity to experience the culture and the ever-growing legacy of the land and its people.

Alberta's not-for-profit and voluntary sectors play a vital role in providing community-based services. Many of these services support the most vulnerable Albertans. The value of these services is estimated at \$9 billion of gross domestic product annually. This is an amazing rate of return on the investments we have made in supporting our not-for-profit and voluntary agencies and organizations, and we will continue to make these wise investments.

In Budget 2011 \$105 million is being designated for community and voluntary support. This includes \$38 million for the community facility enhancement program and \$25.25 million for the equally successful community initiatives program. Budget 2011 provides \$16 million for the community spirit program donation grant, which encourages more individual donations to not-for-profit organizations and registered Alberta charities. These dollars will help grow the already impressive contributions of our not-for-profit, voluntary, and community groups and the positive impact their work has on the lives of Albertans. The positive impact and energy of our voluntary sector will be felt and seen in Edmonton on June 14 and 15 as program staff, board members, and volunteers gather for Vitalize 2011.

Alberta's cultural policy, the Spirit of Alberta, is built upon the idea of inclusion. The Spirit of Alberta provides the opportunity for all Albertans to express their cultural identity, to do so freely, to take pride in and to share in the richness of their ancestry, to live in a tolerant environment free of discrimination. This is the right of all Albertans.

Budget 2011 provides \$5.2 million to the Alberta Human Rights Commission. With this support we continue to ensure that the human rights of all Albertans are protected and work to resolve

the differences that arise through a streamlined and effective dispute resolution process. Our continued investment of \$2 million in the human rights education and multiculturalism fund will support efforts to build healthier, more tolerant communities.

At a time when there remains much global uncertainty, Albertans can be optimistic about the present and the future. As a government we have worked hard to strategically manage all of our resources. We have looked for new ways to increase efficiency internally so that we are able to maintain funding levels to program areas.

Our investments in information technology infrastructure have improved communications with stakeholders. With more people using Internet-based services for information, we need to have the systems in place for effective and efficient delivery of that information. With those systems in place we are better able to promote and deliver our programs and services and help build capacity and understanding.

The resources provided in this budget will allow us to continue to achieve the goals set out in the Spirit of Alberta. We cannot lose the momentum that we have created in the past three years to develop, foster, and showcase our culture and community spirit. Working together, we have already achieved a great many successes.

My ministry continues to work closely with our stakeholders and all Albertans so that we may achieve so much more in the future, remembering the four key pillars: striving for greater access for all Albertans to arts and culture; maintaining capacity in all our communities for arts, culture, and recreation; focusing on excellence; and providing sustainable support for our cultural industries.

Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. May I welcome and thank the staff of the minister who are on the floor here today to aid him.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, do you wish to go back and forth, as has been the practice?

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. Sure.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Blakeman: I know it's not always your happiest day to be here, and I appreciate it. Some of you, I'm sure, enjoy it, but others not so much. I'm sure the minister appreciates it, and I appreciate it. If we have additional staff in the gallery, my welcome to them as well.

Thank you to the minister for the overview. I did my best to take notes. I'm afraid I got a bit lost at a certain point, so I may not have taken down every fact and figure that he gave. If I ask for a statistic he's given, please forgive me.

3:10

I do note and agree that there appears to be a whopping big decrease in the budget this year. But as we set out – and I was quite specific about setting it out last year – there was some \$30 million included in the budget last year, which actually made the cuts look not so bad, which were specifically capital improvements, and it was flow-through money from the federal government. Of course, this year that money is not there, so it looks like the budget dropped by a lot of money, and it, in fact, was not that bad. When you take out that 30 million six hundred

and something dollars, you've got fairly stable funding in most areas, and I will ask specifically when I see an area where there's been a significant drop.

I will point out to anyone listening or following this at home that the funding for this department goes a long, long way. What looks like a large percentage is actually a pretty small amount of money here. You know, you can have 21 per cent representing only a million dollars or something. It sounds like a big percentage, but it's actually quite a small amount of money. The groups that are funded through this department stretch that money further than anyone could believe possible. Keep in mind that I think we all get very, very good value for our money out of this particular department.

Just a couple of observations. The ministry support services are up what looks to be about 25 per cent from the 2010-11 budget, and I'll come back to that a couple of times. Corporate initiatives: I remember us talking about that last year. Again, it's up 65 per cent. Neither of those, I think, are particularly direct support to artists or art organizations. It's administrative money. I will come back later and question that.

The creative and multimedia industries, as the minister noted, are up \$2 million, which represents some 8 per cent, bringing that fund to \$8 million.

The administration for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts appears to have gone up by 41 per cent, again not reflective of money being delivered straight to the artists.

I'll come back to the Wild Rose Foundation because it appears to have gone up 91 per cent from last year's budget. Now, there's no additional funding from government here, so it seems like a really optimistic projection.

Community and voluntary support services is down, but again that is reflective of that federal capital money.

Under heritage historic sites and other museums it's down by 8 per cent, which is going to hurt them a lot. The Alberta Historical Resources Foundation is also down. Some organizations out there are going to be trying to squeeze more money out of – what's that phrase? You can't get blood from a stone. That's it. You can't get more money out of this.

In specifically looking at the estimates on page 82, line 1, ministry support services, it looks as though a lot of the program areas did take cuts and last year even looked like they were underspent. I'm wondering why there was such significant overspending in ministry support services and why this budget has been increased for 2011-12. It was higher than budgeted, and then there's an additional increase. Again, we're not talking billions of dollars here. Nonetheless, it is an increase that I'm asking about.

Under the corporate initiatives, which is line 1.7 of the voted expenses by program, appearing on page 82 of the budget – most of my questions are around that page 82 – I'm wondering what these corporate initiatives are. I asked specifically last year, and it wasn't incredibly clear, so again the explanation for the 65 per cent overage. It was budgeted for \$2.9 million, and it was forecast for the end of the year at \$4.3 million, and next year it's at \$4.8 million, which again is a fairly substantial increase. Could I get an explanation for why it was overspent? Again, what is anticipated being spent under that corporate initiatives sector? If it's funding certain projects, I'd like to know which ones, please.

Under equipment purchases, again that's under corporate initiatives: what are the equipment purchases that have happened here, and, I guess, why do they have a priority now? If some programs are taking operational programming hits and are able to deliver less, I'm wondering why the minister felt it was important to continue the funding of the capital?

I think I'll let you answer that section because it's kind of a complete section, and then we'll continue. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Blackett: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. The reason for the increases with respect to corporate initiatives is that Service Alberta no longer provides the funding for a lot of the initiatives with respect to IT, whether it's management – we were stuck as a department going through a conversion to a different program, a different network. To be able to fund the finalization of that integration, we had to take that out of our own dollars, so those were significant dollars that we needed to do it. We couldn't stay in no-man's-land.

We identified IT as one of our key cost-effective measures to create access for all Albertans. We've got all of our historic sites and interpretative centres. We're now trying to focus more on distance learning, like we do so well at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump and at the Royal Tyrrell Museum. We're encouraging other sites, like the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre and the Oil Sands Discovery Centre, to utilize that web-based kind of connectivity. It means that people in other remote locations across the province can have access to that kind of information as well.

In terms of the equipment, the equipment was used to purchase the GATE system, our new computer system, which would give online application access and reporting and updates with respect to our community investment programs through lottery, so our CFEP program, our CIP, our community spirit donor program. It will eventually include our AFA and our Alberta multimedia development fund. We had to expend money in the previous year to make sure that we developed the system, and we worked with a supplier to be able to do that. This year we had to have the actual physical equipment, so that's why it's in the budget.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. I would expect, then, that the money in that area would decrease in the year following, seeing as all of that has been paid for.

I also have to make the observation that, unfortunately, I've been here long enough that I saw the creation of Service Alberta, and there was money transferred from departments to create Service Alberta to pay for all of that admin. I'll have to put it on the record that I'm a little ticked if Service Alberta is punting stuff back to departments without returning the money. I'll put that one on the record because, as far as I'm concerned, that's not a square deal. Each department certainly funded it to begin with.

I'm going to move down now and look at cultural industries, which is up slightly, very slightly, 2.5 per cent from last year's budget, but we've got to take this in context of what happened the year before that. It's down still \$10 million from the previous year, '09-10, so none of these ones have recovered to where they were. They took a huge hit, and they're getting a little bit back in a lot of cases in this budget.

Under cultural industries can the minister provide a breakdown of where the funding is going, in particular how much is going to film and television? Now, he'd mentioned the \$18 million. There may be an opportunity there to explain a bit more about that, or perhaps it's still just the \$18 million.

3:20

Now, I noticed that in the business plan on page 42 two of the three priority initiatives are relating to the AFA application process.

- 1.1 Refine the Alberta Foundation for the Arts' application processes to improve efficiency, transparency and accessibility . . .

- 1.2 Increase the use of peer assessment . . . to foster artistic excellence, promote organizational health and ensure transparency.

I'm wondering where the funding to support those initiatives turns up in this budget. What line item is it under? I'm wondering if there are funds being taken from artistic support programming to support the implementation of those two priority goals. That's one series under cultural industries.

I'm going to keep moving and look at the funding for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. Now, I actually can't quite tell if this funding went up or down because depending on where you look at it, you get slightly different numbers: somewhere between \$26 million and change and \$27 million and change. But the administration is budgeted at the same level as the 2010-11 forecast, and that's 41 per cent up and 49 per cent up from the previous year. So again I'm seeing administration costs go up a lot, but direct delivery of grants to artists and arts organizations is either stable, a little bit up, or a little bit down. I'm wondering why administration has had to increase by almost half as much again twice, coming into the '10-11 year and then the '11-12 year that we're talking about here.

I'm also looking to confirm that the administration numbers are coming under vote 2.4. It's saying, "Assistance to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts," but I know from those numbers that actually is the Foundation for the Arts. So if there could be clarification, please, around how that actually breaks down.

Now, one of the issues that came up last year was the timing. At the time of the debates I raised it with the minister because in response to a number of questions where I was looking for particular details, the minister's response was: "Well, we're deciding that. We're working on it. We'll figure that out in May, June. We're having consultations." This puzzled me because the way I was taught to do a budget, you had to know what the numbers were to actually project the budget, and this seemed to be more: "Well, we'll put this number in here, and then we'll kind of figure out what we're going to do."

The results of this were – and he did appear to consult the groups in May, June, but I was hearing from groups over the summer that they still had not received their cheques and, in some cases, weren't too clear on exactly how much money they were going to get. That became very problematic because they had been warned the previous summer that, yes, there might be terrible cuts coming but not to worry: "Don't do anything because maybe there won't be cuts." So they didn't quite make the moves because they weren't too sure, and they were instructed by department staff to, you know, not do anything drastic, to wait. But then they waited and waited and waited, and they waited past the budget. They waited past May, June, and some of them into, as I say, the summer to find out exactly what their budget was. For a couple of them this was really difficult because by the time they found out they'd had a 15 or 16 or, in one case, a 19 per cent cut, they were already well into their year.

I'm wondering what the minister is doing to improve the certainty of the grant amounts that are going to both artists and through the grant programs and whether there is a process for both indicating the amounts and delivering the grants faster?

I'll give you an opportunity to answer those.

Mr. Blackett: I think the first question was: out of item 2.3 how much was for the multimedia development fund? In this budget I believe it's \$18.3 million, and that's an increase from \$16.5 million in the last fiscal year. We thought that was important to be able to do that because there is going to be an increase in the

number of productions that we're going to have in Alberta in this coming year, and we wanted to be able to support that.

With respect to item 2.4 you had mentioned the increase in funding for other initiatives, and you wondered if that was administrative in nature and if they were coming out of program funding. The thing is they are all coming out of it. That is coming out of administration. There is no increased administrative expenditures to be incurred by our department for those initiatives, and that will come out of the existing dollars, which I believe is under program support, item 2.1, \$748,000.

Now, under administration, the AFA, you will have a line on page 94. If you look at page 94, the expense there is \$1.278 million. I stand corrected. The \$748,000 I said was for administrative grants; the \$1.2 million is actually administration of all the other different programs.

In response to the performance measures . . .

Ms Blakeman: Priority initiatives.

Mr. Blackett: Those priority initiatives and the funding of those, I think we have addressed that. That will come out of those other administrative dollars.

You had made a reference to cuts that were made, that organizations felt that they didn't know what was going to happen after the budget last year, and they didn't find out until July. From what I can remember, our AFA grants to those organizations always came out about that same time frame. I'm told that this year we will be giving the groups an advance while the board reviews their allocation for the groups. So they will find out, they will get an advance, and that, I imagine, would occur after April 1, and then they will receive the balance of their funding in July. Since we have no further reductions in funding for this coming fiscal year, I think most of those groups should feel fairly confident that they will receive the amount that they received last year.

I think that answers all of the questions.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. That's very useful. Yes, for some time the department gave advances and then followed up with the exact amount that was owing further on. I don't know whether we got away from that, but boy there was a lot of uncertainty and stress in the community last year because of that.

