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The 27th Legislature
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.

Thursday, March 24, 2011

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Let us be ever mindful of our responsibilities as elected officials. Give us the wisdom to serve for the common good of all Albertans, and help us to carry out our duties with respect and courtesy for all of our colleagues in this Assembly. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

Mrs. Leskiw: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to introduce to you and through you 29 wonderful young ladies, members of the Girl Guides of Canada Alberta Council and 4-H, who are celebrating the 40th session of the Alberta girls' parliament, being held from March 23 to 27, 2011, here in Edmonton. I'm also told by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder that this Girl Guide House, as you know, is located in the wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Calder. This unique program is modelled on the Alberta Legislature with delegates from all over the province. This year girls from Ontario and British Columbia are joining in the session. They are accompanied by adviser Melanie Reichle; Cindy Fendall, activities co-ordinator; Shannon Hoffman, registrar; Faye Greenslade, facility co-ordinator; Claire Dubreuil, staff member and parliamentarian; Shannon Robertson; and Caitlin Lyster. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly on behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford students visiting Alberta from Japan. The students are visiting as part of the D.S. MacKenzie school's 30th anniversary of exchange with Fushimi junior high school in Hokkaido, Japan. This past Monday my colleague for Edmonton-Rutherford had the opportunity to attend an assembly at D.S. MacKenzie and bring greetings from the province of Alberta.

To our friends from Japan: our hearts and our prayers are with you, your families, and your countrypeople as your country recovers from one of the most devastating earthquakes and tsunamis ever recorded. We are so happy that you are safe here with us and that you were able to be here.

Each year we continue to grow our cultural and educational exchanges to learn more about our friends from around the world, particularly Japan. Mr. Speaker, they are seated in the members' gallery today. I'd ask Lin Hayama, Minami Suzuki, Nina Masuyama, Takuma Osada, Takumi Odawara, Yuta Iida, and their accompanying students Shelby Hadden, Kyra Heidinger, Keely Green, and teacher James Hamilton to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly. Konichiwa. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Berger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure to introduce to you and through you today on behalf of the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner 15 students from the Glenwood school

as well as three group leaders and teachers: Kelly Thomas, D.J. Scott, and Kathy Thomas. I think they're in the gallery behind me. I hope they are. If they would now please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of students from the Fultonvale elementary school in Strathcona constituency. They are accompanied by their teacher, Ms Cindy Jackson, and parent helpers Carmen Toma, Ruth LaFlèche, and Roswitha Latta. They're seated in the public gallery, where I can't quite see them behind me here. I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through to the members of this House a group of 11 grade 6 students from Talmud Torah school. They're here with their teachers, Mrs. Lindsey Todd and Ms Tania Nichiporik. I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome of this House.

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

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a long-time veteran of this building – her name is Elif Algam – who is sitting in the gallery opposite. Over the last year Elif has had the opportunity to work in my office, serving a maternity leave, and unfortunately she has decided, actually, that she's going to leave the building over the next week. I want to say that it's a pleasure for me to introduce her but at the same time very bittersweet because Elif is hard working, she's loyal, and above all else she has become a friend to me. She will be missed in my office. Wherever she does end up in the rest of her life, I can tell you that the people there will be very, very lucky. Elif, you're really going to be missed in my office. Please stand up and let us give you a warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's also my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly six individuals from the department of official languages at the Edmonton Garrison. It's always a great pleasure to welcome people from the garrison to the Assembly here. The department provides second-language training in English and French to the military community. With us today are Isabelle Paradis, Martine Boily, David Tremblay, Pierre-Luc Otis-Monat, and Karine Stratford, and they are accompanied by their teacher, Deborah Stasiuk. They are in the public gallery, and I would ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly four very special people seated in Speaker's gallery: Fred, Elsie, Trevor, and Roxanne Martin. They are very important and active members of our community of Athabasca and good friends of mine. Fred is a former justice of the peace. Elsie is former president of the hockey mothers, and Roxanne is past president of

Canadian Parents for French. All three are current curling club executives. Finally, Trevor is a past president of the Athabasca chamber of commerce and the Kinsmen, just to name a few. I'd like to ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our day is not long enough today to properly acknowledge the significant role and extensive accomplishments of my special guests that are here. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly an amazing group of individuals representing organizations including the Centre for Autism Services Alberta, the Autism Society of Edmonton, the Autism Research Centre at the Glenrose rehabilitation hospital, and Children's Autism Services of Edmonton as well as parents, grandparents, and family members, all lifelong advocates for their loved one who lives with autism spectrum disorder. In addition to that we have two very special young guests. We have Nicholas Steblyk and Aidan Guerra. They're seated in the public gallery, and I would ask all of my guests to now rise and receive the traditional warm greeting of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly members of the Edmonton Somaliland Community Centre. The centre's goal is to help the Somali community in Edmonton to fully participate in Canadian society. It's a resource and referral centre providing settlement, youth, employment, and family services. It offers workshops such as legal rights, citizenship classes, parenting skills, and crime prevention. I would now like to welcome the members of the Edmonton Somaliland Community Centre, who are seated in the public gallery. I would ask that they rise as I read their names to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: President Sahra Hashi, executive director Kahye Dubow, Kin Hussein, Kali Muhidin, Asmara Mohamed, Huria Mohamed, Liban Muhidin, Habiba Abdulle, and Sagal Yusuf. Join me in giving them a warm welcome.

1:40

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature five members of the light efficient communities coalition. The coalition is an organization of academics, professionals, technical and artistic individuals influencing governments to improve how we use exterior lighting in our communities. The group assists in the creation of lighting policies leading to efficient energy use while improving community health, safety, and living environments. I would now like to welcome the members of the coalition, who are seated in the public gallery, to the Legislature. I would ask that they rise as I read their names: Rod E. McConnell, Sherrilyn Jahrig, Dr. Doug Hube, Don Darnell, and Bruce McCurdy. I'd like it if everyone could join me in welcoming them.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House our new researcher in the Alberta Liberal caucus, Kyle Olsen. Kyle has been involved in politics in the province for many years and

most recently returned to Alberta from Ontario and a consulting firm. He is a former student at the University of Calgary, graduate of the University of Calgary, and president of the Alberta Young Liberals. Let's give him a warm welcome to the Legislature.

Members' Statements

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

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're joined today by people from several autism groups who deal every day with the reality of the disorder known as autism spectrum disorder. April 2 is World Autism Awareness Day.

The hon. Mike Lake, Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Mill Woods-Beaumont, speaks with authority when he says, "It is important that Canadians realize both the challenges faced by families dealing with autism and the incredible uniqueness and creativity of individuals diagnosed with this mysterious disorder." Mike's oldest son is afflicted with this spectrum disorder.

This disorder manifests itself in many ways and is, like any disease or injury of the brain, a very difficult reality to deal with. As both caregivers and the disabled individual age, it becomes difficult if not impossible sometimes to maintain consistent quality of life and caring. Without the love and support of those around them, the life of an autistic person often becomes one of isolation, the afflicted trapped in their world, the caregiver bound there as well. There is little respite from this simply due to the nature of the disorder.

The fact, Mr. Speaker, is this. The things we can't ever forget to forget about can make a world of difference to someone with autism, like the consequence of a decision to ban incandescent light bulbs in the United States, for example. We know that often an autistic person cannot be in a room lit by fluorescent bulbs. This limits their ability to be in so many public places and their chances to do so many things.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta leads this country in the clinical work on the disorder, yet the continuum of care and research is far from complete. I am very proud to say that the leading-edge work is done at the Glenrose hospital in my constituency of Edmonton-Calder. This is a lifeline to the families as they treat, manage, and plan for the futures of their loved ones, who struggle daily with this disability. Parents, families, and friends do very little and ask for not much in return save for recognition of the growing number of children and eventually adults who will be faced with countless challenges brought on by this disorder. These parents are advocating for their children.

Please, members, give them the gift of your time when they call to see you.

Thank you.

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

Safe Water

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said: "access to safe water is a fundamental human need and, therefore, a basic human right. Contaminated water jeopardizes both the physical and social health of all people. It is an affront to human dignity." Yet in Canada our governments have not recognized water as a human right. This has enabled governments to sell off water in bulk, to create water markets, and to sell licences to the highest bidder.

This is disheartening because we know that we're facing major issues in terms of safe water throughout our own province. In the north the people downstream from Fort McMurray are concerned about the safety of their water because the fish are becoming deformed, and corporations have admitted to dumping raw sewage in the river. In central Alberta farmers have written us and the government to express their concerns about flammable tap water. We know that human beings can live, however difficult, without money, but no human can live without safe drinking water. After three days without water there are grave health implications, and after five days almost all will certainly die.

Maude Barlow, the national chairperson for the Council of Canadians, has asserted that we are facing a crisis of global proportions as far as water is concerned. Nearly 2 billion people are living without access to clean water, and a lack of clean water is the number one killer of children world-wide.

Water is becoming more precious and valuable as the years go on. What we need is a government that will make the difficult decisions and that will put the health and well-being of Alberta families and ecosystems first. We need a government that is willing to engage in long-term planning to ensure that we have enough of our natural resources preserved and protected for future generations. Instead, we have a government that is set on selling our most precious natural resources, even those that are necessary for life, to the highest bidder.

Benjamin Franklin said that "when the well's dry, we know the worth of water." I urge my colleagues on both sides of this House to act before that day is upon us.

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

Health Care System Capital Plan

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to highlight the major capital investments this government is making in Alberta's health care system. As a part of our work to build the best-performing publicly funded health system in Canada, our government is investing \$2.5 billion over the next three years through our health capital plan.

Phase 1, announced in July 2010, was valued at \$1.2 billion over three years, including 22 facility projects in 15 small and medium-sized communities, to aid in the planning, design, and construction of the projects. The \$1.2 billion also supports province-wide facility maintenance and technology and equipment purchases. Phase 2, announced in December, provided \$1.3 billion over three years for projects in Edmonton and Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, cancer treatment capacity in these two cities will expand significantly as a result of a new \$208 million cancer infrastructure plan. This investment will support integrated and comprehensive cancer care and help meet the demands of a growing and aging population.

As part of our government's three-year health capital plan we have committed \$209 million for maintenance projects through the infrastructure maintenance program and an additional \$75 million for technology and equipment. This program provides funding to Alberta Health Services each year to cover the cost of repairs, upgrades, maintenance, and building systems costs.