Okay. We need to clear this up. I think this is all connected, but I have raised in question period a couple of times and in the media and other places an issue with respect to artists who were receiving monies through grant programs that were associated with, generally, a specific location. Initially through the community series grant, I think it was, any group that was associated or performing in a building that was owned by a municipality was told that they would not be eligible to apply for that grant anymore, which was in their minds the same as a cut. That got turned around, and they were told that wouldn't be implemented but that they would have to form themselves into a not-for-profit so that they could apply to get the same money they had before, but it couldn't be coming and be associated with a municipally owned building.

Then there was the program that was the artists in the school program, I think. I may not have the right name there. Sorry. So any school that received funding to bring in artistic groups that would work with the kids over an extended period of time, artists in residence programs, that kind of thing – it wasn't a performance; it was a working artistic experience for the kids – people were told that that was being cut, that they actually had their last grant and that there would be no more money coming in this grant

period. Both the Member for St. Albert and myself asked the question: why is there discrimination to this group of artists based on the fact that they're doing a project in a school? That's discrimination based on where they're doing it. The minister said that he hadn't okayed that, and that was turned around or withdrawn.

3:30

The last groups out there that are still being discriminated against are groups that are performing their work and whose affiliation is with the location of a university. That one the minister has not turned around. I have asked him questions in question period on that. For example, the difference between Mile Zero Dance and Orchestis: one is a dance group that's affiliated with the University of Alberta. They have been told that that's it, that they've already had their last grant; they had it last summer, and it's over. The U of A mixed chorus, the organ recital group, any arts groups that are somehow situated or associated with the universities have been told: game over; no more money flowing through there. Assistance for the book publishers as well: game over.

Again I question why there is discrimination based on place. I'm going to connect the dots here. I think this has to do with the minister's desire to have other ministries take over funding for groups that he believes are more affiliated with that location than with the arts specifically, but I'll let him tell me if I'm right there.

I'm looking for consistency here. If we've managed to recognize that it's inappropriate to discriminate against artists and arts groups that are affiliated with municipal buildings and artists that are affiliated with educational institutions, why do we insist on continuing the discrimination based on an association with universities and colleges? I would like an explanation on that because I don't think it's fair. I think if we're a cultural ministry and we're trying to support artists – artists work all over the place. I can tell you that when I was a working artist, most of my rent money came from doing things that were artistic and certainly used all of my training. But I was delivering stuff in the police service; I was working for the hospitals. I was all over the place, and that paid a lot of rent money. So saying that where you're doing it somehow makes you ineligible for artistic grants I think is inappropriate, but I'll let the minister put the explanation on the record.

I'm also wondering how we're going to get the communication on that, if it's going to be carried through, so that it's far enough ahead that people are able to plan for that.

Following up on the minister's statements that playgrounds should be paid for by the Department of Education and things, can the minister tell us if any ministers did respond to his encouragement and take up the gauntlet, take up the torch to fund the initiatives that were previously funded by Culture and Community Spirit? I'd be very interested to see if that happened because I suspect the answer is no. Further to that, does the minister still believe that this is a viable approach to funding initiatives that fall between the cracks? If it hasn't worked so far, does the minister have any other ideas about how to convince these other ministers to take on the responsibility for funding what he views as cultural and/or community-based funding through their departments?

The other examples that he made were Environment creating water groups that were then registered as not-for-profits that then applied for funding through CIP or CFEP. He felt that they should be funded through Environment. This is all coming to mind because I've reread the *Hansard* from last year's debate, and that was one of the examples that he raised.

I guess what I'm seeing here is a bit of ministry turf wars, and the casualties are the artists, which, I would argue, should not be the casualties in this war. To cut them off and then hope that some

other minister is going to pick them up I don't think is the way to build our capacity for artists and the access to artists and to community-based programs in this province. But I'll let the minister talk about that.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

I might note that we're in our second 20-minute section.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much.

Mr. Blackett: All right. That's fine.

There's a lot to go over there. But let's be perfectly clear. We haven't wavered at all from our commitment to focus on artists and providing support. This artists in residence program was something brought forward by our department, as I said here in the House. There are people in my department that can have their own ideas. There are people in the Alberta Foundation for the Arts that can have their own ideas. But I can tell you the buck stops with me. I never signed off on any document. I never asked anybody to look at cutting any of those programs, and there is no cut to the artists in residence program. There was never any intention by this minister to cut the artists in residence program, and it will not be cut as long as I am minister.

The performance for universities and colleges: that money has not been cut. I don't know why you insist on going out and creating angst and anxiety amongst all of our artists by coming up with these things that are false. Other people in our department may have proposed them, but that was never my intention; again, never something I signed off on. We have to support our artists. Where are they going to learn if they have to when they're in school, when they're in college, when they're in university? That's a foundation, a building block, and that's how we get to excellence. We have to support them from when they're young children through our K to 12 education and beyond and to the point where they can be whoever they want to be.

As far as the book publishers: they aren't turfed. They're not under the Alberta Foundation for the Arts; they're under cultural industries. For the last two years the Alberta Foundation for the Arts board has asked that they not be included under the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. They are still part of our department. Book publishing and magazine publishing and songwriting or sound recording are all under cultural industries, under that line.

In terms of uptake of initiatives the Minister of Education has said that it is appropriate that new playgrounds for schools be built by his department. That is a great step forward. I would love for a lot of other people to be able to go and take that leap of faith, but the Minister of Education has stepped forward with that.

I also believe strongly that things belong where they belong. That's why horse racing is no longer in my department. That's why bingo is no longer in my department. And that's why major fairs and exhibitions have been transitioned out of Culture and Community Spirit to Agriculture and Rural Development. It's because that's where they're better aligned. That allows that minister to be able to utilize his resources for multiple different areas for the collective good of the agricultural industry and the rural community.

I don't think we've been consistent in that, and I will continue to work towards making sure that the dollars that are allocated to my department are spent with the stakeholders that we're entrusted with, and those are our arts and cultural groups, our heritage groups, and our not-for-profit and volunteer and community organizations. As you know, hon. member, if you've been here for a long period of time, it is not always possible to get what you want.

I was going to also mention that as far as the funding for those students in the universities and the colleges there's a jury process going on right now, as we speak, for the selection of those grants. Just to look at support of excellence, if you look at the front page story today in the *Edmonton Journal*, Ben Wheelwright and Quinn Ritco-Dooley are students out of Victoria school for the arts and are auditioning for the National Theatre School. I know you're proud of that.

I remember when I was down in Montreal at that institution during Journées de la culture as part of Canada Culture Days, I looked up on the wall, and 25 per cent of those donors were from Alberta. That's something to be proud of, and I think we both agree on that.

3:40

Ms Blakeman: We do, indeed, although I'll just make a brief pitch for my alma mater, seeing as the two best performing arts schools in Canada continue to be the National Theatre School in Montreal and the University of Alberta department of drama here in Edmonton, which consistently produces the finest actors, directors, playwrights, and masters of design in the country. When we are proud of people like that – most of the kids from here audition in both places, and it depends how far away from home they want to get. Generally speaking, our kids get into both places, and then they have the choice. I chose to go here, to the University of Alberta. National would have been fun, too, but my French was appalling. Okay.

I'm glad to hear from the minister that there are no cuts to programs based on where the art takes place. I will find the e-mails and provide them to the minister, but I actually quoted it in my notes here. There was one that actually said: "As of April 1, 2011, the AFA will discontinue the Artists and Education program . . . No new grant stream will be put in place to replace [it] or the old Educational Touring grant programs." That's pretty definitive. If that's the one that got out there that hadn't been approved by the minister, great, glad to hear it.

The other group I was talking about are not necessarily students at the university. It's any grant, artistic program, or arts agency or organization support program that is getting money, and they're affiliated with the university, not necessarily students. The printing was part of it because they have a printing press at the university, and they did do specific runs of books out of there. They are not lumped in with cultural industries because they're very specific to the kind of work that they do there. So a slight misunderstanding from the minister there. I'm very glad to hear that none of those programs are disappearing. I'm sure the others will be, too.

Let's talk about the Premier's Council on Arts and Culture. Now, the department reported in '09-10 that the cultural policy had been championed by the Premier's Council on Arts and Culture. It is an agency of the department, and its members are appointed and report to the minister. Its mandate in its terms of reference is to champion the cultural policy and that the chair of the council regularly communicates with the minister to share insights of the council with him. That seems to be all that's required of them.

Last year when I asked about this, I was told with some asperity by the minister that they had exceeded their requirement for meetings and had actually met four times instead of two as was required, but I'm still not understanding what it is exactly that the minister sees as the council's role in championing and developing the arts. Perhaps he could give me some examples of what the outcomes are. Have they produced any documents, anything on paper that anybody could look at, or was there a business plan, or

have there been recommendations, for example? That's what you get from the seniors' council or what used to be the women's council; you get recommendations. It just seems like this council exists, but I can't find what they do, and there's nothing on paper. Perhaps the minister just wishes them to meet and to share insights with him. I'll be interested in what that is.

On to the cuts. I did point out that a number of groups took cuts of around 15 per cent. What I was interested in seeing is that the two departments that took the hardest hit and were also amongst the smallest departments last year were Service Alberta and Culture. The minister talks about: well, we all had to tighten our belts, and we all have to pull our weight, and we all have to contribute to this. But I'm curious as to why the minister thinks that his ministry was one of the two that was particularly singled out, especially since it's not a lot of money. They didn't exactly balance the budget on the backs of, you know, a couple of million bucks that they took out of Culture and Community Spirit.

I'm wondering, in addition to why he thinks it happened, what has been done? I kept asking this question last year, and there wasn't much pickup on it. What has been done to measure the impact of the cuts and to assist in the recovery of the organizations and artists this year, next year, and beyond? They've all had a huge cut, and now they're stabilized but much down from where they were. How do we know how they are? When we talk about capacity and excellence and organizational health, what is the department's administration doing to put that into effect?

In addition, around the budget cuts the minister said that he, and I quote: fervently believed that there was 10 to 15 per cent waste in the ministry either through inefficiency or bloated programs. That appears in *Hansard* on page CS-261. Was the minister able to locate this inefficiency or bloat? Where was it? I'm assuming he didn't find 10 to 15 per cent of it, but you never know. Maybe he did, and it went somewhere else.

Those are a set of questions on the council on the arts and specifically on the cuts. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Blackett: All right. Well, I've got some documents that I would like to distribute if I'm allowed to do that.

First of all, the first question was on the Premier's Council on Arts and Culture. I have a slide deck here that I think the hon. member would like to see. I would, if I may, have those distributed.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, perhaps you could table those. I think that might be better.

Mr. Blackett: Okay. I can certainly do that.

The first question was about the Premier's council. The Premier's council advises the minister of policy changes. One of the challenges they have is that we've been moving pretty fast in our department. We've had three different series of dialogues across Alberta. We started out in December of 2009 through January of 2010. We had another session that was in September-October of 2010. We were in places like Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Cold Lake, and I know there's another one that I'm missing. We sat down and had meetings with arts organizations and not-for-profit organizations.

For this particular relevance we'll talk about the not-for-profit organizations, and I will table our copies of the dialogue sessions, which went online a couple of days ago. They are responses to the initial dialogue sessions that we had a year ago, some of the things that we were working to improve upon and then having feedback

from that, and going back on the second one, what we've heard, what people have submitted online, and what they've heard in person from those different areas.

I thought it was important that I have my government officials, people from my department, getting out to these different areas to actually experience and hear first-hand what's going on from these individuals. Too often in Edmonton we create our policies in a vacuum, and we forget that Alberta is very diverse. People in Lethbridge are not the same as people in Fort McMurray, and they're not the same in Grande Prairie as they are in Hinton. We have to recognize that. We have to make sure that our programs suit all of those. The Premier's advisory council was part and parcel of those dialogues and passing on information, but a lot of the information they gave was information that we had received from the individuals through those different dialogues.

I do meet with the chair every couple of months. We talk about a multitude of different things. One of those things that they encouraged a lot was to start telling our story in a more effective manner.

Here in this slide presentation, you know, it shows just an example of things that we have done in the last three years: the Montrose Cultural Centre in Grande Prairie; the Olds College Fine Arts & Multi Media Centre in Olds; the new Telus World of Science, which will open in Calgary this October; the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, which opened last September; the new Canadian sports hall of fame, that we're going to open in July of this year; the new Mount Royal Conservatory – the shovel is about to go in the ground – the Nina Haggerty centre for the performing arts here in Edmonton; the Go centre; the beautiful Art Gallery of Alberta; the Rosebud Theatre expansions; La Cité francophone; Athabasca Regional Multiplex; the Medicine Hat clay district national historic site; the Edmonton humane society; upgrades to the Citadel Theatre; the Jubilee auditoriums, two of the top 100 performing theatre venues in the world, which ranked last year 40 and 46, and only Massey Hall ranked in the top 100 in Canada; the old Bailey Theatre, 101 years old, which we refurbished when we opened this year; and the Canmore Opera House, to name just a few.

3:50

I tell you; when I gave that presentation to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, he was shocked because, you know, there is no other province in Canada that has one of those programs, one of those buildings going on. That's our cultural policy coming to life. That builds access, that builds the capacity, that fosters the excellence, and that certainly supports our cultural industries.

Now, you want to measure the impact. Well, there is that, but our dialogue sessions – again, it is talking to people directly and having them tell us exactly what that is. Yes, I understand that 16 per cent is a lot of money to a lot of organizations, but we also have increased funding to AFA in the last six years by 55 per cent – 55 per cent – and the amount that we had to reduce is smaller than most of the provinces that are bordering on either side of us.

Yes, my budget – I think wholeheartedly that we spend a dollar more effectively than any other department in government, and you'll get a greater bang for the buck. We have \$9 billion of GDP that we create for the not-for-profits, and we create \$4.54 billion of gross domestic product out of creative industries.

Lastly, locating inefficiency. We've done a fantastic job. We've been doing that for the last three years, and there will be dollars that we will have found this year. I did promise arts organizations that if we found dollars, they would receive some of those dollars back. The end of the month is about a week away, so stay tuned.

Ms Blakeman: Great. Well, I am really interested in hearing where the inefficiency and bloat was and how much money you're able to redistribute as a result of that.

I know that it's good political spin for the minister to keep saying that there was a 55 per cent increase in the funding for the AFA, but I lived through that. Between 1989 and 2005 there was, for all intents and purposes, no increase, not even cost of living. As I ran a theatre company or tried to work in theatre companies and they tried to go out and buy set pieces or tap shoes or whatever else, they were trying to buy it at 2001 prices using 1989 dollars. So we more than earned that 55 per cent. That was not an increase. You could clearly look at that as cost of living. Everybody else got it. Transportation got it. Municipalities got it. Everybody else got it; we didn't get it. I know he needs to say that in order to repair some things, but I'm sorry; you get no standing ovation from me on that one.

What we had was a coming up to – I think it should have been even more than it was, but we were all very appreciative of the money we got, and there has been a decrease from that. It's affecting all of us because now we're trying to deal in 2011 dollars to buy things, to buy paper, to buy, you know, art paper, acid-free paper, and all the rest of that, so it really makes a difference to us.

I'll just climb down off my high horse and get on with it. Okay. Under cultural policy the government's cultural policy highlights four keystones of – and you mentioned it – access, capacity, excellence, and fostering cultural industries. I'd like to talk about access. I'm wondering how the minister or the department staff expect to improve access when, in fact, groups are able to offer less programming. I'm just going to highlight the Alberta Craft Council, that did a stunning exhibit as a way of driving home their point recently in which there was nothing on the walls. There was nothing displayed – there was no sculpture – because they wanted to show the exhibition with the empty walls, highlighting the effects of the cuts in programming.

Somebody is going to jump up here and say: we didn't cut it. Yes, but not increasing it, even cost of living, is in effect a cut, and there were cuts. They were in the tens of thousands range here. That matters. So how is that keystone of access going to be achieved in this year? How is the keystone of capacity going to be achieved?

I note specifically that from 2009 to 2011 the department spent nearly \$12 million on cultural policy initiatives, and that's coming out of their annual report on page 49. The policy itself was announced as completed in 2008. During the same period the Alberta Foundation for the Arts spent a little more than \$10 million on grants to individual artists, which is less than the amount that was spent on the work for the policy. If you want to put it another way, it's about one-quarter of what the AFA provided in grants to the arts organizations. Can the minister explain the balance here between the amount of money that was spent on policy initiatives with respect to capacity and the amount that was actually spent on developing capacity through grants to the arts? I'm curious about that.

The business plan also includes as a priority initiative developing a strategic plan and policy objectives to address the future direction of creative industries in Alberta. That's in the business plan, page 42, initiative 1.3. We've heard a lot about how there have been plans and consultation and blueprints, and community spirit policy has all been developed, so I'm a little curious about why there is a business plan that includes a priority to develop a plan. Maybe you could explain that. How can we expect to see the strategic plan and the explicit policy objectives from that?

I'm going to go forward now to cultural policy integration. The ministry's most recent annual report states that "aspects of the

policy have been successfully integrated into the work of government." That appears on page 12 of the minister's annual report. I'm finding that a bit vague as a statement of results. Could the minister detail what success means in this context and how I could expect to see the cultural policy integrated into the work of government in this year that we're looking at?

The minister often said last year that, well, you know, we're doing the train in Vancouver, and we're giving \$6 million to support the Alberta artists that performed in the square. I'm wondering if that's what he's including as successfully integrating the cultural policy into the work of government or if there's something else that's happening that I'm not aware of. How do I see this integration in the rest of government? Is it something tangible, or has everybody just agreed that it's a good idea?

Last year the minister said that the budget cuts were made with an eye to "increasing the competitiveness of our cultural industries in the future." That is in *Hansard* on page CS-260. I guess I'm looking to see how the minister can explain how cuts were supposed to increase competitiveness. Since the future is now, could he give us an example of the results of this strategy? How did cutting cultural industries result in them being more competitive, or is there a cultural industry that's doing demonstrably better than it was as a result of these cuts? Exactly what was happening?

The last piece of this is the cultural sector labour force. Now, last year I had talked to the minister about the 2004 labour market review for cultural workers. I asked about how we were getting on with the next one. In fact, in 2010 the federal Cultural Human Resources Council published an additional cultural human resource study, and it's some of the GDP numbers that he has been using.

4:00

We were not involved in the 2004 project, and I'm wondering if he can tell us who took the lead for Alberta in the 2010 project. What I was hearing was that since we identified no one, nobody got sent to participate in that particular survey. I'm wondering if we were able to participate in it. Once again, it's the federal government's Cultural Human Resources Council publishing a cultural human resource study. It came out in 2010. As a result, were we able to get any cultural workforce information that is usable in Alberta, and has that helped with the minister's competitiveness strategy? Maybe I could put it that way. I'm thinking we didn't get in on this one and that they don't have numbers for us, but maybe I'm wrong, and I'm happy to have the minister tell me that. So I'll let him answer that sort of series of questions.

Mr. Blakett: Sure. The first one was on access and how. You mentioned the Alberta Craft Council. You know, one of the things we have a great opportunity for here is to take leadership and tell Albertans first and tell the rest of the world what great cultural institutions we have, what great artists we have, and how we'd like to work together to foster that excellence.

Now, the Alberta Craft Council. That was fantastic. They had a display, and they sent out postcards. By the way, the postcard? That was I Love Alberta Art. That's something we promoted out of our department. It's nice of them to take that and take the negative because you know what? Why would they want to tell the good story? Why would they want to take the time to say: "You know what? This is what we do for Alberta artists. This is what they represent. You should support us. You should come and buy more product because this is fantastic. Our artists are not getting paid enough, and we need your support to come and do that." But, no. And I would have been happy to help them with that.

In terms of access most of our departments, in terms of the

problems they've had – what we've had to focus on in the last two years is trying to do more with less, to become more efficient in our operations. There is waste all around the board, and I'll get to some of that in a moment because you brought that up with another question.

Our council's integration in government. One of the things that we've had very successfully is Alberta Arts Days. We started that in 2008, and in 2009, with help from the Premier's council and the AFA, we were able to get the Minister of Education to go out and encourage all the K to 12 schools in the province to participate. I think we had over 80 of those participate. We had the Minister of Municipal Affairs send a letter out to all the libraries across Alberta asking them to participate. We had 142 libraries participate. Last year, in 2010, we did the exact same thing, and we increased that. We want every year to be more inclusive with Albertans, and this is encouraged by our Premier's advisory council. Culture has to be larger. Arts is a subset of that. You've got to take people in their communities, the multicultural aspect, and make every one of those 3.7 million people feel welcome. We did that.

We also partnered with the not-for-profit community last year. The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues was fantastic. That 151-member or 152-member organization had their own functions. We hope to do that again here in Calgary, and we will continue to work through other departments and other organizations and municipalities. I'd like to say that the city of Grande Prairie put forward a motion, and they declared that they would put \$5,000 towards their Arts Day program for 2011.

In terms of cuts for competitiveness I didn't say that cuts will make us competitive. Cuts force us to be competitive. I know that many of those organizations run lean and mean, but that's what we have to do.

In terms of our Alberta Film Advisory Council we focused on two things that we need to do to get the industry back up and employing as many people as possible, having as many productions here and generating as many dollars in Alberta as possible. We had to look at innovation. We had to look at what new technology we can be a leader in, that we can participate in, and that we can grow and have a niche market that is second to none in North America. We thought that was HD and 3-D technology.

Then we looked at competitiveness, and that was a wide range of things. We had to look at our incentives. When we went to L.A., we found out that our incentives weren't the problem, that we had other little niggling issues. There was the lack of a master agreement between unions and guilds and our producers. They are working hard to be able to do that. We weren't working as a partnership. We weren't working as government and unions and guilds and producers and our film commissioners and our postsecondary facilities. We needed to do more of that.

We needed to be more efficient in the way that we utilized the money that was in the Alberta multimedia development fund. There are projects that we had there. There are genres that we probably should be funding. We don't fund sports. We don't fund news. We don't fund reality television. Some others reportedly were given money with the belief that they're actually going to be seen. That was the premise on which they would receive money, and some of those didn't happen.

We are all working together to make sure that in the year 2011 we're going to actually have those union and guild memberships working. We paid out almost \$20 million last year and \$34 million the year before, and there are still people that are sitting and not working. We need to work at efficiencies. It's a balance of indigenous work and service work and all the different genres. We have to make sure that we're making that money work for us and

that it give us the best bang for the buck. I'm happy to say that the industry is working together to make that happen today.

Our federal human resource council and who led that: I had a meeting with Minister Moore just last week. We didn't get in on that one in 2010, but I talked to him after the FPT. We said that we need to share a lot more resources amongst the provinces and with the federal government. We've asked for a couple of different things from them and the Canadian Tourism Commission. We want to get more information as to the economic impact for film, television, and digital, not just on the direct. Look at New Zealand, for instance, with *The Hobbit*. They say that that's a billion or billion and a half dollars. It's not just what's spent on salaries. It's not just what's spent in the hotels. It's not just what's spent on costumes. How many people are coming to New Zealand now because they saw that movie? We know that Brits love to go to countries that they see in movies.

They hadn't had a lot of definite information on that, so we're working together with them on that. He has said that when that information comes forward, he will certainly share that with us. I will give Minister Moore credit because he was the one that made me realize what the percentage of our gross domestic product is in relation to other industries. For Canada it's, like, \$46 billion. That's twice what agriculture is for the country. In Alberta we're a little bit more the flip side on that. We've got to get past where we think that this is an expenditure. This is an investment.

We spend \$20 million or \$30 million, and what we're going to get out of it is a multitude of benefits. I'll give you one. We got \$13 million of economic benefit. It cost us \$2 million, but we also got notoriety throughout Hollywood for our crews, our location, and our professionalism. That will leverage other projects, not just for Warner Bros. but for Disney and HBO and the like.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. I've asked to go back on the list so I can complete my questions. Actually, the minister did say that cuts were going to make the cultural industries more competitive. It is on page 260, and I can read it back to . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, the time has passed.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, are you going to combine your 10 minutes each?

4:10

Mr. Anderson: Back and forth if we could. That would be great.

Thank you. It's always good to see the smiling face of the minister there. He's very passionate about his area, about his ministry, and that's much appreciated.

I also want to thank the government for sponsoring and supporting the Airdrie air show. It's a great part of our community. It's a new event that we're putting on. This is the second version of it; we did one two years ago as well. It was just phenomenal. We had thousands and thousands and thousands of people show up, so I do appreciate the support from this minister on that issue.

I do want to talk about the CIP and CFEP programs, and I have talked to this minister in private about it as well, so he knows generally where I'm coming from on this issue. First of all, I can only say from my own experience, and I know the minister can only go from his own experience, too. When I was a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, how it worked, in my expe-

rience, with regard to CFEP and CIP monies and grants was as follows.

There were two types. I had the opportunity to sit on both the Calgary caucus and the rural caucus. I'm going to start with how things were done in my own constituency, specifically in rural Alberta, and then I'll move to Calgary. There was a certain specific amount of money that was allocated for each constituency in rural Alberta. I forget the exact amount. It's probably changed since I last checked, but it was several hundred thousand dollars for both CFEP and for CIP.

Now, how it worked in my two years there – you brought this up.

Ms Blakeman: I did.

Mr. Anderson: You brought this up. I remember that, hon. member. The first time it had ever been mentioned in the Legislature, I almost . . .

Ms Blakeman: I nailed you.

Mr. Anderson: You did. Well, for telling the truth.

What happened at that time – well, I won't go into that. Essentially, somebody would come in from lotteries or from the program and would sit down with us and say: "This is how much money you have in your budget every two years" – I think that it's over two years that they spread it; it might be three years – "and here's how much money you have that you need to spend in your CIP and CFEP budget that you have left for your constituency." Then they would go through the list of programs that were being applied for, and they would go by the city of Airdrie or by Chestermere or the Airdrie Pro Rodeo or whatever. They go through these different applications, and they would say exactly where we were in this application process. Then they would ask: "Mr. Anderson, would you like to support this project, and if so, for how much?"