My constituency is receiving some of this funding for things such as medical equipment, sterilization upgrades, a loading dock, and much more, all vital to providing the quality of care that my constituents and all Albertans expect.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Petroleum and Natural Gas Lease Licence Revenue

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There continue to be indications that the recent royalty curve adjustments, with emphasis on new technologies, are solidifying Alberta's competitive position, and Albertans are reaping the benefits. The province held its final mineral rights sale yesterday, March 23, for the 2010-11 fiscal year. I am pleased to report the province had yet another strong sale, bringing in nearly \$200 million for the province. This sale is just another example of the renewed confidence in Alberta's energy sector. This means new opportunities for industry, and it means new jobs for Albertans.

Approximately \$1 in investment equals \$9 in economic stimulus, and we're talking about multimillion-dollar investments. For each rig it is estimated that 135 jobs are created directly and indirectly. This past year has seen many records set when it comes to the sale of mineral rights.

A new average price per hectare, \$2,185, which is the best measure for a sale, was established with the July 7, 2010, sale. Of course, members will recall that this sale also set a record. It was the second-highest sale ever recorded and brought in over \$450 million, nearly half a billion dollars, for the province of Alberta. This came about during a calendar year which saw the province collect over \$2.3 billion in sales for the first time.

Yesterday, March 23, saw yet another record set. A licence located south of Fox Creek sold for over \$96.5 million. This parcel brought in the highest ever bonus for a petroleum and natural gas or oil sands parcel. The previous highest bonus was for an oil sands parcel that netted just under \$80 million in 2006. For the fiscal year we achieved the highest petroleum and natural gas lease and licence revenue ever, over \$2.5 billion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Wait Times for Cancer Care

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While this Premier continues to hide behind the Health Quality Council of Alberta, Albertans are dying from lung cancer unnecessarily. The five-year survival rate for lung cancer in Alberta is the lowest in the country, at 15.1 per cent. To the Premier: given that these troubling figures provide clear evidence that lung cancer treatment in Alberta lags behind other provinces, can the Premier explain why Albertans with lung cancer are more likely to die in Alberta?

Mr. Stelmach: Yesterday the hon. member quoted something from *The Lancet*, I believe. You know, once again, we see the Liberal leader playing politics with health, and it is quite troubling because the individual is also a public health doctor. To take something, that has already been in the media yesterday, by Dr. Tony Fields, who called the comments from yesterday a big leap to make, where our cancer survival rates are much better than in the U.K., Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and this fellow brings that kind of unreal information. . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: I thought, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier was proud of our position relative to the rest of Canada. He suddenly shifted to international comparisons. Very interesting.

Is the Premier, then, saying that there's no connection between Alberta having Canada's lowest survival rates and this government's decision to dismiss two prominent lung surgeons? Are you saying that there's no connection, Mr. Premier?

Mr. Zwozdesky: You want to talk about Canadian statistics? We can talk about Canadian statistics, too. Let's talk about the fact that in Alberta the death rate for women with colorectal cancer is the lowest in all of Canada. We can stand here and I can tell you that the death rate for men with lung cancer is the second lowest in all of Canada. These are numbers, Mr. Speaker. We should be focused on improving early detection, more screening, and better health outcomes, and that's what we're doing on this side of the House.

Dr. Swann: Given that this is the potential evidence linking unnecessarily high death rates from cancer to the actions of this government to stifle physicians, will the Premier finally name an independent judicial inquiry with the power to subpoena witnesses and compel testimony under oath, and if not, why not?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, it's just unbelievable. First they ask for the Health Quality Council to become involved. We get the Health Quality Council involved. They ask for an independent review. We give them an independent review. Nothing is ever good enough for them. They ask for a judicial inquiry. We have a former Chief Justice on this advisory panel, and now that's not good enough. What will ever satisfy the opposition's quest for this wild goose chase? I don't know.

The Speaker: By my reckoning, there are approximately 125 young people in the Assembly today.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has known for over a decade that resources for lung cancer surgery were inadequate, and it chose to do nothing. Instead of listening to years of concerns from top surgeons, Capital health ordered them to stop speaking out and then bound them to silence. One of those doctors, Dr. McNamee, now at Harvard, is again raising concerns about low lung cancer survival rates in Alberta, saying: irrefutable evidence by an impartial third party review; Albertans suffer when it comes to cancer care. Does the Premier dispute internationally recognized evidence that Albertans are suffering with inadequate cancer care?

Mr. Stelmach: Well, given the statistics that the minister just quoted, I believe we're doing very well in many areas of cancer treatment. Can we improve across the broad spectrum? Certainly. But to pick one particular area and not talk about the rest is not fair to the thousands of people that deliver health care in this province.

Dr. Swann: This government failed to act on the concerns of expert surgeons. Given that Alberta's lung cancer survival rates are the worst in Canada, will the Premier admit now that the government's continued mismanagement of health care is hurting Albertans?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the important thing to keep in mind here is that at the time these allegations refer to, which is approximately 10 years ago, the wait time for access to lung surgery in Alberta was about 60 days. That's in that doctor's statement alone. Today it's 27 days. It's been cut in half. We're making vast improvements in this important area.

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you to the minister for acknowledging that their firing of two lung surgeons did contribute to the problems a decade ago. Thank you for that.

What is the Premier hiding, and what are you protecting by not calling a public inquiry? What are you hiding, Mr. Premier?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, nobody is hiding anything. I'm not going to be following this member's suggestions of stampeding to some sort of a judicial inquiry. Back where I come from, there's a saying: "Chekaj! Chekaj!" Whoa; let the Health Quality Council do their work.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Whether it's compromised care, wait times, a culture of intimidation, or the lowest cancer survival rates in the country, evidence of Tory mismanagement of health care in this province emerges daily. The Premier hides behind government spokesmen, ignores the concerns of doctors, nurses, and a respected international medical journal. This is a scandal that may well have cost many people their lives in this province, and this government is engineering a cover-up. To the Premier: given that the Health Quality Council of Alberta can neither subpoena witnesses nor . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, talk about a culture of fear and intimidation. Members in this Assembly have been using the protection of immunity to question the integrity of men and women involved in providing health care in Alberta on a daily basis, individuals that have no way to defend themselves, and using inappropriately the traditional immunity of the House. If they do not withdraw the names of the individuals they mentioned, especially yesterday from the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, I think that is a total abuse of the traditional performance of this House.

Dr. Swann: Will this Premier admit that his government's greatest concern is doing whatever it can to protect its cabinet ministers, top officials, and friends from avoiding taking the witness stand? That's your greatest concern, not the health of Albertans.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what we're doing. We're protecting Albertans' health, and we're protecting them against accusations like this. We're protecting them from accusations such as were levelled yesterday by the Wildrose Alliance against innocent bureaucrats, as he called them. To call someone a reprehensible bureaucrat is absolutely shameful.

Dr. Swann: Why is this Premier more concerned about covering up the truth about lung cancer death than he is about getting to the bottom of a scandal with a full inquiry that can subpoena evidence and question witnesses on the witness stand? Why the cover-up, Mr. Premier?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I'm not about to question the capabilities of Dr. Cowell or Dr. Tyrrell, certainly not the capabilities of Dr. Lakhani or Dr. Sutcliffe. Nor am I going to question the two individuals that have been appointed to the advisory panel, former Deputy Prime Minister and law professor Anne McLellan or a former retired Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench. If that party wants to question their capabilities, say so in the House.

Integrated Ambulance Services in Airdrie

Mr. Anderson: Well, I had some questions, but I'm going to change them now.

Mr. Premier, yesterday I brought evidence to this House that showed a 33 per cent increase in ambulance response times in my constituency since your vaunted Alberta health superboard took over ambulance services from the city of Airdrie. A 33 per cent increase: that's over three minutes for people suffering a heart attack in my community that they are now going to have to wait to have an ambulance come and see them. This whole process was overseen by an individual, a high-ranking official named Darren Sandbeck . . .

The Speaker: I'm afraid we haven't time for the question. [interjection] No, no. Please sit down. Please.

I don't know who this question is going to.

2:00

Mr. Stelmach: I don't know what the question is, during whatever the member said, but we want him to keep in mind that there has been an 80 per cent increase in the population in the area. Over a period of time there has been an increase in the population in Airdrie. The minister is doing whatever he can with all of the municipal jurisdictions in Alberta to provide ambulance service. We have covered the cost as the government of Alberta and support . . .

The Speaker: Okay. I'm going to recognize the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere with his second question.

Mr. Anderson: Given that the transfer occurred three months ago, not 25 years ago, which is the time frame you're referring to, how do you explain a 33 per cent increase in the response times for my community between the time Alberta's health superboard took over ambulance services for the city of Airdrie and the integrated service and what it was doing before?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the people . . . [interjections] Did you want to recognize Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo?

The Speaker: No. I'm going to recognize you, but I'm going to look at two of my little buddies over there.

I'm going to recognize the Minister of Health and Wellness for a response.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you that the EMS individuals and the firefighters and the fire and rescue team in Airdrie are the top professionals available. That's for sure. The fact is that there were two different locations out of which EMS used to be provided. I believe the current situation is that it is being provided out of one, and now Alberta Health Services is looking for a second site to add. But the number . . .

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

Mr. Anderson: Given that there is now a 33 per cent stronger likelihood that people in my community are going to die when they have a serious heart attack and they have to wait three more minutes for an ambulance service – and you were in that city council chamber, Minister, when we explained this to you prior to this decision being made. We begged you – we begged you – to not make that decision, yet you didn't listen. Will you take . . .

The Speaker: That's a long enough background. Minister, proceed if you wish.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, it's true. I met with the city council, and the city council had made an arrangement with Alberta Health Services. The takeover has occurred. If these services are as the member says, perhaps not quite where they should be, I'm confident that Alberta Health Services will look at that, and they will make whatever corrections and additions are necessary. It's as simple as that.

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

Cataract Surgery Wait Times

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Alberta has among its other failings the worst waiting times for cataract surgery in Canada. According to Alberta Health Services numbers wait times in the province averaged 38.6 weeks, putting us in last place in the country. My question is to the minister of health. How can the minister justify this deplorable state of affairs other than to admit that Albertans simply can't trust this PC government with our health care system?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, it's not a question quite the way this member is intending it, I'm sure. The fact is that there are a number of people who go to ophthalmologists in this province who sometimes are put onto what you might call a reservation wait list but not on a wait list as in: it's urgent, and you must have it right away. That's an important distinction to make.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, they don't call him the Velvet Fog for nothing.

Given that people wait 62 weeks for surgery in Calgary compared to 39 weeks in Edmonton, or one and a half times longer, and given that nearly all surgeries in Calgary are done in private, for-profit clinics in contrast to the surgeries done in Edmonton, will this minister admit that this PC government's failed experiment with publicly funded, privately delivered health care has simply made a bad situation even worse?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, there's no failed experiment of any nature whatsoever. The fact is that we have about 30 outstanding ophthalmologists in Calgary who perform a wide variety of surgical procedures for the eye. In fact, they're probably providing about 11,000 or 12,000. We've just ramped it up province-wide by another 3,200. You know what? If they vote for our budget, they'll see another ramp-up again because that's the service people want.

Mr. Mason: Given that this minister just seems to be chasing crises with dollars instead of planning forward for the health care system, will he do the right thing and support a full public inquiry into the health care system of this province?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we're doing well over 30,000 cataracts, just cataracts alone, in our province. We're spending millions of dollars to provide that outstanding service for Albertans. Yes, there are some wait lists; yes, there are some reservation lists. The point here is that the ophthalmologists are doing an outstanding job of lowering those wait times because that's one of our five-year health action plan objectives, and we will accomplish it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Health Services Financial Reporting

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Former Auditor General Fred Dunn stated in 2006 about Capital health's shoddy bookkeeping, and I quote: auditing should not be a hide-and-seek exercise, whereby management hides the truth and auditors seek to get adjustments made in order that the financial statements reflect reality. End of quote. To the minister of health. The other budget line for 2005 was \$29 million for Capital health. What is hidden in this \$29 million line item? Is it settlements to silence doctors? Is it the legal fee . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, you know, 2005. I mean, you might as well ask the hon. member what he had for lunch on that day. Who knows? If there's some allegation he wants to make, then please bring it forward as a written question, as a motion for a return, or some other way, where that level of detail going back six years can be properly explained once and for all. Please do that, hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Shame on this minister. Again to this minister: why did this government allow Capital health to pick its own auditor?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the regional health authorities, just like with AHS, were entities unto themselves. They had their own administration, they had their own bookkeeping, they had their own CEOs, they had their own vice-presidents, and so on. They ran their own show, and Alberta Health Services still does. They're a self-standing entity, not unlike a corporation.

Mr. MacDonald: I find it curious, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. minister can remember that from 2002-03, but he can't find the \$29 million from 2005-06.

Again to the minister: why did Capital health not provide its audit and finance committee with complete and accurate financial information in 2005-06?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I would submit they did, and I'll bet you the Auditor General would agree.

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

Ethane Incentive

Mr. Prins: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday this government announced an expansion to the incremental ethane extraction program. As I understand it, the program is a royalty credit program, where credits are provided to petrochemical companies consuming incremental ethane for value-added upgrading in Alberta such as ethylene, polyethylene, and other derivatives. My question today is for the Minister of Energy. Why does the government believe it is necessary to provide financial incentives to support the production of ethane in Alberta?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, the feedstock supplies for the petrochemical industry have been on a decline for some time with the decline in production of natural gas. But there are some 7,500 Albertans who work in the petrochemical industry. It's a very important industry in the province. In 2006 the incremental ethane policy was brought into place, and what we announced yesterday was the expansion of this program so that it will now include off-gases from the oil sands . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Mr. Prins: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are the environmental benefits of this program?

Mr. Liepert: Well, one of the situations you have with the oil sands is that an awful lot of these off-gases are simply burned as fuel, and they have a high carbon footprint, Mr. Speaker. So what we are attempting to do is capture those off-gases, process them for value-added, and use natural gas as the fuel supply. We anticipate that annually the gas emissions could be reduced by as much as 1 million tonnes.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my constituency of Lacombe-Ponoka is home to some of the bigger petrochemical plants in the world at Joffre and Prentiss. I would like to ask the minister: what are the benefits to these plants and other Albertans?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, the member is exactly right. As I said in my first answer, some 7,500 Albertans are employed in the petrochemical industry, but we have been experiencing feedstock shortages. I had the opportunity to meet with the owners of the NOVA plant, which is now the United Arab Emirates, and they clearly indicated they're prepared to put additional investment into that plant for expansion if they could get some assurance that the feedstock supplies would be there. I think yesterday's decision will provide that assurance.

2:10

Education Funding

Mr. Chase: Mr. Speaker, in 2003 this government accepted the Learning Commission's recommendations to fund optional full-day kindergarten and half-day junior kindergarten but never did. This government abandoned the commission's reduced class size initiatives, froze special-needs funding for the past three years, eliminated enhanced ESL funding, halved innovation support, and now the minister is pressuring boards into bankruptcy by suggesting they drain what little remains of their surpluses. To the minister: why is your government holding our children's education hostage?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, that is absurd. The budget for school boards across this province has gone up 63 per cent over the last 10 years, and the enrolment has gone up 3 per cent. The improvements in education have been phenomenal, and the fact is that this province year after year after year under a PC government has among the best results in the world.

Mr. Chase: Mr. Speaker, if step 1, based on the minister's comments yesterday regarding draining school board surpluses, is to bankrupt boards, is step 2 to further centralize or eliminate local educational authority entirely?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, over the past three years we've talked about Inspiring Education, and day after day I've said that one of the most important things we have in the education system is locally elected boards involving local communities in the education of local students. So I don't know where this hon. member has been, but what we're doing is asking boards in a time of fiscal restraint to take a look at their operating reserves and their other things, to take a look at what they're doing and making sure that everything they do adds value to students and student learning.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Given that last year's provincial funding shortfall forced the Calgary board of education to eliminate 277 full-time positions and as a result of this year's \$61.7 million government shortfall an equivalent number of support staff and teachers will disappear, are our children not worthy of sustainable, predictable government funding?

Mr. Hancock: Sustainable and predictable funding? We're talking about a \$61 million shortfall in the Calgary board. That would be a 7 per cent increase in their budget. Nobody ever promised anybody a 7 per cent increase in their budget. We have a 4.7 per cent increase in the education budget this year, and that's very good. But it's a tough budget for Education because we need a little bit more than that in order to balance things. So we had to cut back some targeted grants. The school board should be looking at their operating reserves. They've got \$34 million in operating reserves, and to come cap in hand and ask for a 7 per cent year over year budget is absurd.

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

Federal Budget

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Tuesday's federal budget is provoking a great deal of reaction across the country, from those who support it to those who don't like it and think it should trigger an election. The Alberta government's reaction seems to be somewhat in between: wishy-washy. My questions are to the Minister of Finance and Enterprise. Is this budget good or bad for Albertans, Mr. Minister? In clear words.

Mr. Snelgrove: Well, I guess until I watched the news I thought it was kind of a boring, mundane budget. But from the reaction of the opposition parties, apparently it wasn't.

Mr. Speaker, the reality in government is that we have to deal with real numbers, with real people, with real issues. Opposition parties have an opportunity to pull numbers and issues out of the air. The federal government matched many of our priorities: caring for vulnerable Canadians, trying to pay down their debt, keeping an eye on our economic recovery, making sure that we keep Canadians working. Is it good for Canada in that we're reducing our debt? Yes.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My next question to the same minister: given the federal budget again ignores Alberta's demand for fair treatment under the Canada health transfer, how can this government support this budget?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, there are many, many issues that we need to deal with the federal government on. While it is troubling from the health transfer point of view – because we look at health in Canada as a national concern. We believe people with cancer or heart issues across this country should be dealt with fairly. We will continue to lobby the government. We would ask Albertans to contact their MPs to ensure fair treatment under the Canada health transfer, and that's why that's maybe the most troubling. Other than that, we have had a good relationship with the federal government.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Final question to the same minister: what is the impact on our resource sector of the tax measures in this budget?

Mr. Snelgrove: I can't tell you what the impact on the sector might be. They have made changes to some of the rules surrounding transfer of income from different industries within some of their partnerships. It has changed the way they're able to write off some of the expenses with regard to some of our mining.

Mr. Speaker, I would far rather sit down with this government than a coalition of opportunist Liberals, separatists, and socialists.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Protection against Discrimination

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta human rights act prohibits discrimination against individuals on the grounds of physical or mental disability, but this law is outdated in that it allows discrimination based on future disability by permitting organizations to coerce individuals into providing their genetic information, and then it allows those same organizations to reject those individuals for employment or insurance. To the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit: will the minister support UNESCO's position that no one shall be subject to discrimination based on genetic characteristics?

Mr. Blackett: Well, Mr. Speaker, we had a fulsome and vigorous debate here two years ago on the Alberta human rights act, and we looked at all different types of protected grounds. We did not at the time think of that as a sufficient basis to put into the act, and we stand by that today. If there is a belief that somebody has been discriminated against, they can take that to the Human Rights Commission and let the commission determine it.

Ms Blakeman: Well, no, sir, they can't. If they feel they've been discriminated against because of genetic information, it's not a prohibited grounds of discrimination, so they can't take it to the commission. Where else would the minister suggest they take it, then?

Mr. Blackett: Well, Mr. Speaker, if it's not available under the Human Rights Commission, then I'm sorry. I'm not sure what opportunity they have. Maybe the courts is another avenue they should be looking at.

Ms Blakeman: I don't think you're making Albertans feel any more protected.

Back to the same minister: given these concerns will the minister request his colleague the minister responsible for the Personal Information Protection Act to specifically prohibit the use of genetic information by organizations to make decisions on employment and insurance?

Mr. Blackett: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of all the information in the allegations the hon. member is making. If the hon. member would like to submit that information to me in writing, I will give it some due consideration.

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

New School Construction

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents are concerned that despite all the money that this province has invested in capital projects, school space in communities such as Beaumont is not sufficient to meet the needs of growing communities, forcing the local school board in Beaumont to reconfigure grades in various facilities to the dissatisfaction of parents. To the Minister of

Education: why do school projects lag so far behind the need when population growth should be predictable? What are you doing to ensure that communities growing like Beaumont get the schools they need?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a reality that we face. The province has been growing rapidly, and we have to try hard to keep up and, in fact, get ahead of the demand in areas like schools. We have some hot spots in the province. Nonetheless, we have completed about 110 projects over the last two years, and there are more projects happening. We are working with school boards, and we have one of the best demographic modelling tools available, so we have a very good predictive process relative to where we need schools. We're working with the school boards on dealing with their issues.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Mr. Minister, what are you doing to get new schools built in these growing communities, like Beaumont, where there is exceptional need?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Minister of Education said, we are continuing to work with school boards. We have met with school boards, and we have done a detailed analysis of whether, you know, a school board needs modernizations or renovations or additions. Most importantly, we're looking at innovative and creative ways to deliver these schools, whether it be bundling or alternative financing. We need to ensure that the schools are provided on a cost-effective . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Again to the Minister of Infrastructure. You say that you are working on a plan. When can my constituents and the people in these other fast-growing areas actually see some concrete results? How soon will you get this done?

2:20

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, our Premier has committed that these schools will be delivered, and it is a priority of this government. It will happen, and it will happen soon.