Every single month, essentially, when applications came in, we would be asked by the individual – community liaison officer was, I believe, the title – whether we supported the project and to what dollar amount. Never in my two years, the entire time I was in government, did anyone say no when I said that I supported the project and I said the dollar amount that I supported it for. Not once in that two years, not a single time, was the actual grant that went out unequal to what I had specifically supported, to the dollar. Never once was there a problem with it, which was fine. That was fine.

People would come in to see me. They would say: we need to build a new playground. My assistant and I had so many playgrounds going up in the area that we said: "Okay. For each playground it's going to be \$30,000. That's how much we can budget, \$30,000 per playground." This is probably shocking to you, hon. member. Anyway, that's what occurred.

I have documentation here – and I'll table it tomorrow in the Legislature – correspondence between myself and my assistant and the community liaison officer talking about these things, talking about this back-and-forth, about how much money I would support it for, what project I supported, et cetera.

Ms Blakeman: Is that happening now?

Mr. Anderson: Well, incredibly, it's not. Incredibly, since I've become a member of an opposition caucus, I don't get that, Mr. Chair. I don't get that same heads-up. I'm not asked for my opinion. I have been back and forth with the minister on this issue, and we're talking about, you know, ways that he can maybe give us

more of a heads-up when projects have kind of been approved so that we know beforehand what has been approved, and I appreciate that. That's better than what I was getting before. But it's just so categorically 180 different from what it was when I was a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

I don't mind that we do it this way. I actually think the MLA should have a role in weeding through the malarkey that's out there. I don't like the idea of someone from a constituency coming forward and applying and then, you know, some civil servant in Edmonton, who has no clue what the needs of the local community are, making a decision. I certainly don't disagree that the MLA should have a role, but what I do disagree with is whether that role that the MLA has should be based on whether they're in the government or not.

Since I've been in government and since the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has been in government, we have not whatsoever in any way, shape, or form been consulted. We can write a letter to the minister, and we can say that we hear that this application from a constituent is coming forward and that we support it in principle, whatever, but the same consultation, the back-and-forth process that existed when I was in the government, absolutely and categorically does not exist today. That's unacceptable. That's just absolutely not right.

Ms Blakeman: Did you get to hand out the cheque?

Mr. Anderson: Yeah, we got to hand out the cheques. I mean, I was glad to see the Airdrie air show supported. I got no heads-up on the cheque announcement, but that's just, you know, another matter.

I would as an MLA in rural Alberta from an opposition party like the ability to have a say in a project or at least be able to express my support or lack of support for an application knowing that I know the needs of my community a whole lot better than somebody in your office, just like, hon. minister, you know the needs of your community better than any other MLA in this Chamber. So that's the first thing.

As a member of the Calgary caucus it was a little bit different. Now, my funds were not put into the Calgary caucus, but I did attend the meetings where they were divvied out. Essentially, we would go through project by project. People would come to Calgary caucus, give their presentation, and then we would go around the room and essentially talk about which projects we supported and for what dollar amounts, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. The Calgary MLAs would pool their money, and then they would divvy it out according to whatever they discussed. So that's how it's done in Calgary caucus. That's how it worked.

Now, I don't know if things have changed since then, hon. minister, but if they haven't changed, if it's still that way, I as a rural MLA would like the ability to participate in the decision-making process or at least participate and have in advance the opportunity to express support or lack of support for the projects in my community to the dollar amount, just like I was when I was a PC member. I think that's a fair request. I'll let you respond to that.

Mr. Blakett: Mr. Chairman, I'd love to respond to that. First of all, let's be perfectly clear. No MLA is responsible for administration of the dollars in their constituency no matter what. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo said to me in a letter, which I would be glad to table tomorrow: I am the one responsible for handing out grants in my area; I will take care of that; you nor the Premier nor anybody else in your government needs to come there; I will take care of that. That is wrong, absolutely wrong.

I'll tell you what the policy is today because I met with the

Member for Airdrie-Chestermere. First of all, prior to that, I said to him: "Let's be clear. Of all the opposition-held ridings in the province, there is a disproportionate amount of money that goes to them. Higher than the average of any other constituency goes to Edmonton-Centre, Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-Mountain View, Edmonton-Gold Bar, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera."

We divvy out the money on an average per constituency. There is no constituency that actually gets exactly the money because in some constituencies we don't have as many applications as we have money allocated to them. Sometimes we take that extra money, and we try to divvy it around to programs that we think have good benefit. But we always look from the CLO standpoint. Is the application viable? Do they have the matching funds that are required? Do they have community support? A lot of times that community support comes in the form of the MLA.

4:20

Now, what we have today, I can tell you, are reports that go out to MLAs once a month which will tell you what projects are being put forward in your constituency. That goes out to our opposition MLAs. It says: ABC organization has applied for a grant. If they want to, they can write a letter of support on that grant, and we will take that under advisement. Actually, there have been several in some of those ridings that I've already mentioned that they supported, and we did award them a grant based on that. So I think it's fairly equitable.

But when you are a government member, it's not the same as being an opposition member, and when the minister is out there presenting something, he's going to take his government colleagues. That happens. I'm not denying anybody else from it. If the hon. member is suggesting that I should be notifying all of them, that's fine. But today I can categorically say that those CLOs do not give that information out to the members. I give that information out to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, to my government members and to the members opposite. If they want something approved or they want help, like the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona had with a previous application, I would be more than happy to sit down and talk about that. We certainly helped with that project, and that organization did receive funding. We'll continue to do that. We're as transparent as we possibly can be.

My father came from a background of working with Revenue Canada and the Auditor General, and he told me that the very first thing you do is you go talk to the Auditor General and the Ethics Commissioner. You make sure that you've got all your ducks in a row and that things aren't offside. Anything that is offside with the Auditor General is offside with me. We made sure that we streamline some of those things. Some of my colleagues maybe didn't like that, but that is the responsibility that we have to the taxpayers of Alberta. We think we've been fairly fair, and we will continue to do so. I'm very proud of those programs.

Mr. Anderson: As I said, I completely agree with the minister that the program is a good program. It's not about the amount of money. I'm not for one second saying that Airdrie has been short-changed under the CIP and CFEP programs. I get the same amount in our community as every other rural community, for example. That's not in dispute here.

What I have a problem with is that as an opposition MLA – you know, Albertans voted for me, and Albertans voted for you. We all got people to vote for us, and that's why we're in the Legislature today. The issue, though, is that as an MLA I think that regardless of what party you're from, you should receive a notification when you're going to give out government money because

we're the local representative in our constituency. We're not saying that this cheque comes from MLA Rob Anderson or anything like that.

Some Hon. Members: Names. Names.

Mr. Anderson: Sorry. Names, names. I agree.

I'm not saying that that should be the case. All I'm saying is that we should have an ability to at least be there to represent our constituents, so a notification. My first question is: will the minister undertake to at least notify opposition MLAs of events prior to cheques being distributed so that we can at least attend and be present?

The second question is kind of attached to that. Before an application for something is approved, can we at least be asked for our opinion on it, just give an opinion? You don't have to follow the opinion, you know. Okay. This playground is coming down. The application is for \$80,000. Can I at least say, "Yes, that is very much needed; I support this project" or "No, those guys were in for money three years ago, and I think they're just milking you" or whatever? Can we at least respond to it and give our honest opinion of whether the project is supportable? So notification prior to the cheques, and if we could have some input into things prior to the approval, that would be fantastic.

I'll give you an example of this prior approval. Again, I will table these tomorrow. This is an excellent opportunity for this minister, who's obviously passionate about his ministry and has done a lot of good things in his ministry, to really, you know, change the way that business has been done on the CFEP/CIP programs, show a lot of ingenuity and transparency, and make these decisions more nonpartisan and transparent. I think it would be a great opportunity for him to do so.

One of these things. There was a message from a Cheryl Dalwood, the community liaison officer. I just want to stress that this person is doing her job. Clearly, she's doing nothing wrong because she's following directions. This is to my assistant, Donna. In the e-mail she says, "Just wondering if Rob has had an opportunity to review this funding request yet?" This is for the CIP application for the Olympic torch relay community celebration. "Drumheller, Red Deer South and Red Deer North have committed to support their part of the event. Please let me know as soon as possible."

She had asked a couple of times, and for some reason my assistant and myself hadn't gotten back to her, so she was following up again the second time saying: we really need to know whether you as the MLA support your part of the funding for this so that we can go ahead with this project. I think this is great. I think this is the way it should be. It needs to be transparent. MLAs need to be responsible for what projects they support and what they don't support and why they support and why they don't support. People need to know that. Our voters need to know that.

As I said in my article, if you remember, Member for Edmonton-Centre, that's part of the transparency that should exist, that we should be accountable for the support or nonsupport of things that we do so that people can judge for themselves. You know, it's just like anything else. Transparency will make us all stronger MLAs, will make us more accountable.

Would you be willing to do those two things, Mr. Minister, notification and asking for input prior to approval?

Mr. Blakett: Well, Mr. Chairman, two things. On the first one I'm open to the idea of looking at notifying opposition members of things that have been made. I will look at that.

On the second one let's be perfectly clear. No government

member now is asked for a yes or a no from my department or myself. I'm not going to extend that opportunity to the opposition because that doesn't happen right now. We provide a report that will tell you which one of those applications is currently being considered. You have a chance to write a letter of support or pick up the phone and call our office if you'd like, and you can put that on the record and notify your people in your constituency, write a letter to your local newspaper, just like anybody else here can. But we will not be asking anyone yes or no. Those members here know they can provide letters of support if they would like to. They get those reports, and we move forward.

In terms of notification I don't think that's something that's unreasonable to ask for, but on the second one the answer would have to be no.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Anderson: Yeah. Just to clarify quickly, I agree. I don't want to be asked yes or no, but can we at least just get a heads-up before the approval to ask for input? Just input. I know from these documents and I know from my own experience that there's no doubt that I have been asked yes or no personally, but maybe that has changed. Maybe you've changed that in your department. I don't know. I haven't been there for a year and a half. Can we at least get a notification prior to approval to at least have the ability to give some input into the project? Just any input. I'm not saying that you have to follow it. It's not a yes-or-no question. It's just that if we could get that opportunity to have input into a project prior to final approval of that project, I think it would be a great, transparent thing.

The Deputy Chair: The time has elapsed on this one.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, please.

4:30

Ms Notley: Thank you. I think I'll try going back and forth. We'll see how that works. I have a number of issues that I need to cover off.

I'd like to start with just a fairly open-ended kind of question. Of course, I haven't gotten any of these one-on-one consultations that have been described, but on behalf of some people in my constituency I know the minister is aware of the efforts by the Varscona Theatre to acquire funding. They've made some, obviously, very good arguments. They've succeeded in getting a fairly significant commitment from the city, and there appears to be a fair amount of productive conversation with the federal government, but they seem to be running up against a brick wall with the provincial government.

This is a theatre that, you know, is one of the busiest theatres in the country, that has about 350 performances a year, that has over 35,000 people go through its doors every year, and that offers a range of programming to kids and to youth and to adults. So it's a key community and cultural centre in our city, and they have some very, very serious capital problems with respect to the state of the building right now.

I understand that in the past they got some CFEP funding to do some work around the assessment of their needs, and that's great. But, as you may well know, I think the assessment concluded that there was about \$4 million or \$5 million that was needed. So my question is pretty open-ended, really, to the minister: where would you suggest that these folks go and look to get some support provincially for the amount of dollars that they need? Do you believe that refurbishing the Varscona Theatre is a project that is worth pursuing?

Mr. Blackett: Thank you, hon. member, for that question. The Varscona Theatre is a wonderful facility. I have a soft spot for it because I got to perform with Die-Nasty there a couple of summers ago. We had a discussion. We had a presentation by them. I think it was somewhere in 2009. I haven't heard from them in quite some time, so I'm not familiar with the city coming forward. It's probably time to reconnect with them to see where they're at in their process.

We have the community facility enhancement fund right now, a program that we could utilize, but there's a limited amount of money in there. It's \$35 million trying to spread across the province, so that's tough. When we had the major community facilities program is when we talked to them. It was just the tail end of that. We thought we'd be able to utilize that, but we haven't had that happen.

I'd be happy to sit down with them. We can provide some funding through CFEP. It may be in excess of the \$125,000 that's there, but it will not be in the millions of dollars because we just don't have it. But I'd love to sit down with them and see where they're at. If the city supports them and the federal government supports them, the province of Alberta is usually someone who can be counted on. I'll talk to some of my colleagues in the Edmonton area and see what we can do to help them with that. I'd love to have that discussion.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Notley: Thank you. Well, I think a good starting point would be for them to have an opportunity to make a presentation to the capital region caucus, which I understand is not something that they've been successful at doing yet. So that would be a good start.

I'd like to talk about another issue that you're very familiar with as it relates not just to my constituency, but it's through my constituency that I brought it forward to you. As I'm sure you're not surprised, I am quite – well, disappointed is probably an understatement. Just to recap the history on this in terms of your understanding of where I'm coming from, as you know, there was the decision that CIP funds would not be made available to municipal bodies, and that was something that was discussed in the last round of estimates.

Then, lo and behold, arts and culture projects that were orchestrated through the Old Strathcona Business Association, which is a business revitalization zone – suddenly they were told that they would not be eligible for these funds, which seemed like a bit of an oddity because, of course, they are not actually municipal bodies. We got correspondence about that. We met with you. Two different leaders of two different business revitalization zones met with you along with me, and at that time you assured us that it didn't make sense, that you understood that it didn't make sense, that it was sort of a gross expansion of that policy to that group, that it didn't make good public policy sense, and that you would have it fixed.

Based on that – and this is the thing that's really concerning – I know of at least one business revitalization zone organization that went ahead and invested money and time and volunteer efforts to move forward on projects that they believed they were eligible to apply for funding on. Then just a mere three weeks ago they got yet another letter telling them that, no, after all, they're not actually eligible. My first problem, of course, is with the fact that this organization acted on the assurances that they received in person from the minister several months ago, to their detriment. So that is the first issue here.

The second issue here is again the public policy implications of this. Business revitalization zones don't get money, specifically, any more or less from municipalities than any other community group, nonprofit society, or anything else. The municipalities merely act as a collector for them. What they do is they collect funds that businesses voluntarily agree to provide, and that's all they do. They are simply a flow-through mechanism. There could be a variety of different flow-through mechanisms, but at some point in the past it was determined that the municipality was the most appropriate flow-through mechanism.

In the past this minister has talked about the need to leverage – this is one of your favourite concepts these days – dollars from other communities. So if government money goes into something and you can get corporate sponsorship or community sponsorship to add onto it, then one taxpayer dollar turns into four ultimate dollars for the project. Now, these business revitalization zones are built-in dollar leveraging mechanisms because small business – you know, people think: “Oh, yeah. The NDP don't like small business.” But I actually like small business, and these BRZs are exactly the reason why. They give right back to their community because they live and die on the health of their community, the community we all live in. So they make an effort to give back to their community, and that's what the purpose of these BRZs is.

They've put in their own money. In the particular projects that the Old Strathcona Business Association has been ineligible to get funding for, the businesses have put in additional resources above and beyond the regular levy that they contribute, which is funneled to them by the municipality. So they put in extra work on these particular projects, and they're being penalized. Here's a community organization that is actually being penalized for the fact that they have set up a systemic regular process of ensuring that there's other money there that can leverage the public money. It seems to go absolutely counter to good sense to exclude them from eligibility for the CIP.

So I'd like the minister, first of all, to comment on the investment that was made, to their detriment, on the basis of the assurances that we received from the minister in that meeting in October or November. I'd also like the minister to comment on how it is that this makes any kind of sense based on your own desire to add community money to taxpayer money when building community initiatives. Of course, as you know, the initiatives in this case are all about building the local music industry, which is squarely within the terms and the objectives and the mandate of your ministry.

Mr. Blackett: Well, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member did meet with me, and I met with a representative of the business revitalization zone. I was told at that time that they were not-for-profit organizations. We had talked about whether they were a part of the municipality, and we were told they were not-for-profit organizations.

We spent an inordinate amount of time in my department trying to find out through Municipal Affairs and through the different municipalities exactly how they're constituted. Funny enough, there is not one municipality that has the same type of governance, the same type of rules. They don't disclose. You have to dig very, very deeply within the municipalities – and I'm not making this up – very, very deeply to find the information as to if they get funding, how the funding flows through. Not everybody works like the city of Edmonton. We're talking about a policy that would be – if I say that that's for that BRZ, then the next BRZ says that that's a precedent.

4:40

It was hard to get that information. They are governed by the

municipality. Their governance is by the municipality. And you can shake your head. I can tell you that I've got the paperwork, and we've done it to prove it. They cannot operate without direct permission of the municipality for a specific purpose and are then funded by the tax levy. As you mentioned, if incorporated as a not-for-profit, then they would be eligible. But for a lot of them it's the legality, and it's the paperwork. My department couldn't find any consistency or anybody that could provide the information to make that. I said to you that it makes no sense. If you're clearly a not-for-profit and we can demonstrate that, then it should be straightforward, and they'd be eligible. There's no guarantee they would get funding. But from what I could see and everything that's been put forward to me, that's not clearly there.

Ms Notley: Well, I would sure have appreciated it, Mr. Minister, if your department had called up the Old Strathcona Business Association while they were in the process of not getting this information and maybe asked it from them because they would have gotten that information. They would have found out that they're audited to higher standards than 90 per cent of the organizations you currently fund right now. And you would have maybe just given them notice that they ought not to invest all the money that they were investing on the basis of your word. So right there, I mean, that's the first problem.

The second thing is: I don't know how the other BRZs work, but the ones that you met with told you what they told you, and I know that their bylaws, their auditing, their financials are completely transparent, and not once did anybody in your ministry contact them and ask for this information. So I find this really hard to buy, quite frankly.

Mr. Blackett: I'm not sure if anybody in my department contacted them, but I'm telling you one thing: one rule for the BRZ that you have given me does not transfer to everyone. We're not going to give one and not be able to give to others because there are inconsistent rules and regulations on how they all operate. That is my responsibility, to make sure that's there. Until I'm satisfied that that can be done – understand that the rules with respect to municipalities having access to government grants are made by the Department of Municipal Affairs, and the reason for that was that most of these organizations are eligible for MSI funding, which those not-for-profit organizations that I have to deal with, most that come through our department aren't. If we can get assurances that they are a not-for-profit – I went back and forth with my department in several different meetings, and I'm told that that is not there.

Ms Notley: They're not eligible for MSI. Just to be clear, these organizations don't get a single cent from the municipality any more or less than any other community organization, and they're not eligible for MSIs, so that's not a legitimate rationale.

Moreover, you should have told them. You should have told them. They went out on a limb. They invested time. They invested money. Your folks met with each other – and every time they go off and meet with each other they get confused – but they didn't actually sit down and talk to the people that they were providing the inaccurate information about. It's perfectly possible to come up with a set of standards for all the BRZs and say: okay, the BRZs will not be exempted providing they meet these standards of auditing or whatever. But there was no thought put into that. There was no consultation. There was no discussion with them. Meanwhile, they went off and invested all of this money.

So it's not an indication of a good track record of managing an issue on the part of your staff. I don't have a lot of time left, but I

do think that we'll go on about this in a different forum because I think the record that we've got thus far is really not something that anyone in your office should be particularly proud of.

I'd like to go very quickly to the issue briefly raised by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere. Now, he seemed prepared to accept that it was reasonable that you would just maybe in the future give us notice of cheques being presented in our ridings. I have to say that, I mean, in response to the questions that I asked last year, we got a list of the 25 or so cheque presentation events that occurred, the 40 Conservative MLAs who were invited to them, and it's very clear that no opposition MLAs were invited to them. It was indicated that there were press releases on the ministry website that announced these events every time they happened, so it's clear that ministry resources are going to help organize these events, but no opposition MLAs are being invited.

Does the minister not understand how the average taxpayer would look at that expenditure of communications resources and event-organizing resources and see that opposition MLAs are being excluded, government MLAs are being included, and taxpayer dollars, not PC Party dollars but taxpayer dollars, are going to do that and not believe that it creates an overall picture of a certain amount of corruption? Do you not see how the average taxpayer would be quite offended by that expenditure of their taxpayer dollars?

Mr. Blackett: Well, Mr. Chairman, I don't see why the average taxpayer would be offended because no money is expended on communications for those. The events are usually organized by the organizations themselves, the primary reason being that it is for their benefit to have the fact that they have a program that's being given funding or a building that's being given funding to – that's matching funds. They still have to find dollars from the corporate community or individual donors, and we help do that, just like we did this weekend with the Calgary Immigrant Educational Society. We did it with the Community Kitchen, and we did it with Cubs, that deal with poverty. A lot of people don't know those organizations exist.

So what did we bring? We brought a backdrop, we brought a big cheque, and we showed up. I don't know what communications dollars that required other than a press release that went out, and we generate press releases every other day. There was no huge expenditure. There was no huge highfalutin promotional material or mechanism or development for this. We just went out and handed out a cheque because we are the government of Alberta. We are representatives of the government of Alberta, so we go and present a cheque that the government of Alberta gave them. That's it.

Ms Notley: That's exactly right. You are the government of Alberta. You are the government of Alberta using government of Alberta funds, and you are only inviting Progressive Conservative MLAs to it, and that's where it goes wrong. That's where it's dirty. It's dirty, dirty, dirty. And just to be clear, you have \$525,000 in your communications budget this year, so money does go on it.

I used to work in a minister's office. I know how much work goes into organizing these events. I know that the staff have to call to make sure that, you know, the podium is there and the people there that have been invited and that the backdrop is there. Work goes into organizing those things. Don't try to pretend it doesn't. It's taxpayers' dollars that do it. They're there to promote Conservative MLAs, and you're using taxpayers' dollars to do it, and they should be offended.

I want to quickly go to human rights. The workload at the Human Rights Commission is continuing to go up. We've had a 25 per cent increase in ongoing open files. Over the last two years we've got the number of complaints going up. We've got all that stuff. In the last two rounds of estimates you indicated that there would be new intake officers hired, and then last year you said you meant to, but it never happened. Now this year we've got the same budget line item with no increases. So my question to you is: is it acceptable to you that the wait times go up between 10 and 20 per cent every year under your watch, that the number of unresolved cases over the course of the year goes up every year under your watch? Is that acceptable? Or when exactly are we going to see some improvements with respect to the functioning of the Human Rights Commission?

Mr. Blackett: Well, Mr. Chairman, first of all, the Human Rights Commission and the numbers: they go up and down each year. Last year they were higher, the year before they were less, and the year before they were higher. What has happened, though, is that when we changed the Alberta human rights act, one of the provisions we put in there is that the Human Rights Commission would not see a case unless it's seen in another forum.

The Deputy Chair: The twenty minutes has elapsed.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

4:50

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to have an opportunity to complete, I hope, my questions.

I'm just going to go back and pick up where I left off, which was around the cultural workers. Part of the point that I was trying to make there – and the minister acknowledges that we did not get in on the 2010 federal survey of cultural workers. But part of the reason why – and this is what I was talking about last year – is that there is no designated organization in Alberta that is representative of cultural workers that has the stamp of approval or the recognition from the government that they will listen to the group. Therefore, we can't send anyone.

We keep getting asked by the feds: "Who are you sending? Is it PACE? Is it the Edmonton Arts Council?" which isn't appropriate, "Is it the Calgary cultural development authority?" which again is not appropriate because it's municipally based. And CPAA is gone now. But there needs to be an organization in which the government recognizes that if they designate workers to go from that organization, the feds will pay for it. They'll pay to fly people to the meetings. But without the understanding or the signed memorandum of agreement or whatever that the government is going to listen to them when they come back from the meeting, we can't send anybody. So that needs to be resolved, whoever is responsible for that.

This is indicative of how long I've been elected that I just take it as kind of normal that the government MLAs get to be in on this whole cheque thing. I appreciate the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere bringing it up. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Minister, that we in the opposition do not get a list in advance in which we can choose to write a letter of support, in which there is a list of applications. We don't. What we get is a listing after the fact, and sometimes way after the fact, that says: you should be thrilled because in Edmonton-Centre all of these people got grants.

I actually go through that list, and I'm sure someone in your department reported back to you that I was asking about a couple of cases because there were groups that got money that aren't from my constituency. The answer back was: "Yes, that's true. They're located, you know, on 170th Street, but they were doing

an event in Victoria park, which is in your constituency, which is why they got funded.” I do look at that list, but I don’t get it in advance ever, so I have no opportunity to write those letters of support. So I would appreciate it if the minister could address that as he is slowly unraveling the partisanship of these grants.

This is not a government pot of money. The money that we approve as this Legislative Assembly is approved by the Legislative Assembly to go forward. It’s not government. It’s not caucus funds. It’s not party funds. It’s funds from the Legislative Assembly, and the members of the government are cabinet. So if you want to have a cabinet member go out and represent the government, the big G government, to hand out a cheque, fair enough, but to have the big cartoon cheques – I’ll tell you, at one point they had the big cartoon cheques, and members actually wrote their names on them, actually wrote their names as though they cut the cheque. This is a political exercise. As the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona said, this is intended to make a distinction based on money or the belief that a group will get money only if they support a government member. That’s the point of it. [interjection] Yeah, it is. That’s why it’s been there for so long.

[Mr. Lund in the chair]

So let’s unravel this. Let’s take the partisanship out of it because the closer we get to an election, the worse the government members, including backbenchers, look on this one. Interestingly, grant amounts often go up closer to an election. People are going to start calling you on this one, so the faster you can unpartisanish it, the better. Included in that would be that notification in advance so that we can give you information or write letters of support. It would be very polite, when you come into my constituency to hand out a cheque, if you let me know in advance. When I go to your constituencies, I let you know I’m there. It’s a courtesy. And you’re using it for political reasons. You know, that’s why you’ve got the big cartoon cheque. I mean, you’re trying to get your photo in the paper. That’s the point. But it would be very courteous if you would let the local members know so they could attend, and I would appreciate that as well.