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

Health Quality Council Review

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans won't be fooled by cheap imitations of public hearings. Yesterday the health minister announced a council to advise a council, and notwithstanding the elevated reputations of the council members in comparison to the council they're advising, it still looks like cynical window dressing to Albertans. To the minister: will he admit that his council squared still can't subpoena witnesses and still can't protect them if they come forward?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I think the advisory panel members are held in very high esteem by members of this House and by Albertans. Dr. Zaheer Lakhani, the Hon. Anne McLellan, Mr. Art Price, Dr. Sutcliffe, the hon. Allan Wachowich, former Chief Justice: I'm sure they can handle whatever task is put in front of them, and I'm sure they will make the appropriate recommendations on how that review is to proceed.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans deserve to watch, hear, and read about any investigation into whether our doctors were intimidated while it happens and given that the Health Quality Council probe will still take place behind closed doors, safely tucked away from the public's pre-election eye, will the minister admit that his advisory group will do nothing to fix this fundamental flaw?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. This is not my advisory group. This is an advisory panel selected, chosen, identified, and otherwise put in place by the Health Quality Council of Alberta. The important thing for Albertans to know – and I would hope the hon. members pay attention to this – is that the final report will be made public in its entirety.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, given that the Health Quality Council regulation makes no provision for an advisory group to the council such that it's clear the government pulled this advisory council out of a hat under increasing public pressure, why won't the minister admit that this was a shameful and ineffective ploy to lend credibility to a probe that has none?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, that's what's so unfortunate when opposition members who have nothing whatsoever to contribute sometimes feel obliged to share it with everybody.

The fact is that in the news release that was issued by the Health Quality Council, they specifically said:

A team of health professionals and system review experts who have no known association with the specific matters under review will be appointed to the quality assurance committee.

A panel of experts will be appointed to assist and advise the Council in this review.

A quote from their press release.

The Speaker: And we will have a tabling of such documents, please. [interjection] It has been tabled? Okay. Fine. Thank you, then.

The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Spring Flooding

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. New flooding in the Medicine Hat area appears likely in the coming days or weeks. My questions are to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Since this and many other parts of the province are prone to flooding, what permanent and needed solutions is the government considering to mitigate flooding rather than simply dealing with the costly damages on an ad hoc basis after the fact?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, that's an excellent question. We just wrapped up the convention with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and certainly flooding was on everybody's mind, especially following last year's flooding. This was re-emphasized again by some of the localized flooding that we're presently experiencing in southern Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, just last week I announced a million dollars in funding for temporary flood-mitigation efforts in both Medicine Hat and Cypress county, and it's an expectation . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Mr. Kang: To the minister again: if the province contracts out disaster recovery services again this year, will the same company be used, or will there be an open tender process?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, again, the contract, the RFP, was for more than one year, so we will be using the same company again this coming year. It's a contract that we have there to provide us with so many days and so many hours of work over a period of a number of years for a particular amount of money.

Mr. Speaker, there's maybe a little bit of insinuation that they weren't doing a proper job, and we've concluded satisfactorily about 98 per cent of the files. There are still a couple of complex files that we need to . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That company hasn't been doing a great job. Some flood victims are still waiting for their cheques.

To the minister again: has the minister explored the feasibility of creating a dedicated disaster recovery fund instead of relying on emergency funds to cover flood claims?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, I continue to work with my counterparts across Canada, our provincial ministers and the federal ministers, to look at a very formalized mitigation fund. We know that under the DRP process we've got access to dollars through our Treasury Board, and we've been able to respond to the necessary costs that we incur as we move along.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Education Funding (continued)

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent press release from the Calgary board of education states an estimated \$61.7 million shortfall for the coming school year. Young teachers and those involved with education are finding it more and more difficult to secure a job. My question is to the hon. Minister of Education. What explanation can you give to those in the education field who are either looking for work or presently worrying about losing their job?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, there's no question, as we've said time and again in this House, that this is a difficult budget for Education this year. We have a significant increase of 4.7 per cent, but it's not going to go far enough to cover all of the costs, so we had to actually look at some of the targeted grants to see whether they were still performing their purpose and eliminate those ones where we felt they could be eliminated in order to participate with the government in a fiscally responsible budget and to keep the deficit as low as possible. That's what we needed to do. Unfortunately, that's going to provide challenges this year on some fronts, but we're asking school boards to try and manage that process.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same hon. minister. What is the government's policy on school board reserve funds, particularly when the fund is used up?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do expect that school boards will keep a modest operating surplus of around 2 per cent, which would assist them with ongoing expenses and shortfalls from time to time and managing things. We have significantly more than that across the province in reserves. We know the school boards have saved for a purpose, but we're in a tough fiscal time, and what we're asking school boards to do with their bud-

geting is to look at those areas, to look at everything that they do to determine: does it add value, does it help students, does it help maintain the class sizes?

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary is to the same hon. minister. Given the fact that many Albertans put as much priority on education as on health care, would you explore the idea of our government creating a policy on sustainable, predictable, and longer term funding for education similar to Alberta's five-year funding for health care?

Mr. Hancock: That's something that has been discussed over the course of the last year and probably longer than that. One of the things that I would point out, as I mentioned earlier in the House, is that over the last 10 years there's been a 63 per cent increase in the operating funding for boards in the province in the school education budget and only a 3 per cent increase in student population. Now, we have an increasing population. I don't think people would really want to be limited to what they might get on a long-term funding basis when we do have challenges and opportunities that we need to deal with on an ongoing basis. But we do have three-year business plans, and there's no reason why school boards cannot plan in accordance with those three-year business plans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Alberta Children's Hospital

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Children's hospital in Calgary is the jewel of the city. Sick children travel across the prairies to receive world-class treatment. Mismanagement in Calgary has overloaded the Foothills hospital and led to adults having lab work done at the Children's hospital. Not only are they being seen, but they are being prioritized ahead of the sick children because it's easier for the administrators. To the health minister: Are you aware that adults are now being treated before children at the Children's hospital?

Mr. Zwodzesky: No, Mr. Speaker, I am not. But if there's a story there that needs to be looked into, if there's some help needed, I can assure you that somebody will look into it and provide the help needed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the lab at the Alberta Children's hospital is equipped to test sick children, will the minister here and now promise to investigate this situation and make sure that children come first and that adults will wait as per their own policy?

2:30

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, I will ensure that someone from Alberta Health Services looks into that as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, that's a good thing.

Given that Alberta Children's hospital is first and foremost for sick children and not to be used as an overflow for crowded hospitals elsewhere, will the minister again commit to having all children treated before adults at the Alberta Children's hospital?

Mr. Zwodzesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure they have protocols there that they're doing their best to follow. Perhaps there are some

issues with certain peak periods, where others need more urgent care than not regardless of their age, but whatever the situation is, I have already committed to this member that someone from AHS will look into this and will follow through on that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

PDD Transition Funding

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minors who are disabled, some from birth, and are receiving supports from government still have to apply for the assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH, program when they turn 18. They and their parents wonder why they have to go through this process instead of it happening automatically. To the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: why is this transition process not more seamless?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, this member asks a very good question. I, too, have had constituents ask me this question, as I'm sure other MLAs have been asked. That's why we've been working so hard across five ministries, including Children and Youth Services, to develop Alberta Supports. That initiative will provide a more seamless transition between programs as people age or as their circumstances change.

Mr. Marz: What exactly is the minister doing to make this process more streamlined in the future?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, the vision of Alberta Supports is to deliver social-based programs to Albertans in need with easier access and better transitions. Twenty-five families with kids between the ages of 16 and 19 have agreed to participate in a pilot project in central Alberta to test the ways that we can simplify and streamline transitions between programs. Case co-ordinators will help these families to move from one program to another without another application.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Marz: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what will the minister do with the results from this test project? What happens next?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, we'll take the findings from this pilot project in Red Deer to other places and other client groups in the province. We believe that this pilot project will help Alberta Supports to achieve some very important goals: better client service, smooth transitions from one program to another, and better ways of doing business.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Exemption from Municipal Zoning

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, I've repeatedly asked the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology to justify the remarkable privilege granted to three Alberta universities; namely, their complete exemption from any municipal zoning regulations. The minister has never offered a justification, which suggests there isn't one. One more time to the minister: what justification can he give for granting this privilege to a few select universities when no other institutions, businesses, or citizens receive it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand and answer that question. There is not a total exemption for any facility in the province of Alberta. Even on those campuses such as the University of Alberta or the University of Calgary or Lethbridge, if there is any commercial activity or any commercial development happening on that campus, it must go through all the processes within the municipality for approval.

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, this minister needs to study both the legislation and the regulations.

Given that, what does the minister and his department do to hold universities to account when they violate the few planning and development requirements they face under the Post-secondary Learning Act?

Mr. Weadick: Mr. Speaker, at this time I'm unaware of any times where any of our universities have violated those planning rules around our municipal planning within the province.

Dr. Taft: Well, that raises this question, Mr. Speaker. Does the minister or his department ever look at what the universities are doing to check if perhaps they are violating their long-range development plans? Has anybody ever looked?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We work very closely with our universities. We know that they do work with the municipalities, with the neighbourhoods, and with our department. All of their long-term plans are approved by us when they go forward, but where there are commercial properties, those have to go through the appropriate municipal processes.

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

Community Facility Enhancement Program

Mr. Benito: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The community facility enhancement program assists communities with construction and the development of community public-use facilities. It's a wonderful program. In fact, I recently awarded a cheque for \$125,000 in civic funding to the Ghana Friendship Association. However, other groups in my constituency have longed for a community centre to call their own, but they've found it difficult to raise the necessary funds to help build them. My first question is to the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. How, specifically, are the grant requests for community facility enhancement program funding processed?

Mr. Blackett: Well, Mr. Speaker, the first thing I'd like to do is clarify with the hon. member that he didn't award the cheque to that community association. He presented the cheque on behalf of the government of Alberta. I'd just make that clear.

We process applications in this way. An individual organization can put an application in to the community liaison officer or online through our system. That application is looked at based on viability, on the fact that there are matching funds approved, and that there's community support.

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Mr. Benito: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. What, specifically, are the requirements a group must meet to receive a community facility enhancement program grant?

Mr. Blackett: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, they have to be a registered not-for-profit with the government of Alberta under the Societies Act. They have to meet the matching fund requirement. They have to meet the viability dictate that's there, and we have to make sure that there is community support. That includes letters of support from MLAs, municipalities, and others.

Mr. Benito: To the same minister: are there other alternative sources of funding to help those in the Mill Woods community build public-use community facilities?

Mr. Blackett: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker. It's an excellent program, but it's a matching program, so there are other sources. That would be from other levels of government. That would be from the private sector or individual donations. That is an excellent question. That deserves an award.

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

Municipal Sustainability

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties wrapped up their spring convention this week. They had some prepared questions to ask the minister, so I thought that I would ask a few as a follow-up. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The AAMD and C has worked closely with this ministry in drafting the proposed municipal sustainability strategy. What were the results of the consultation process, and is there a public report?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, we have resubmitted the report back to the individual municipalities, and we've asked them to provide input back to us on the sustainability report. That report is public. All the municipalities should have a copy of that report, and the report should be online. We are asking municipalities to provide responses. Then we're going to analyze those responses and carry on with the report.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think part of your answer was to my next question as well. How will the rural municipalities through the AAMD and C be engaged in the next steps of creating the municipal sustainability strategy, and why did it have to go back? Where were the stopping points?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, you know, the report was done by individual municipalities, the AAMD and C, the AUMA, and the members of summer villages as well as individuals from the municipal administrators. There were a number of groups that got together and actually formulated the report. It was sent back to us. We had a few questions and wanted their response to that particular report. That report was sent back with a deadline to respond to me, just to see with individual municipalities if that report hit the mark with them. We're waiting for their response.

Ms Pastoor: When can the municipalities expect the promised five-year review of the Municipal Government Act to actually begin, and what will the consultation process look like? I think it's something that is very timely and must be done.

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, the MGA, the Municipal Government Act, hasn't been reviewed for quite a number of years. It's a very, very detailed act. The act is split up into three different sections. It's our intent to do the review as per individual sections within the Municipal Government Act, and I would suspect that

the review would start rather soon here. It will probably take a period of four to six years to fully complete, with necessary legislation coming into the Legislature as required and adaptations accordingly.

2:40

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes Oral Question Period for today. Nineteen members were recognized. There were 114 questions and responses. Needless to say, it's Thursday just before a break, so there were three phases to the question period. Questions 1 to 5: oh, excitement, energy, enthusiasm, rambunctiousness. Then it sort of settled down a bit with questions 6 to about 12, and then it slowed even further from questions 13 to about 18. All in all, it's like a flow, I guess, of a contest or a match. Nobody had to be named despite the fact that a couple of the boys want to be. I know who they are, but it didn't happen.

Let's take 15 or 20 seconds, and then we'll come back to the Routine.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

High School Flexibility Enhancement Project

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak about the high school flexibility enhancement project, that has the potential to change the face of Alberta high school education. This project encourages collaboration between schools, school jurisdictions, and the government to change the current programming structure of high schools so that the time the students put into their studies is better reflected by the credits they earn.

Currently in its second year this project involves 16 high schools from across the province, including Archbishop O'Leary Catholic high school in the constituency of Edmonton-Decore. Also, Mr. Speaker, my son is attending this particular high school in grade 11. Along with his classmates he is experiencing this project first-hand.

Mr. Speaker, each participating high school is exploring alternatives to high school program delivery by removing the current 24 hours of face-to-face instruction per course credit requirement. The project will work to encourage students to take ownership of their education and take an active role in shaping the way they learn through the directing of their own learning and personalizing their learning environment.

The goals of this initiative, Mr. Speaker, are to support students' learning, to improve high school completion rates, and also, more importantly, to enhance student achievement and success. This is just one example of how Alberta's education system is transforming one classroom at a time. Programs like this one are particularly important to our province as we plan for the future of Alberta and the sustainability of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

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

Health Care System

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In growing numbers health care professionals, doctors, and nurses on the front lines of patient care are courageously stepping forward to tell their stories of government mismanagement and intimidation within our public health care system. The stories are shocking, the allegations stunning, with grave implications for this Progressive Conservative government.

Over the course of the past several months I have repeatedly raised a wide range of health care issues, including growing wait times in the emergency room, burned-out health care professionals, problems associated with centralizing health care administration, cost overruns, and, most importantly, poor outcomes for patients, including avoidable suffering and premature death.

Alberta Liberals brought these issues forward: the evidence of government mismanagement and malfeasance, including 322 cases of grave emergency room problems at one hospital alone, allegations of over 200 premature deaths across the system, allegations from respected, highly placed health care professionals who were silenced by government when attempting to advocate for more resources for patient care, with a growing sense that this government brands any health care professionals who criticize them as mentally unstable.

This government has created an atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and distrust, that is unworthy of a modern liberal democracy. *The Lancet* review of Alberta's lung cancer rates and lung cancer survival is merely the latest evidence to show this government's incompetence. That this government still refuses to hold a public inquiry into mismanagement and intimidation of health workers is evidence as well, evidence the government has something to hide, evidence of its moral cowardice and ethical bankruptcy. Without truth there is no progress. The government must stop hiding behind the Health Quality Council review and allow a full public inquiry into the allegations of government mismanagement and intimidation in public administration. Step out of the shadows and face the cold light of the truth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park

Ms Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2006 the government of Alberta approved an acquisition of over 3,200 acres of ranchland near Calgary from the Harvie family. A significant \$40 million was invested in what would become Alberta's newest provincial park, the Glenbow Ranch provincial park.

When this park officially opens later this year, it will join an existing network of municipal and provincial protected areas making a substantial natural corridor between Calgary and Cochrane. It will be one of Canada's largest urban parks and will protect this spectacular and increasingly threatened landscape along the north shoreline of the Bow River. It will also provide a unique opportunity to celebrate and showcase Alberta's rich ranching history.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the park's natural and historic resources will be preserved and that visitors will have a great experience, much work has been done on public consultation, environmental and historical assessments, engineering and access stations, and building more than 25 kilometres of pathways, washrooms, viewpoints, kiosks, and picnic tables.

I'd like to congratulate Tourism, Parks and Recreation and the Glenbow Ranch Park Foundation for their efforts and accomplishments to date as they prepare for this important opening. Constituents and Albertans look forward to exploring this park, and I for one am very proud of what I am sure will prove to be a wonderful, lasting legacy.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(3.1) to advise the House that on Monday, April 11, 2011, written questions 3, 4, and 5 will be accepted; written questions 8 and 13 will be dealt with.

Also on Monday, April 11, 2011, motions for returns 6, 7, and 8 will be dealt with.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill Pr. 1

Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties Amendment Act, 2011

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill Pr. 1, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties Amendment Act, 2011.

This act brings the act that authorizes the organization of the AAMD and C up to date. It was originally passed in 1923 and amended in 1971. It needs to be brought up to date, Mr. Speaker, as it currently names the original directors from 1923 and does not reflect the current realities, including how directors are elected. At the recently concluded convention of the AAMD and C yesterday members passed new bylaws that support this amendment.

I would encourage all hon. members to support Pr. 1.

Thank you

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 1 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 rise and table the appropriate number of copies of the following reports: the 2009-10 annual report from the Alberta Health Facilities Review Committee, the 2009-2010 annual report from the College of Alberta Dental Assistants, and the 2009-2010 annual report from Alberta Health Services.

I'd also like to table a copy of a document I referred to during question period. These are the Canadian cancer statistics, Mr. Speaker, 2010, which show that Alberta has the lowest death rate or the second-lowest death rate in a number of areas related to cancer for men and women.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit.

Mr. Blackett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of five packages of documents in response to questions raised by the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere in yesterday's Culture and Community Spirit main estimates. This documentation provides evidence of government openness and transparency with all nongovernment MLAs with respect to community enhancement grant programs.

2:50

The first tabling includes my letters of April 20, 2009, to various organizations, informing them of their successful grant applications whereby the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was copied on the correspondence and returned the copies with a handwritten note requesting to have all five cheques sent to his MLA office, noting that he would be working with media and volunteers to maximize exposure and that my department need not be involved.

The second tabling includes a letter of November 4, 2010, from the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere accompanied by my response of November 18, 2010, indicating that I agreed to look at options to address his request to receive future updates on pending community investment grant applications in his constituency.

The third tabling includes my letters of December 20, 2010, to all nongovernment MLAs following through on this request, which provides each of them a report of pending community enhancement grant applications in their constituency.

The fourth tabling includes a copy of my letters of January 19, 2011, and the applicable quarterly reports, addressed to each nongovernment MLA.

The last tabling, Mr. Speaker, includes a copy of a January 12, 2011, letter from the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere accompanied by my response of January 31, 2011, advising the member that I agreed to continue to provide him with quarterly intake reports about the community facility enhancement program and the community initiatives program, once again demonstrating consistent communication on these matters with my nongovernment counterparts.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, do you have another tabling as well?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. Just to be sure, I want to table the news release from the Health Quality Council of Alberta dated March 17, which I quoted from on page 3 today.

I also want to table the news release from the Health Quality Council of Alberta dated March 23, in which the advisory panel members are named along with their backgrounds and biographies.

Finally, I'd like to table a copy of the Health Quality Council of Alberta document received today, Mr. Speaker, in which they are making a correction to item 2 of their terms of reference wherein they're talking about:

To determine whether the quality of care and the safety of a group of 250 cancer patients on a surgical wait list of 1,200 were seriously compromised due to delayed access to surgery as alleged in a question raised in the Alberta Legislature on February 28, 2011.

Earlier they had referred to that as a tabling. The tabling, I believe, was made after that particular date, so this clarifies that it was actually an allegation raised in a question.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Taft: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I will be tabling the appropriate number of copies of a letter I received from a group of third-year students at the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta. It's signed by a total of 63 of them. They raise questions around the value, a value they support, of initiatives for newly graduated nurses to assist them in training for more specialized care, and they are concerned that in recent years this initiative for new nurses has not been in place.

Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have five tablings today, and all of them are related to my questions earlier in question period. The first is a letter that I received from Capital health on June 6. I believe it is 2007. It is in regard to an

access to information request that I had regarding the performance and the potential dismissal of Alberta's Auditor General. That's my first tabling.

The second tabling I have is a letter dated October 25, 2006, from Capital health to Mr. Fred Dunn, Auditor General, province of Alberta, and it is signed by the chair of Capital health, Neil Wilkinson. This letter is in regard to the reappointment of the Auditor and the auditing firm.

The third letter that I have is dated November 15, 2005. It's again from Capital health to Mr. Dunn, and it's signed by Neil Wilkinson, chair of Capital health. It notes that the board recommends to the Auditor General that KPMG be reappointed for an additional one-year term for the audit process.

My fourth tabling is from the Capital health authority board meeting minutes of June 26, 2002, and it notes under the process for auditors appointments that the Regional Health Authorities Act is responsible for the requirement that the board appoint its own auditor.