I want to talk about the Varscona Theatre as well. The city of Edmonton has been waiting and holding onto their grant money. I think they’ve ponied up \$2 million. I think the feds are in for \$2 million. Everybody is waiting on the province. Now, I gather you’ve just ironed that out as I sat here and listened, that the minister will be open to or will pave the way for the Varscona Theatre consortium to approach the appropriate caucus or caucus policy committee or however you guys organize that stuff to do this. But I just want to point out to the minister that money was found to support Vertigo Theatre in Calgary, money was found to support the Grand theatre in Calgary, and in Edmonton we lost the Kaasa. Part of the reason why the Varscona has so much activity in it is because it is one of the only theatres. Very soon Catalyst is going to lose its space, and that will be, you know, next to Theatre Network, one of our only. It’s not considered a medium-sized theatre, by the way. It’s 175 seats, so it’s an F scale, I think.

There is a distinct lack of equality between the two cities. The minister will be quick to say: well, that was then and this is now, and times are tough and friends are few. Well, the funding at the time that Vertigo got it was not so great. That was a tough time as well. I really think that the government needs to step up on this one. They’ve been asking for a long time. They’ve been fund raising for a long time. It’s very important to the theatre community in Edmonton, and I would appreciate it if we could get that matching money and make it roll forward. So thank you for allowing me to put that on the record.

Now, let me go back. The other thing you were talking about was the film industry, and you talked a lot about what the minister believes he’s been able to effect as changes. There was a change in the grant structure, and the existing scheme was changed slightly. The minister has talked about how this is much better, but I’d like to know if contracts have been signed because one of the things in this industry is that there’s a lot of talk. My goodness, they’re good at talking. I’d like to know if we’ve actually got signed contracts for some of the projects he’s been talking about to go forward. Do we know if we’ve been able to woo any projects away from B.C. or New Mexico or Saskatchewan? That would be a lovely feather in the minister’s cap. Have we got any signed contracts there?

Here’s something I heard about this morning. There are a couple of projects that have just started shooting in, let me say, south of Red Deer because I’m not exactly sure if they’re in Calgary or just outside of Calgary. The rate they’re paying is half of scale, and on another shoot they’re paying minimum wage. You know, these are trained professionals with years and years and years of experience. I would be very upset to hear that the government was co-operating with a film company that was coming in and taking advantage of our workers because there’s so little work out there that they are taking jobs at minimum wage.

I don’t think that’s what the minister is trying to do here. I don’t think it reflects well on us in allowing a company to come in and basically undercut our workers and to pay them far below what they’re worth. If you can possibly look into that and make sure that we haven’t funded them, and if we have, use that big stick. That’s what it’s for.

The second thing I have is that he mentioned the tourism spinoff on having films shot in Alberta. Very true. But one of the things that is a distinction on that is: it is what it is. Fort Macleod was Fort Macleod in *Brokeback Mountain*. That’s partly why people go there. They didn’t pretend that it was someplace else. I don’t think they ever specified, actually, where they were shooting that. I’m getting a little tired of having film companies come in and then pretend that we’re Toronto or London or somewhere else. It’s much more helpful for us tourism dollars wise if they come in and say: “Yeah, it’s Edmonton” or “Yeah, it’s Red Deer” or “It’s outside of Balzac” or whatever.

I’m wondering if out of all that money you’ve devoted to policy development there are ways of using some of that to encourage or to put it in as part of the incentive sign-off with the contracts that . . . [A timer sounded] Oh. Ten minutes because we’re splitting it. Sorry. Thank you. We agreed that we would both do it.

The Acting Chair: Back and forth?

Ms Blakeman: Back and forth. Yeah.

I’ll let you answer some of those questions, and we’ll keep going. Thanks.

5:00

Mr. Blackett: Okay. Thank you. A single voice for the arts: one of the things we found in the dialogue session was exactly that. You’ve got sports organizations and you’ve got other organizations where they’ve got regional bodies that flow into a provincial body, and then you have a collective voice. We don’t have that yet, and we need one that will be able to speak for the sector as a whole and do exactly what you’re talking about. That’s something that we have on our list to go forward to try to create, and hopefully we can do that in time for the next meeting. We will work with that. I hadn’t had that brought to me, so I didn’t know about that, but now that it’s on my radar, we’ll definitely look at that.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

Your other point, though, about cheque presentations and this and that and the other thing. We had sent out letters – I signed them in January – that went out to every opposition MLA that said everything in the quarter that was coming up for review. I sent out every single one of them, and they will go out every quarter. We make decisions by quarter now as opposed to letting everything wait till the end of the year. We sent out a letter, and I will go trace those letters and present a copy tomorrow. I sent one out to every opposition member, and I will continue to do so.

We have the records. After decisions are made, we put them on our website. We very much believe in transparency. There's nothing untoward there. Your point is well taken about the fact that a grant is based on where the event took place as opposed to where the location of the actual organization is, which makes no sense to me, so I will look into that and make sure we rectify that one.

In terms of film and taking advantage of workers, I had an excellent meeting with the head of AMPIA and Mr. Damian Petti on Friday and when we were in L.A. and subsequent conversations after that. We want our workers to be employed. We want them to be well paid. We want them to make a living so they can actually stay here. Whether they rent a place or they own a place, they should be able to do that like anybody else does. I would never advocate anybody going and taking advantage of our talent and paying them minimum wage. I can't even believe that you can get away with that. So I would love to have more information. If somebody can provide those examples to me, we'll certainly take a look at those. I think that answers that.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. I found it, and in fact we were issued a list on December 20, 2010, of applications that were being considered for CFEP and CIP grants from the 1st of October 2010 to December 31, 2010. I'm not sure how that's in advance. That would have given me 10 days left in the quarter, and everything else had already passed. So the minister may well be signing this in September, but I didn't see it in my office until December 20 for a quarter that went from the 1st of October to the end of December, okay? You can understand the frustration on this side as a result of that. Thank you for allowing me that clarification.

Now, let me keep moving on here. The cultural community and volunteer support services. I'm very interested in what is in the other initiatives because although this minister probably doesn't – well, okay. Here's a little historical vignette. There are a couple of people on your side that I know will have been around long enough to know what this was. This amount of money: at one time I got the minister to admit that there was no application form for other initiatives, there was no deadline for other initiatives, and the decision was exclusively by the minister. There was no appeal process. It was essentially a slush fund.

I'm wondering what exactly is in other initiatives this year. It has been cut by quite a bit. The actual for '09-10 was \$10.1 million. It was budgeted for \$6.5 million, but it actually looks like \$10.6 million was spent in the '10-11 year, and – whoa – a massive cut to \$4.1 million, so it's losing about 6 and a half million dollars out of other initiatives. Now, I know that's going to go up and down with how much money is extra there. But if he could please tell me what he spent it on this year and what is the list of initiatives he's expecting to spend it on. He did give me a list last year. Where can we find the final reports of what was funded through other initiatives last year so we know what those are?

The Wild Rose Foundation. I'm a little quizzical about this

because – this is in the estimates on page 98 – it appears to have a very high amount of money with sort of no backup for it. I'm wondering if you can explain that because it has no form of revenue, particularly, so where is the investment supposed to come from? It's actually up 325 per cent from '09-10, so exactly where's that going to come from? I would appreciate if I could get that comment. That's terrific. Thank you.

Further to what's happening in the NGO volunteer-based sector, I was going through the newsletter from the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations. This goes back to that capacity issue that I keep raising. If you look on page 3 of their newsletter, they show a graph that shows that the change in government policies or priorities was 58 per cent of the factors impacting voluntary organizations, so a huge effect on those organizations.

As well, we're still struggling in the voluntary charitable sector with the difference in salaries between what the comparable position is that's paid through the government if they were on the government payroll as a social worker versus being a social worker with foster parents or something like that. In this one it's a newspaper article of a woman who works for the Bow Cliff Seniors' centre. Yeah. "We just can't magically get it done on these salaries with this expectation of professionalism" because she keeps getting people wooed away, so that continues to be a factor for us in this area.

I'm moving on to heritage now. There was a cut in heritage. What action has the ministry taken to ensure that the ministry sites don't degrade to the point where we're in the same position that we are currently with infrastructure, where there has had to be a huge influx of money to make up for what wasn't put in there on a regular maintenance basis? What is the minister doing there to help under heritage?

Finally, the Royal Alberta Museum. What the heck is going on there? Who is it that's asking for two sites? If it was a politician, they would have jumped in front of every camera there was, and nobody has ever jumped in front of a camera saying: I'm the one that's pushing for a second site. So who's pushing for this? This doesn't make sense. We've got a perfectly good site. We own it. There was a good plan. They redid it. There was a second good plan. Now that one seems to have been punted for some reason. Now we're talking about two plans. I'd like a detailed breakdown of how much money the province is going to put in this year, next year, and year 3; how much money the feds are putting in this year, next year, and year 3. Where did this come from that we are going to build a second site here, and what is the justification for that? What's the business case for it?

I've never seen anything that backs this up. It's just a bunch of rumour that I've asked and asked about. It was denied, denied, denied, and then the minister said: "Oh, yeah. Definitely. That's where we're going to go." So let's hear about that. Let's hear about it, Minister. Go for it.

Mr. Blackett: Great questions. First of all, other initiatives. Now, it's quite interesting that you would mention that we're reducing our fund that you refer to as a slush fund. I don't think of it as a slush fund. Other initiatives program is set there for those programs, those organizations who can't get money through the regular process. Now, that includes that this year we will have the Canadian country music awards. We will have the Western Canadian Music Awards. The Canadian country music awards are going to be in Edmonton for three consecutive years, so we've committed to that. The Two Hills Community Centre, the Edmonton Triathlon Academy; \$3 million to the Art Gallery of Alberta, somewhat of a worthy cause . . .

5:10

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, the 20 minutes has elapsed.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere. Are you going to share the time back and forth?

Mr. Anderson: Okay. Thanks. Back and forth, please. All right.

I've been listening intently, very interesting information. I want to go back to the issue. I want to get something done today, and I appreciate very much the minister agreeing to give some prior notification to opposition MLAs to cheque presentations. I do think that that's a good step in the right direction, and I look forward to receiving my first update in that regard.

The second portion that I wanted to get to – we got cut off when we were going back and forth on it. When I say that we should get the opportunity to give some input into a project before its final approval, I wanted to make sure that the minister understood that I wasn't asking as an MLA for a unilateral yes or no authority on whether or not a project is approved. That's not what I'm asking at all.

There's a sheet – and, again, I'll table all these documents tomorrow. Anybody on that side of the House will recognize these sheets. What it does is that it goes through all of the different projects that are in the queue, essentially, and it shows their project status. It will give the name of the applicant, the date the application was received, and its application number. It will give the project's status. In other words, on some of them there's a cheque that's been given out – this is July 22, 2008 – and it gives the grant request, the approved amount, and whether the funds have been paid out or not. It goes through that. It goes through each individual one.

The project status is included: cheque given out, in the minister's office, under tech review, review 1, evaluation. It has these different kinds of project statuses that it's at. Then at the very end here there's a summary status of project application. It will say: this is how much is in process, and these are the total amount of funds that have been paid out and declined. Then there's a rolling total. There's a three-year total. This is how much you have left in your three years because it's over three years. Then this is how much you have left this year, so in this case it's \$416,000. That's the document.

When I would get this, what would happen is that I would look at the projects. The community liaison officer would call me or call my assistant every month and say: "Okay. We need to go through it. This one is under tech review, and this one is under evaluation" et cetera. They would say: "We've done everything that we need to do on our side. Now we're just waiting for your comments."

That's what Cheryl Dalwood, the civil servant, was talking about in this e-mail I have here.

Just wondering if Rob has had an opportunity to review this funding request yet? Drumheller, Red Deer South and Red Deer North have committed to support their part of the event. Please let me know as soon as possible.

There are others. I've got two or three others here like that.

In the previous e-mail it says:

Hi Donna.

That's my assistant.

Would you please forward this information to Rob for his consideration of CIP funding? The total CIP grant request for the Airdrie-Chestermere constituency [in this case] is \$26,500.

The CIP application is being coordinated by The City of Red Deer with each community organizing their own respective celebration. The City of Red Deer will ensure that allocated

grant resources are dispersed appropriately and that required follow up reporting is completed on behalf of all communities.

Then it shows exactly the CIP grant request for each community: Red Deer, \$37,500; Airdrie, \$13,500; Chestermere, \$13,000; Drumheller, \$11,000. Then it says how the funds are going to be used. Essentially, they were saying: look; the members for Drumheller-Stettler, Red Deer-South, Red Deer-North have committed to supporting this project, so we're just waiting to see what you say about the project.

Again, I have to say, whether this was going on without your knowledge or not, Minister, that there was not a time that I didn't support a project on a specific dollar amount that was not accepted by the CIP, CFEP grant programs. I will swear an affidavit oath to that effect. That is absolutely true.

So we have this situation here, and all I would like to see, in addition to the notifications, is just to have this document, that I'll table tomorrow, that's sent out to government MLAs sent out to us so that we can see that: "Okay. This one here is still under review. This would be a good time. I'm going to call them up." It even has a contact person for the grant, so you can call them and say: "What's this grant all about? Is it something we need? What's the deal? What's it for?" It allows us to do our homework to see if we want to support the grant or not.