My last tabling is an interesting document that we received at the office of the Official Opposition. It is a series of e-mails to clear up the fact that Capital health for some reason, after we initiated this FOIP request, wanted my own personal health records.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling e-mails from the following individuals, who are seeking the preservation of the Castle wilderness: Lindy Clubb, Ronald Lovequist, Livianna Tosutti, Jacqueline Wakefield, Amy Fedrigo, Jose Costa, Daniel Rice, Tara Muir, Lynne Tyler, Daniel Murphy, Lynn McIntyre, Lou Probst, Greg Shaw, Carla Wong, Carly Armstrong, Chris McDonald, Terry Astbury, Rob Clement, Maren Hovi, Mark Carter, Elizabeth Cowan, Anne Curtis, Allan Briesmaster, Michael Street, and Anne Ellis.

Mr. Speaker, if I may at the appropriate time call upon the Government House Leader to provide the . . .

The Speaker: We're not there yet in the Routine. We may not get there if we don't get through the rest of the Routine.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Yes, well, here we go.

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to stand and to table the requisite number of copies. I went to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers' awards last night, the RCE awards. They do a phenomenal job of industry's commitment to continuous improvement in environmental health and safety and social performances. We need to recognize the great work that's going on here in the province, and there were many companies last night that were recognized for their efforts in these areas.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of a series – I decided to do them all in one – of e-mails and documents and correspondence between myself and the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit as well as several community liaison officers from his ministry outlining what is clear from the documents, as you can see: asking for me to

approve or to show my support or nonsupport for different projects in my community and for what dollar amounts.

I would also like to commend very much the hon. minister for yesterday agreeing to give us a heads-up on cheque presentations on a go-forward. It was very stand-up of him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Snelgrove, Minister of Finance and Enterprise, pursuant to the Government Accountability Act the Measuring Up progress report on the government of Alberta business plan annual report 2009-2010, consolidated financial statements of the government of Alberta annual report 2009-2010; on behalf of the hon. Mr. Webber, Minister of Aboriginal Relations, pursuant to the Metis Settlements Act the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal 2010 annual report.

Projected Government Business

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the Government House Leader share his wisdom with all the members of the Assembly and in a few seconds tell us what we'll be doing next week?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Well, actually, it should April 11, is my understanding.

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to share my wisdom. How long do we have?

With respect to projected government business April 11, 2011, of course, is a Monday and, therefore, private members' business.

Tuesday, April 12, 2011, in the afternoon we anticipate being in Committee of Supply for the estimates of the Premier and Executive Council, as is disclosed in the schedule on the Order Paper.

In addition, on the Wednesday the 13th in the afternoon, as the Order Paper discloses already, we'll be in Committee of Supply on Health and Wellness. It should be a fun afternoon.

On Thursday, April 14, in the afternoon we would anticipate doing second reading on Bill 6, Rules of Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2011; Bill 7, Corrections Amendment Act, 2011; Bill 8, Missing Persons Act; time permitting, Committee of the Whole on Bill 1, Asia Advisory Council Act; Bill 4, Securities Amendment Act, 2011; Bill 5, Notice to the Attorney General Act; and as per the Order Paper.

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, you are on the record of rising on a point of order. I take it that that's not the fact.

Mr. Anderson: I'm sorry. I thought that hon. House leader was intentionally misleading the House when he said that it would take a while to express his wisdom, that it would take a long time. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It was an attempt at frivolity, is that correct?

Mr. Anderson: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 16

Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2011

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

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move second reading of Bill 16, Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2011, and adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 11

Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act, 2011

[Adjourned debate March 10: Mr. Prins]

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

Mr. Prins: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to comment again on Bill 11, the Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act, 2011. I want to reiterate the purpose of Bill 11, which is to move cervid farming and its regulations from the Wildlife Act under Sustainable Resource Development and LIDA under ARD to LIDA alone under ARD. This will clean up some overlapping legislation and clarify some important issues for cervid farmers within Alberta, especially the ownership of their animals. It will reduce the administrative burden and possibly enable the industry to open new markets.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The elk and deer farming industry has been around for many decades, in fact probably for 30 or 40 years. In the early days the industry existed under the regulations within the Wildlife Act. Then in the early '90s, about 20 years ago, the Livestock Industry Diversification Act was created to recognize that the farming of elk and deer is a legitimate and valued industry in Alberta, with many farm families that make their living raising elk and deer. Today it is a mature industry that has great potential and needs to be regulated under Agriculture and Rural Development, where it actually belongs.

Bill 11 is supported by both ministries, the Sustainable Resource Development ministry and Agriculture and Rural Development, and it is supported by the elk and deer industry itself, which has been consulted many, many times to deal with these amendments.

Bill 11 was introduced a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, and it was soon realized that there was a perceived inconsistency in some of the bill. I received a number of calls and e-mails with comments from constituents and stakeholders that pointed out that there could be a loophole that may allow for hunt farms. This is clearly not the intent of Bill 11 as everyone can see in section 18.01(1), where the bill says "a person shall not hunt . . . a diversified livestock animal." Period. That's the end of the sentence. Then part of section 10.1(1) says "the Minister may issue a permit authorizing a prescribed activity." Now, these two statements have caused concern for some stakeholders even though they deal with completely different issues.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate today that the government will be introducing amendments to Bill 11 to make it perfectly clear what Bill 11 says about the ban on hunting cervids on farms. I'm

mentioning it today so that all members of this Assembly and all members of the public may be absolutely sure of the intent of Bill 11. The amendments will be introduced in committee, and I look forward to the debate in committee.

Mr. Speaker, I also move to adjourn debate on Bill 11.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 1

Asia Advisory Council Act

[Adjourned debate March 3: Mr. Hancock]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of advanced education on the bill.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure for me to rise today in support of Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act, because, quite simply, Bill 1 is the next logical step for our province as the hon. Premier's vision for Alberta's prosperity becomes reality. The hon. Premier has made it very, very clear from the start that his vision for Alberta includes a strong and prosperous economy that is globally competitive.

Mr. Speaker, he has clearly outlined how the ministry of Advanced Education and Technology can help make that vision come true. It's all there in black and white in the mandates that he has given the ministry over many, many years. He has laid out a clear path to ensure Alberta's global competitiveness by enhancing our province's postsecondary system and our research and innovation system. Each mandate has been a building block in the hon. Premier's vision for our province so we can strengthen Alberta's competitiveness and innovation world-wide, so we can enhance the knowledge-based economy of Alberta, and so Alberta can become a preferred destination for turning ideas into products and services that can benefit people not just here in Alberta but around the world and especially in key jurisdictions like China and India and other rapidly growing Asian markets.

One of the first mandates to our ministry from the hon. Premier supported the creation of Campus Alberta. He knew that increasing the access, the affordability, and the quality of Alberta's postsecondary education system would benefit everyone. It was what we need to have a strong system and help to build Alberta's economy so that we can achieve our full potential because, Mr. Speaker, these two are inextricably linked. To be successful, our economy needs well-trained graduates. The better trained and prepared Alberta graduates are, the better off Alberta's companies are going to be in a global marketplace. The more successful our companies are, the more taxes are generated, the more our businesses give back to schools that educate their personnel. It's a wonderful, positive, self-perpetuating cycle, and it directly contributes to the government of Alberta's international strategy.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 looks to expand existing economic, research, educational, and cultural opportunities between Alberta and Asia. Certainly, our ministry's international education framework will contribute to that goal. The framework provides direction on a number of issues and opportunities relating to international students, from developing global strategic alliances to making sure students everywhere know about Alberta and our institutions and know that we are leaders in learning, in research, and in innovation. It presents a road map for future planning and recognizes the importance of international education to Alberta's future economic and social success. International education, the exchange of people and ideas, is Alberta's window on the world and the world's doorway to Alberta. In a global economy where

knowledge has become the new wealth, Campus Alberta is the heart of what Bill 1 envisions.

Mr. Speaker, another initiative within our ministry that directly supports the goals of Bill 1 is the result of another mandate of our hon. Premier, our technology commercialization action plan, Bringing Technology to Market. This helps Alberta entrepreneurs get more of their ideas off the research bench and into consumers' hands by providing a range of tools and assistance to Alberta innovators like Alberta innovation vouchers and the growing list of product development centres around the province.

We are growing our knowledge-based economy and encouraging the development of Alberta's technology-based and value-added industry sectors. The assistance is helping companies move down the commercialization pathway to become more prepared to partner with foreign partners and export their products and services into new markets. This will create new wealth and job opportunities and create longer term economic stability by reducing our reliance on any particular industry.

What particularly excites me about the plan, Mr. Speaker, is that with Alberta's knack for being innovative, we can turn issues like climate change, energy security, water conservation, and food safety into unique innovations and new opportunities, opportunities to help improve people's lives.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, just as the hon. Premier saw a stronger postsecondary education system being a part of Alberta's global success, he knew the same kind of alignment needed to take place within Alberta's publicly funded research and innovation system. That's how another of his mandates resulted in the creation of Alberta Innovates. Alberta Innovates aligns all elements of our innovation system, from universities to business incubators, as we focus on areas that we are good at. These include biotechnology, energy and the environment, health research, platform technologies such as nanotechnology and information and communications technology, and technology commercialization, all of which are represented by our new Alberta Innovates corporations.

Mr. Speaker, people around the world marvel at the fact that we've been able to align complex systems like Alberta Innovates and Campus Alberta and get all the players together. It's important to note that these initiatives undertaken by our ministry – Campus Alberta, Bringing Technology to Market, and Alberta Innovates – don't exist in isolation. Each works in collaboration with the next, building alignment amongst our postsecondary institutions, our research organizations, our innovation support services, our businesses, and our entrepreneurs.

It's all about working together. That's what we must do if we want to build Alberta's knowledge-based economy and see Alberta succeed on a global stage. It's an honour for me to help take this vision to its next logical step, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that our ministry is ready to go. We've got many agreements with Asian partners already in place, agreements that are exploring opportunities for educational partnerships and sharing technology and knowledge.

We're seeking new partners as well. Alberta already has sister relationships with Korea, Japan, and China – specifically, Gangwon, Hokkaido, and Heilongjiang – and it's important to point out that our ministry has broadened Alberta's relationship with these countries and areas beyond cultural and educational ties to include important science and technology linkages and partnerships.

In fact, Alberta's work on China projects with International Science and Technology Partnerships Canada, known as ISTP Canada, in areas like dairy genetics and petroleum technology is being used as a model for broader international collaboration be-

tween our ministry and ISTP Canada in China, India, Israel, Brazil, and many other developing countries.

In addition, just last month we co-hosted the first Environmental Technology Forum for Sustainable Water Resource Development with our partners in Harbin, China. Together our scientists and policy-makers gathered to explore ideas, to share information, and to examine how we can work together to protect our precious water resources and treat waste water through sustainable water resource technology. There's also our declaration, signed just a couple of weeks ago, that will see us co-operate with China, India, and Israel on nanotechnology research that will help us deal with the water issues that we all face.