If we could even just get this or whatever you're sending now to your individual government MLAs, I think, certainly, that would be a very good step in the right direction, as you already have taken with allowing for notification, if indeed you follow up with that. This would be, I think, a way that we could move forward. I know that I would and our caucus would be completely happy with that. We think that would be a fair arrangement.

If we need to talk about the grant programs – I know the Liberals and others have talked about different ways to do it. You could have a community organization or something like that, and that's fine. Maybe we can have that debate in the future, but for the purposes of right now under the current system that we have, could we have the same document that's sent to government MLAs sent to opposition MLAs?

Mr. Blakett: Well, I can answer that quite quickly. On January 17 we sent out a letter to all opposition MLAs with a report, and that went out to all government MLAs. It was all of those applications that came forward in the last quarter of 2010 and the first quarter of 2011 that decisions will be made on, so decisions that are going to be made now before the end of this month. That letter went out on the 17th of January.

There will be another letter that will go out in the first month of the next quarter – so it will go out in April – which will be all the applications that we've received for the first quarter of 2011, where decisions will be made by approximately June of 2011. That's the consistent approach that we will continue on with. I will be happy to table those letters that we sent on the 17th of January. We will continue to do that because we believe in being open and transparent and consistent.

Mr. Anderson: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate that. The letter that I think the minister is referring to, the one that got sent to myself, is this one, and I'll table that as well. It does have part of the information that the government MLAs get. It has the application number, the date that it's received – that's consistent with what was handed out before – the name of the applicant, the contact person, and the project status, so under evaluation. Absolutely.

Now, the only thing it doesn't include – and this is what would be helpful so that we could see what was available – is that on the one that was sent out to MLAs it has a summary status of project

application. It will tell you at the bottom how many total funds have been paid out to this constituency. In this case it's \$115,000 at this point. That allows you, of course, to deduce how much is left in the minister's budget for this constituency.

5:20

This is very useful because if you have, you know, four schools or something that you know are going to bring forward playground applications, for grants to help with building a playground, you can put a letter together and say: "You know what, Mr. Minister? This is what I would recommend. There are these two schools that are upcoming. I would recommend that maybe we should make sure everyone is treated the same and that they each get \$30,000 or \$40,000 or whatever, the same amount, et cetera." Or you could say, "Given that there's only about \$50,000 left in the budget and we have two people applying for the grants, could I suggest that we be equal and do \$25,000 and \$25,000?" It just helps us to make a proper recommendation, a well-thought-out recommendation as MLAs.

The other thing that this is missing besides the total funds paid out is the grant request amount. I don't know, for example – on here it does not say how much the grant was for. It just has the contact person, the project status – these are all good things to have – but it doesn't have what the actual amount of the grant was. So could those two things be included in these quarterly letters that you send out?

Mr. Blackett: Well, Mr. Speaker, when we first talked about it, what you had asked for, we had given you. You don't need to know what the dollar amounts are. You know the program, and every opposition member knows how it works. You prioritize which ones you think are important, that you want to support. If you see three playgrounds, say: please don't allocate all the money.

Give us a list of priorities. I mean, we can certainly do that. We don't have to get into the minutiae of how we're going to allocate dollars.

Mr. Anderson: All right. Well, I guess that's one way of looking at it. I guess the other way of looking at it is that if I have a – let's say that in Chestermere, for example, the Chestermere yacht club got a grant last year. Didn't know anything about it. It was just given out to them, the Chestermere yacht club. That's fine. It was quite a substantial grant.

There were some other grants that were being applied for at the time, and if I had seen the size of the grant, I maybe would have said: "You know what? Why is this so large?" Maybe I should call them and say: is this a priority for the constituency, or are there some playgrounds or some equipment or some event, maybe the pro rodeo or whatever, that would be more important? In other words, if you have the Chestermere yacht club asking for money and I say that I support the project, then what am I supporting? Am I supporting something for 50 bucks, a hundred bucks, a thousand bucks, \$10,000, \$150,000? I don't know. How can I know to support it or not, you know, or if there are any red flags that I should be looking at?

The only thing missing on this sheet that is on the government one is just the application request amount. If it's a hundred thousand dollars, \$90,000, it would be literally just another column on the sheet. Then the opposition MLAs would get the same as the government MLAs, and it's all good. Is that possible, Minister?

Mr. Blackett: Mr. Chairman, I'm not going to repeat myself. As I said to the hon. member, we have that report that you have, so you'll have an idea of what's coming forward in your constituency. My

office has always been open. It's been open to any opposition member who wants to come and discuss a particular application. I have no evidence from anyone that says that that's been incorrect. So if you have a particular instance, come and see me.

Mr. Anderson: Okay. Fair enough. Well, can I get this commitment, then, Minister: in addition to getting these quarterly reports, which you're sending in the current form, can I at least have a commitment from you that my assistant or our constituency assistants can call your ministry any time during operating hours and get the amount of the application request from them just by asking them verbally? And can they get the amount of money remaining in the pot for the specific constituency of Airdrie-Chestermere? If they're not going to get it on this, can they at least call in and ask that question as any government member would be able to do and get an answer to that? Is that a fair compromise?

Mr. Blackett: Mr. Chairman, the answer to that is an unequivocal no. We have gone and we have given him information. There you go. We're not going to spend time in our department with staff that are doing an important job, trying to go back and forth because of opposition queries and get into the minutiae of it. You support an application, or you don't support an application. That's the most information that we've ever given an opposition member. If that's not good enough, that's not good enough.

Mr. Anderson: Okay. Well, I guess what would not waste the time of staff, Mr. Minister, is if you just put the number in like you do for the government MLAs. If you just put that in the document, that would save your ministry's office all the time and effort. There would be no need for my assistant to call and ask because it would be right there, just like it is for every government MLA. I guess I would ask: why is it appropriate, Mr. Minister, for a government MLA to call in and get that information on demand, but I as an opposition MLA cannot call in and get that information? How do you justify that inconsistency, that double standard?

Mr. Blackett: Well, Mr. Chairman, first of all, opposition MLAs can call in and get that information. Secondly, if the hon. member wants to get the same privileges as a government MLA, he should have thought about that before he left our caucus and walked across the floor.

Mr. Anderson: Okay. That's an interesting response.

Clearly, what the minister did say is that I can call at any time. Is that right? Can I or my staff call anytime to ask for that information? Is that what I heard? You seemed to say that I could. Is that not the case? My staff can call and get that answer. Is that right?

Mr. Blackett: Mr. Chairman, he may be a lawyer, and I'm not a lawyer, but I'm not being fooled. Let's be perfectly clear. I said that if you've got a specific instance and a question about a particular project that you need support on, call me, and I will help you with that discussion. I'm not going to provide all of the particulars and financial information because you don't need it.

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Chair, that's fine. I will take you up on that offer, Mr. Minister; I promise you.

Why do the government members need the information but I as an opposition member do not need that information? Why? What's the reason?

Mr. Blackett: Mr. Chairman, the process is that applications are submitted, and the CLO looks for those and makes sure that they

meet the criteria that I outlined before: that the project is viable, that the matching funds are there and they're actually accounted for, and that there's community support. For government members the importance of the money towards them doesn't matter either. [interjection] No. You're talking about a process that may have been in place at whatever time you're referring to. I'm telling you that there's a different operation method today, and we stand by that.

Mr. Anderson: Okay. All right. Well, we'll continue to call. I think that any Albertan looking at this objectively would say that it would be fair for an opposition member to make the same request as a government member with regard to getting information from the minister in this regard, that it would only be fair that that be respected.

You said earlier, though, real quickly, that I should have thought about whether I wanted to have access to that information or not before I crossed the floor. Should my constituency be feeling that way, too? Is my constituency going to be punished in any way because I decided to cross the floor, Mr. Minister? That seemed to be what you were indicating there.

Mr. Blakett: Well, Mr. Chairman, I said that if you wanted the privileges of a government member, then you'd have to be in the government to get those privileges.

Airdrie-Chestermere nor any other riding has ever been punished for having an opposition MLA. As I stated earlier, opposition-held ridings get a disproportionately higher amount of money in their ridings than anyone else does. I dare you to show me where Airdrie-Chestermere has been adversely affected by anything that we have done. The mayor, Peter Brown, and the people that I met with on Saturday were very, very happy and very, very appreciative of the fact that the government of Alberta was still there to support them whether they had a government member or not.

We'll continue to do the great work for Albertans and provide the programs that are there for all Albertans, irrespective of who they voted for, because that's the right thing to do.

Mr. Anderson: I appreciate that. I'm glad that the folks in Airdrie-Chestermere won't be penalized. That's definitely a good thing. If it wasn't that way, it would certainly have the taint of corruption, wouldn't it? I would just say that I'd like to put on the record one final time that even though the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre and myself are members of an opposition party, we still represent the people that voted for us, and we still fight for them on a daily basis. Having the information available to us is important in order to do that.

5:30

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. Well, this certainly became an interesting discussion this afternoon. All kinds of information on the record that we weren't able to get on the record before.

I'd just like to pick up where I was and continue now. I think the minister probably still has a list of questions he hasn't answered, so let me add to his list. We were talking about the RAM; that's right. I'm also interested in and I'm sure the minister has noted my questions on the hub in Calgary. Is there any money from this budget that is going toward that Calgary media hub? I remember that last year there was a sum of \$10 million, and then when I questioned him in the budget debate, it was less than that. I'm just wondering if there is any money in this budget, and if there is, how much is it, and which vote number does it appear

under that is going toward that Calgary Creative Hub? The Calgary media Creative Hub or some variation on that theme is what it's called.

I'm also wondering. I mean, it's a pretty big deal. How come it's not in the ministry plan? Or is it in the three-year plan? This isn't a three-year budget projection particularly, but if it is part of a three-year plan, could he lay that out for us? And what exactly is the government's role going to be in this? It's always been a bit of a sticky wicket, this one, because the Edmonton film studio was privately funded entirely and has since been bought by a different group and is being operated differently. It's a large outlay of money to actually build one of these, and it's been a struggle.

Over the years – I don't know – there's probably been four or five of these Calgary studios that I've heard were going to be built, and it's always an extraordinary amount of money, which usually is enough to stop it, and eventually it all trickles away. Then four or five years later you get another version of it. So I'm hopeful that this one is successful, but if I could get a bit more detail about what the government's involvement in it is and what the money is and where the money is, that would be terrific.

Okay. Go ahead and answer those questions.

Mr. Blakett: First of all, I think other initiatives, we're getting through that. We will be more than happy to send you a list of all of those. And very similar to the list that we talked about last time, it's the Canadian Theatre Festival Society, the Magnetic North conference for part of the Calgary 2012 bid, the Olympic tribute gala at Commonwealth Stadium, the Atlas Coal Mine Historical Society, the Glenbow Museum, the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame, Alberta Creative Hub, to which last year we gave \$1.2 million. We will gladly give you a copy of those.

Your next point was about the Wild Rose Foundation and where that money came from. We have an \$8 million endowment for that, and the \$325,000 would be interest on that on an annual basis. We use that money towards the Vitalize conference, and then the ministry tops up the difference. I think this past year it was about 700 and some thousand dollars that we spent on Vitalize, so \$325,000 or thereabouts would have come out of this endowment fund interest, and then we would top up the rest of it.

In terms of the voluntary sector – I'm trying to remember because we've gone back and forth. The salary levels: that's always been a problem, the wage gap for the people that are in the sector versus any other industry or any other sector, especially oil and gas when you're in Calgary, the professional sector here in Edmonton versus government workers. We have a human resources strategy process that we're going through right now to try to deal with some of that and come up with some concrete measures because, again, that's something that's repeatedly brought up in the dialogue sessions. In the 30-some years I've been involved in the sector that's continued to be a problem.

We talked about the heritage sites. We have \$2.3 million in capital toward the heritage sites. We will continue to do what we can toward making sure that they're up to date, but we do not have a large outlay at this particular time for any large capital-intensive projects. Under voted capital investment by program, page 84, it says \$2 million there, and if you look under capital investment by program, page 89, under heritage, it's \$2.330 million. The other \$2 million is a voted amount.

Now, with respect to RAM, we have \$50 million budgeted for this coming year, this fiscal period, \$70 million for '12-13, and \$60 million for '13-14 for a total of \$180 million. You mentioned about the two-museum concept. That's something that was mentioned back – I remember the Premier mentioning it – in December 2009. The original design for the very large building at

the Glenora site totally encompassed Government House. It was not respectful of it. That Government House is an icon, a heritage piece, and we had this huge monstrosity just completely overshadowing that. We looked at doing it all in one or looking at two different sites because the costs were comparable.

We've moved forward. Right now we're focused on finishing the Acheson site because when we start construction and we have to close the museum for a period of time, we've got to have a place to be able to put all our artifacts. That will be the Acheson site, and hopefully that will be completed this fall. We need that in order to be able to move to the next step.