Mr. Speaker, our ministry has many memoranda of understanding, or MOUs, with our valued partners in Asia, each of them as promising as the next. Alberta was one of the first provinces to have an MOU with China's central government Ministry on Science and Technology. We also have MOUs with the Heilongjiang Science and Technology Department, the Innovation and Technology Commission of Hong Kong, the Shanghai Municipal Science and Technology Commission, the China Cancer Research Institute, the Zhejiang Science and Technology Department, and the Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board, or SPRING Singapore, just to name a few of those relationships.

Our ministry has also been instrumental in helping to develop MOUs between Alberta's TRILabs and Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute, NINT, or the National Institute for Nanotechnology, and Japan's Nanosystem Research Institute; and Athabasca University and SIM Global Education in Singapore.

Campus Alberta has already led the way as it has forged relationships with Asia. The University of Alberta has more than 30 agreements with Chinese universities as well as a number of agreements with institutes in India. Similarly, the University of Calgary has 26 agreements with Chinese universities. There's also the very promising agreement with India, which is bringing 50 top students from India this coming May to do research aligned with Alberta Innovates' priorities, including biosciences, renewable energies, and information and communications technology. And that's just for starters, Mr. Speaker.

We anticipate that our relationship with the mathematics of information technology and complex systems, Globalink, a MITACS program, will continue to help connect the best and brightest minds from India's prestigious technology institutes with Canada's business leaders, professors, and students through three four-month research and industry placements right here in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I could go into detail on the successful results of each of these agreements, but I would need a great deal more time than I have here today. What this all boils down to is that our ministry stands at the ready to support the proposed Asia advisory council in its mandate. Campus Alberta, Bringing Technology to Market, and Alberta Innovates, each a stepping stone mandated by the Premier, are already strengthening the collaboration between Albertans, business, industry, and government to benefit international relations and to support the important work of the council. That's why I'll be voting in favour of Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act, and I encourage all hon. members to do the same. I can't wait to see where we go from here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Anderson: I just wanted to ask the hon. member opposite. There are just so many different committees that government has

out there and councils and people on fact-finding missions, et cetera. Why on earth do we need a piece of legislation allowing us to or mandating that we form a committee? You know, we talk about cutting regulation and unnecessary laws and so forth. Why would we do that? Why wouldn't the Premier just make an announcement saying: I'm forming a council to look at this? Why a piece of legislation? It makes no sense.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to respond to that. We as a government and the Premier believe that this new relationship, this developing relationship is too important for just an announcement. This is Bill 1. This sets it out as the most important thing that we're going to try to do in the upcoming number of years. We're focusing our energy on the Asian marketplace. We're looking at the opportunity for pipelines to the west coast, where we can start to move our goods into another marketplace.

We notice that our trading partner to the south is still struggling, and we need to expand our marketplaces around the world for our energy, for our education, for our technology. Working in the nanotechnology area, we're seeing incredible opportunities and in our forestry sector for some of our forestry products. Mr. Speaker, there are very unique opportunities in bio-research. Some of the work through Genome Alberta, Genome Canada, and the prion institute is world-class research that will help all of us. Often the research we're doing into animal health is starting to translate into human health, and we have researchers around the world beginning to connect together to make that research happen.

Mr. Speaker, a very, very important part of what we're focused on is connecting with Asia and ensuring that that's central to the future of Alberta's economy.

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

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. Thank you very much. To the hon. minister of advanced education, as I sit in here on a Thursday afternoon, as we get ready to be able to drive to our constituencies, I have to tell you this. This is absolutely beyond belief. Essentially, it's like the government of Alberta finally today realized Asia is out there. They've decided finally that not only is Asia out there; it has billions of people, where there are markets. Why is it that this bill is really in front of us today when in actual fact the natural partnerships have developed over the last 10 years? What has the government been doing? Has it been sleeping? I mean, it's as if this government just today with this bill, the flagship bill, determined that now Asia is important. That makes no sense to me in light of the excellent work with business and others and universities that has been going on in Asia for the last 10 years.

3:20

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is absolutely right. This relationship has been developing between our universities and between our governments for many, many years. Just last year we met with education leaders from China, the first time we've had people of that high rank here in Canada. The relationship is growing and developing. This isn't a brand new idea. This is the focal point, where we have said: we believe that with all of these great relationships, with these new research opportunities, we want to take our focus to the next level and really focus to be able to drive investment in Alberta from Asia.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do know that the hon. member has been involved with a number of the institutions over, well, a considerable amount of time now and now in his capacity as the minister. I would ask the hon. member: during the discussions that he's had with the presidents of the institutions across Alberta – I do know that he has visited every one of those institutions in the province – how important is it to the institutions themselves, from a student perspective, to have that connection and that relationship and now having legislation that actually puts it out there for the world to see? Perhaps he could expand on the difference between the different sectors in Campus Alberta and what it means to have international students at the different levels.

The Deputy Speaker: You have 10 seconds.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Developing our international students is indeed a very, very important part of what we're doing. We're seeing an increase in the number of students, especially from Asia.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo on the bill.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, it's a pleasure to rise, as much as on a Thursday afternoon, and to talk about a flagship bill, put forward by the Premier, pertaining to another committee, called the Asia advisory council.

I describe it this way: not only are the inmates running the asylum; they've now handed over the keys. This is beyond my belief, and in fact this member is going to send to the Premier's office a globe. It's clear to me there must not be a globe in the Premier's office. To awaken today with a flagship Bill 1 talking about the importance of Asia when the rest of Alberta has already figured that out about 10 years ago, it basically demonstrates that the government is about 10 years behind where Albertans and Alberta universities and Alberta businesses are, who are forging ahead with incredible partnerships with the Asian community.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I am at a loss. I have never in my years read a bill that makes up three or four pages, right? I mean, I probably could have saved the government a lot of time by sending them a globe, and they at least would have found out where Asia is. Not only that, but also as a former minister of international relations did the government of Alberta know that we have 10 offices? Can you name what the 10 offices are that are going on in Asia right today, that have been going on for years? I'm sure the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations knows that, but the question is: it's clear the Premier doesn't know that. This bill does nothing other than basically say: "Let's form another committee. Let's form another unnecessary bureaucracy."

Again, the gap will widen between what Albertans and good, hard-working Alberta businesses and universities and students are doing – they know what is going on in Asia. I must admit that calling this Bill 1 is beyond belief. I say that because of the fact that Albertans have moved on. They have used their energy over the last 10 to 15 years in what they have been doing, in forging those important relationships with the good folks in Asia. Yet here we are today with a government 10 years later finally announcing an advisory council act.

Did you know, as it says in the preamble: "Whereas competitiveness is core to the Government of Alberta's plan to position Alberta." Well, the positioning should have been taking place 10

years ago. Here they are 10 years later positioning. And did you know that in Asia markets such as China, Japan, Korea, and India are Alberta's second-largest export market? Is that just new to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud? He appears to be surprised by that. He is the Minister of Education, but he is surprised today. I will go to Staples and buy him a globe, and I'll even put a pin on there where Asia is so that he can determine for the future rather than wasting the time of this House with a flagship called Bill 1.

In fact, if he wants, he can take my international business course. It's business 479. It starts in May. If you want to, you may learn a thing or two rather than wasting the House's time with this.

To the hon. minister of employment: clearly, Mr. Speaker, I am going to send them all a globe. In fact, maybe I'll send them inflatable globes, you know, so they can put a pin in it and let it deflate, like what this government is doing right now in terms of ideas.

Ideas? This is absolutely pathetic. I have never witnessed a pathetic Bill 1. When I sat on that side, at least we saw a side that didn't form another committee and another bureaucracy and another layer of red tape. Thanks very much. This is admission that you can't even come up with your own ideas over there, which is, in my belief, absolutely showing that the winds of change are blowing. In this next election Bill 1 is going to be based on ideas. You know what? The two clues they have over there: they lost one, and they're looking for the other.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say on Bill 1: let's form another committee. Well, I can save you all a lot of time. Just enrol in my business class 479, okay? I'll teach you a thing or two. You know what? I'll even make sure the member over there can sit in the front desk. [interjection] Well, I don't know if he has the prerequisite, but we may allow him to come in. "Hey, Albertans, did you know? Asia is out there. Did you know? It's an important market. Let's make it Bill 1." Fifteen years later. Wow. That is beyond belief. It is truly beyond belief.

Now, I know the Member for Sherwood Park, the minister, does have an aptitude of understanding pertaining to missions. I know she spent \$16,000 in terms of value on a mission to Asia between November 1 and 15. I do know that there was also a mission to India, and that only cost Alberta taxpayers \$87,070.39. Can you believe that? Another mission to Asia and then a mission to China and Japan. Wow. That is incredible. Let's form a committee. I'm surprised you didn't form the committee first, before all of these trade missions, that, by the way, ended up spending hundreds of thousands of dollars. That's when we were not in session. The question Albertans are going to be asking is: is this good value for our dollar?

I would like to know – I was wondering – if the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud would like a big globe or a small globe because I know that when he spoke about wisdom, a big globe would assume the potential of greater wisdom. I'll make it a small globe so that we can expand your horizon so that you can truly get a first-hand look at Asia. Even though the rest of Alberta figured this out about 15 years ago, it's good to see that Alberta is catching up with the businesses and universities and colleges, where we forged these partnerships over the past many, many years.

I'm disappointed by Bill 1. I'm disappointed because it really is perhaps one of the most pathetic flagship bills for a Premier who's leaving. Now, I guess one of the things on this bill is that since he is leaving – sometimes it's called a lame duck. Believe me, we know a lot about dead ducks up in Fort McMurray. But be it a lame duck or be it a dead duck, I want to let you know that I certainly hope there's not going to be 1 cent of Alberta taxpayer dollars spent by this Premier, before he leaves office in Septem-

ber, for travelling Europe because the bottom line is that there's going to be a new leader.

Consequently, I'm sure the government is going to ensure that not one single cent is going to be spent on Asia by this Premier and that they will wait for the new leader to come in. Can anyone over there assure me of that? Relative to the fact that now that they've discovered where Asia is, would they assure us that the Premier will not spend a cent of Alberta taxpayer dollars going to Asia just as his swan song before he leaves office? We'll be watching closely, and we'll be in fact having a clock on how much it's costing Albertans if, in fact, someone is going there.