Lastly, the Creative Hub. Yeah, it's a great deal of money, but it's something that we need. This spring we've got *Heartland* coming for its fifth season, and working out of warehouse space is inadequate. We have *Hell on Wheels*, a production for AMC, the American network, through Nomadic Pictures here. That's going to start filming, I think, next month. Then, we have the Sam Steele movie for CBC by Knight productions along with Nancy Laing. That's going to be filming here, starting sometime in May. So we need this kind of space.

It's Calgary Economic Development that actually will manage going forward. It's a not-for-profit entity that we've set up. We put \$1.2 million toward that last year, and that was to come up with a governance structure, come up with a not-for-profit organization that the money would flow through from all levels of government. That was also for hiring a consulting firm. Lawson Projects, which is a combination architectural firm, engineering firm, and real estate expertise, went and looked at the site that we had looked at and chose, Canada Olympic Park, to see if that was the best site and looked at all the other prospective ones. It was close proximity to the mountains on the way out to Banff and only 20 minutes from downtown Calgary.

5:40

They have come up with a business plan. They had the different levels of government take a look at it to make sure that it was feasible. That's the federal government and the city of Calgary. It also asked 60 representatives from the industry whether they would participate and to which level they would participate in the new Creative Hub if it was established. Overwhelmingly they said that they would, to the point where 45,000 square feet of office space has already been spoken for. We don't have any money in this particular budget for that, so I would have to go through the process of asking Treasury Board for those dollars, and we haven't had a chance to do that. But that's a number one capital priority after the Royal Alberta Museum in my department.

Ms Blakeman: And the Varscona?

Mr. Blackett: The Varscona will be third.

Ms Blakeman: Seriously? The Varscona Theatre would come after this Creative Hub when it's been in line longer?

Mr. Blackett: Yeah. I'll be glad to tell you why.

Ms Blakeman: Well, I'd respectfully disagree with the minister. I think the Varscona has been waiting longer, and there's leveraged money that's waiting for it. I don't know how long the feds and the city are going to hang onto their money, waiting for the province to come in on that one. So we could be chucking some money there. I would urge you to fund that one faster rather than slower.

Just a couple of questions that have come out of what the minister just said. He gave me the money that was going into the RAM: \$50 million this year, \$70 million next year, and \$60 million in

'13-14. Could he please give me what the federal money is for that, or is the federal money part of the money you just gave me? If it is, break it out. If it's not, could you tell me how much it is, please?

I'd also like to see the business plan for the RAM. If you have enough information to be able to give me the reasoning you just gave me, there must be a business plan somewhere. So can I get that business plan, please?

I'd also like to see the business plan that was submitted to the feds and the city of Calgary on the hub project. I'd like to know how much the contract was for that went to the Lawson Projects. I'm sorry; I may not have that name exactly right. I've got Lawson, but I'm not sure if I got the second bit exactly correct. Sorry about that.

The Acheson site for the RAM: my understanding is that it will be a storage facility, not a visitation facility. So for how long is it expected that Albertans and tourists coming from out of province, out of the city I suppose, would not have access to the exhibits? Why was the choice made to do that so that it was not accessible rather than putting it into another exhibition space where it was accessible? Let me just give you a quick example of that. We had the Edmonton Art Gallery that relocated for the period of three years, I guess, that it took to build the new Art Gallery of Alberta. The concept is understood here. It's been done before. I'm just wondering why the choice was made by the department to essentially shut down the museum and store it as compared to keeping some part of it going. I can see his staff nodding, so there's obviously an answer there.

The historic sites: Turner Valley gas plant, Bitumount, and Greenhill mine. Can I get an update on that, please? One, I want an update on the status of those sites. Two, are there contracts in place between the departments of Health, Environment, and Culture? Turner Valley gas plant for sure has had a boatload of problems with pollution, essentially whether it was safe for people to go there, and various environmental studies were done. There were questions about whether they were done appropriately, whether they were done at the right time of year, whether they were done when the water was high or low, and how it affected the wells in the nearby area. I'm just wondering where we're at with that.

I think Dingman 1 was just shut down. I can see somebody moving over there, so they know what I'm talking about. I'd like to know what is happening with the restoration of that. Who is the lead out of the three departments? Where does the buck stop? What are the timelines for achieving nirvana or whatever the acceptable state is? As well, are there any outstanding studies or remediation that needs to happen there?

The minister answered my question about long-term plans to ensure ongoing maintenance of historic sites in that there is money that covers the regular maintenance of those. Thank you for doing that.

Okay. We're coming down the home stretch, guys. [interjection] You've been sitting there; I've been standing.

The last category is human rights. My colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona raised a couple of points around that. Once again, I see that the total program budget has gone down, but the administration costs have gone up as a percentage of the total budget. The budget for assistance to human rights in 2011-12 is slightly up, but it's still 8 per cent below the figure for '09-10, which was the first cut. That appears in the estimates on page 91.

The minister spoke last year about the "changing multicultural complexities in places like Edmonton and Calgary". That appears in *Hansard* for the Committee on Community Services, I think, on page CS-260. I notice that in Calgary last week we had another

racially motivated demonstration there. Hate crimes are reported as up in all Canadian cities in all of the major categories, so that would be race, religion, and sexual orientation. I'd like to hear the minister's commentary on that because we do have less money in that fund to operate around educational opportunities than we did before.

When I looked on the website – and thank you for putting stuff on the website now. Open data is a great thing. It just takes a whole bunch of a load off you people from having to go and scrounge for information for people like me. The number of complaint files that were opened in '09-10 is up quite a bit from previous years. It's 803 compared to 799 – well, that's not that much; that's four – compared to 680. But then when we look at open files, as of March 31 it goes from 810 to 941 to 1,000 open cases. Yikes. Now, the minister put a lot of time and effort into this department in the last year. What kind of results can he boast to me about how great it's going?

The last point I have to make is a bit of an odd one, but I find it very odd that when I phone people in the minister's department, I get a polite but firm, edging towards curt response from whomever I've called looking for pretty mundane information – if it was politically tricky, I would phone the minister because you know how much I like holding him to the hot seat – and I'm always told by the staff: "I'm sorry. Opposition members are told to phone the minister's office or to write a letter in order to get that information."

You and I just had the oddest go-around, where I quickly phoned and asked for some statistics on something, the total AFA grants that were given out over a nine-year period or something. It was quick. At that point it was not on the website, or I would have gotten it myself. I phoned the department. No, I had to write a letter to the minister's office in order to get that information. I got a kind of snarky letter back from the minister saying: "Well, now, really, it's on the website. You should have gone and gotten it from there, but here's the information that you're looking for." I thought: why do I have to phone the minister's office to get authority? It's very clear that that happens because I'm an opposition member.

5:50

Now, we've had a lot of discussion today about the different treatment between opposition members and government members. At a certain point this starts to creep into the area of privilege. I'm interested why there is a policy out there, a hangover perhaps from before the minister's days, that opposition members can't just phone his department and get flat-out information, that we have to write a letter, not phone but write a letter, to the minister himself in order to get the information, and some six weeks later it'll turn around and come back out to me. I mean, in this day and age of instant turnaround on this kind of thing this is ridiculous. I'm interested in what the reasoning is.

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

Ms Blakeman: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I'll allow this time to the minister to answer my questions.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Blackett: Well, thank you. First of all, in terms of having access to the collection for RAM, we don't know that. There is no business plan that exists right now. We do this in conjunction with the Minister of Infrastructure. A lot of that work will be done by

them in terms of drawings and those types of things. Of course, they share them with us.

How long? We haven't determined how long the museum would have to be shut, so we don't know how long people would not have access to that collection. I should point out that the Acheson site was there for other museums and their collections as well as RAM.

Turner Valley and Bitumount: I've been to them several times. Great places. In good times we thought we were going to be able to move ahead with the interpretative centre to coincide with the hundredth anniversary of the Turner Valley gas plant, but that's not possible right now. We have done all the remediation so that the paths there are walkable. The site is acceptable. We continue to monitor that site through the Ministry of Environment, and they measure that water quality on an ongoing basis. Yes, it's made the papers many times, but the levels are natural and, I'm told, acceptable. When we have the financial wherewithal, hopefully together with industry we will be able to do something in terms of providing a proper interpretive centre there.

In terms of human rights our budget didn't go down. I mean, we upped it a year ago, and we have kept that consistent. I think it's \$5.2 million this year. The actual last year was \$4.887 million, so it's a slight increase. Part of what we were doing is that we had to get more people in there. We had to have legal representatives for both the chief commissioner and for the director. We now have a full-time commissioner to help with the backlog of cases, and we have some additional part-time commissioners.

One of the problems that I was just starting to talk about to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona before the buzzer went is that because of our ruling now that says that the Human Rights Commission, which has always been a dumping ground for every complaint – 30,000 inquiries come into it. Two thousand actually have any merit, and we get about a thousand cases or fewer that actually go forward. So they are held. If it has to be looked at in another area or another forum – for instance, occupational health and safety – they've got to go through that process before they can come back to the Human Rights Commission. But that file is left as open because it's not resolved. We just have to find a different mechanism of actually showing that.

We do have fewer cases, but because of that rule – and we've moved some cases that are actually in other areas being resolved before they come back – it looks like there are actually more. We'll continue to reduce those cases. Blair Mason and Philippe Rabot are committed to doing so, and we've put the resources there to be able to do that.

The human rights educational fund: there was no reduction in that. It remains the same, and that's important. We have, I think, the actual last year of \$2.175 million, and this year it's going to be \$2.017 million. That's a slight reduction, I guess, of a hundred and some-odd thousand dollars. But we continue to use that because it's very valuable in what we do in terms of trying to combat racism, making people more aware, especially employers, of their responsibility.

We are a province where immigration is becoming an increasing factor. We're becoming more diversified, as I had mentioned. One of the things you'll see going forward in our department is that we are realigning some of our programs to make sure that we are able to address the needs of new immigrants, natives and Métis off-reservation, and youth who aren't at risk. We're trying to do some mitigation as opposed to dealing with the problems after the fact, in conjunction with some other departments.

Also, I should say that in June we're happy to be able to host CASHRA, which is the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies.

We're very proud of the steps we've made forward. There's much more to do, but I think we're moving well in the right direction.

The last one was with respect to opposition members. I ask that no members contact my staff directly, other than through my office. It's conflicting the information that comes out. It may be wrong. We had a letter that went out to someone that says that we're cutting a program. We're not cutting any program. I'd like to have a consistent message, and I don't want to get people all excited about something that need not be.

My letter to you: I was told that it was on the website. If it wasn't there, I apologize for that. We shouldn't take that long. I'll make sure we respond in our office a lot quicker than that.

So please do that through our office, and we'll make sure that we get back to you in a timely fashion.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. If it's consistent, I have no problem with it.

Just to close off, then, if the ministry has no business plan for what they're doing with RAM, how do you know what you're doing? I mean, surely you have a plan for this. You have dates and timelines and contracts, and you are working with another department. There has to be something on paper. I can FOIP you if you really want, but that's going to make some of your staff grimace. Why don't you just tell me what planning documents you have that allow you to move forward going: this is what happens next, and this is what happens then, and this is what happens then? Where are the documents about what you're doing with the Royal Alberta Museum?

Mr. Blackett: Well, we have some plans, as I said. It's not a business plan per se. They're with the Ministry of Infrastructure. Our schedule, timelines, and contracts: we don't have those in place because everything has kept on changing, what we looked at and what I thought was going to happen in 2008. I mean, we had money that got moved out. Part of our capital plan got moved out because of the economic circumstances. It was pushed out of, I think, fiscal year '09-10, and then it got moved out into this year, that \$50 million. We don't have any contracts. We have no building permits or any of those things that have gone forward yet. Once that decision has been made, we'll make that clear. You can certainly ask through us, and we will provide the information that we have, but there is no business plan. You can do that through both us and the Ministry of Infrastructure.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, there are two more minutes left.

Ms Blakeman: Two minutes. I have a whole two minutes left.

I'm just following up on your question about the Turner Valley plant. You were talking about the pathway. I'm sure that someone sent you a note because at one point there was a memo out there that said: pregnant women and young children should not go off the pathway. I'm presuming that the pathways have been certified – what was the language they were using? Oh, he's saying yes. Okay. Whatever it is, walkable or accessible to people.

Mr. Blackett: It was remediated to a different level. There are different grades. I can't remember what they are. But the pathway is different out there.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. I think that one's going to be a no-win no matter how it works out because I think that to make it nontoxic, we're going to destroy it. Maybe you could make a really good film about it, and that might be a way of getting around the problem of people being able to not access the site very well.

Thank you very much for your patience and everyone else's patience in the room today. I really appreciate it. Have a good evening.

6:00

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 5, agreed to on February 23, 2011, the Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

We'll give a few seconds to have the staff leave.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration resolutions for the Department of Culture and Community Spirit relating to the 2011-12 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, reports progress, and requests leave to sit again.

The Acting Speaker: All those members of the Assembly in favour of the report, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

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

Hon. members, it is 6 o'clock. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

The policy field committee will convene tonight, in 30 minutes, for consideration of the main estimates for Transportation. This meeting will be video streamed.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:02 p.m. to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

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