The members on that side can go ahead with: yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full. But at the end of the day, thank you to the government for catching up with the rest of Alberta 15 years later. Not only are you not down the road and around the corner; you're not even on the same block. It's clear to me that by forming this committee, if you can believe – I always thought the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster was never a big fan of red tape, of bureaucracy. I always thought that, and actually it's what I liked about the member. Then all of a sudden, the first bill: let's form a committee. If you form a committee, that's just a fancy way of saying: we don't have any new ideas ourselves.

3:30

Well, let me tell you that this party does have new ideas when it comes to Bill 1 and Asia. Not only that, we believe that it's an important link. More than that, we don't believe in a committee. We believe in actually rolling up our sleeves and embracing the tremendous opportunities as opposed to a piece of legislation called Bill 1, a flagship, that represents absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say today that, really, this bill on a Thursday afternoon, Bill 1 – I can honestly say to you that this is truly, in my judgment, wasting the House's time because this is not a bill. They have formulated over 50 committees on that side without a bill, but this one is going to be a bill that they're going to legislate because it's so important. Well, really, when we examine that, it actually sends conflicting messages, and it builds on the uncertainty that this government has created in Asian markets because of that uncertainty.

I'm glad to see that they know where Asia is today, 15 years after Albertans discovered that. Did they know that 60 per cent of the population of the world actually comes from Asia? Did they know that? Well, I see the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud looking, and I see that he's not so sure. Is that a yes or a no, that he's aware that 60 per cent of the population comes from Asia? Is he aware of that or not? Is that a yes or a no? I'm watching closely to see if he will signify.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, on the bill. Through the chair on the bill.

Mr. Boutilier: I'm glad to see that he even recognizes – he looks a bit surprised, but he recognizes that 60 per cent of the world population is actually in Asia. That's good, to get up to speed with others. That is so important. I'm glad to see that he's been listening. You could learn a lot in my international business class. Okay? In fact, you all could learn a lot over there, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I have said to you three times to speak to the chair about the bill, please.

Mr. Boutilier: Well, Mr. Speaker, they seem to be trying to interrupt me, but I'll just talk over them because they're not very good listeners; I know that.

That being the case, my constituency, they may not be aware, is the oil sands capital of the world. As the oil sands capital of the world – everyone in Asia knows that northern Asia represents almost 40 per cent of Alberta's non-U.S. exports. Did you know that China is Alberta's second-largest trading partner? Well, let's form a committee, Mr. Speaker, so that we can find out. What would this government do if they didn't have a committee?

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that China, as we know, is the second-largest consumer of oil in the world. I can say that as we go forward under a Wildrose government, clearly, under Bill 1 it is going to be – I can hear the laughs from the opposition-in-waiting. It's really quite amazing. I can say, as I talk to my constituents on a daily basis, that it's so important.

Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, I can only say to you that from the people we're talking to, they have recognized that they're looking for a party under Bill 1 who knows where Asia is, and they don't have to legislate it. They know that – you know what? – they don't need another committee. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, I can only tell you this. Guess what? We'll send him a globe, too, because he doesn't know where Asia is.

Mr. Anderson: Call a point of order on that. That can't be true.

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. Does somebody want to call a point of order on the fact of me accusing you of not knowing where Asia is? I'm not sure.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say, getting back to the legislation for a moment: let it be remembered that in the last session this Premier's flagship bill was the Competitiveness Act. What did that bill do? It set up a council to advise the Premier on competition.

It seems like every time the Premier doesn't know something, he has a bill written and a council set up to advise him. Well, Albertans are smarter than that, so consequently, I think that, clearly, this is an unnecessary piece of legislation. This is an unnecessary step of bureaucracy, another level of bureaucracy where you have unelected officials advising an elected official who is the head of Executive Council. I think, as I said in my opening remarks, that not only does it demonstrate that the inmates are running the asylum; now they've turned over the keys. They clearly have lost their address with Albertans when it comes to where they should be going.

So I'll not only send them a globe; I'll send them a map of Asia as well so that they can easily determine. I can only hope that whoever their next leader is, if you're going to forge relationships, make sure it's not with a lame duck Premier. Make sure it's with another Premier after the leadership. I want to be assured that not one single red cent under Bill 1 will be spent on a Premier going over and travelling as a swan song as Premier. I mean, that will be a total waste of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, let me say that as we go forward, I think it's so important that we eliminate the bureaucracy, eliminate committee work. You don't need to legislate a committee to advise you on competitiveness in Asia. You could actually come forward.

In this next election this bill will come back to haunt them. Do you know why? Because it's going to be about ideas, and ideas are like a newborn child. You've got to feed it. You've got to protect it. You've got to nurture it. But you have to have, first of all, a child, and you have to have an idea in order to feed, nurture, and protect. Clearly, this Bill 1, forming another committee – you know, it's been rumoured by most Albertans and most Alberta constituencies feel that if they don't know what they're doing, they just form another committee, another committee that can collect dust, another committee that can just simply say: oh, well,

we're getting a committee review. It's no different than what we've just witnessed in health care.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes for comments or questions. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much. I must say to the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo that I enjoyed your remarks on this bill, but I have a series of questions. The first one would be: you imply throughout your remarks that government members are totally in the dark regarding Asia. I'm wondering: the globes that you have promised to deliver, are you planning on having them illuminated?

Mr. Boutilier: That is perhaps one of the most articulate and intelligent questions, and I thank the member.

Mr. Snelgrove: Of the last 20 minutes it was.

Mr. Boutilier: Oh, the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has awakened. I must admit the fact that we met so many Asians with our sold-out event in Lloydminster just a few nights ago. It was so nice, Mr. Speaker. It was so nice. I want to let you know there were a few globes going around there, and it could have saved the government a lot of time.

To the hon. member I just want to say this: a very good question. I must say that this member has demonstrated the frugality of looking at every single cent. He has demonstrated that on health care and other areas. I'm sure, like everyone on this side of the House, that we do not want one single cent spent by the Premier for a swan song to go all over Asia as kind of like his legacy. That is what is pathetic, so we're going to get a running cost of what it's costing Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

It's an important point that the member has asked, and that is this: would I give them globes that are illuminated? We've heard the saying: the lights are on, but nobody is home. I definitely think we'll put some lights on the globe as well. Since their new discovery of Asia, 15 years behind when Albertans found out where Asia was, the markets that our businesses and universities and colleges have developed – I want to say to the hon. member today that he is absolutely correct. The globes need to be illuminated for the members.

By the way, I didn't promise the globes to every member because that would be too costly. What I will do is that I'll give them specifically to those who are interested in enrolling in my class. I see three heads nodding now. The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs certainly will be getting a globe, as will the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Is there anyone else over there, Mr. Speaker, who would like to get a globe? Put up your hand now. I only see two now.

3:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Just on the topic, I just wanted to find out . . . [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, hold it. Do you have a point of order?

Mr. Lukaszuk: No. I just want to ask a question.

Mr. Boutilier: We'll get your question later on. Back to the member, the very good question that he asked – that's like: down,

boy, down. It is really good that not only will we have a globe for him and the other; we'll make sure there's a bright shining light inside of it.

Mr. Hancock: Point of order.

The Deputy Chair: Point of order. The hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Question-and-comment Period

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 29 provides that if there are a number of people who want to ask questions, it's not an opportunity for another five-minute speech after one question. If there's only one question, then that's what is shared, but surely the Speaker would want to look around the House and see if there are other questions.

The Deputy Speaker: From my perspective as the chair here, I would say: please shorten your answers. The question is whether the globe is illuminated or not. Yes or no, I think, is preferred, and then continue with the next member.

Debate Continued

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The lights will be on, and they will be illuminated for the member for Edmonton-Castle Downs and Edmonton-Whitemud. The light will burn brightly, so we can shine light on how they don't know where Asia is.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration, you have a question?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you. Well, the member clearly indicates that he's teaching a course at the University of Alberta, and he's inviting all of us to enrol in it. He spends a lot of time here at the Legislature. I'm just wondering: how does he manage to teach at the University of Alberta full-time and be here and still tell us that he's going back to Fort McMurray? How does that work?

Mr. Boutilier: Well, see, Mr. Speaker, this is the problem with this government. On the question, the reason is that it's not full-time.

The Deputy Speaker: I think we should have comments and questions relating to the bill. You can answer, and then we will carry on with the bill.

Mr. Boutilier: Let me speak very slowly. Mr. Speaker, clearly. Okay. I want to say this. Because of the close connection to the people of Alberta such as at universities and colleges and as the former international minister, one thing for sure – you notice how they say full-time. You see, it's really important to be able to deal with the demands of your constituency but at the same time be measured and be well balanced. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this member doesn't know what that means. That's why we're able to do that and do a variety of roles and responsibilities in such an efficient manner. We use our time efficiently.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, I think before we go on, I just want to remind the member, like the hon. Government House Leader has correctly said, that the five minutes for comments and questions are about the bill. And be concise so that other members can participate.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act. This particular piece of legislation is incredibly important, although some may not understand the fact that when conducting business with Asian nations, sometimes gestures of friendship are incredibly important. When you introduce a piece of legislation that says, “We value the friendship and the relationship that we have with you, we value our cultural ties, our educational ties, our trade ties, our business ties, and we value the ties between Alberta families within Asia and Canada,” when you make these gestures, it gives you the ability to show the people of the great Asian nations that you are absolutely willing and able to put them at the helm, at the front of your foreign agenda, and that’s what we’re doing. That’s what we’re doing.

There’s absolutely no doubt that Alberta companies, many of them, and Alberta postsecondary institutions have forged wonderful relationships with many institutions in Asia. There’s no doubt. We have done phenomenal work. Now, Mr. Speaker, is the time to as a government bring forth that work and to form new collective visions that will take us to the next level.

Mr. Speaker, nobody in this House can deny the fact that Asian nations are growing at rates that, quite frankly, I don’t think North America will grow at, whether you look at population or even economic growth. Alberta is perhaps the only jurisdiction in North America that can compete with the sort of economic growth that’s taking place in nations like India and China.

Mr. Speaker, with an abundance of growth taking place in Asia, with a rising middle class and a hunger to succeed come great challenges for those nations. One of those challenges is obviously energy. In meeting with Indian officials, they tell us that perhaps upwards of 80 per cent of their natural gas is imported. Now, they would love nothing more than to have the ability to import liquefied natural gas from nations like Canada. Engaging in these discussions – these are long-term discussions, and they require a series of small steps and some bold actions that will ensure that Albertans have new markets, that Alberta energy, our oil and our gas, will have profound new markets to service the growing middle class in countries like India and China.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this conversation is not just around oil and gas. Nations like India have a hunger to achieve world-class education. So when many postsecondary institutions from around the globe go to India, they pursue the same jurisdictions and the same institutions as fellow North American institutions work with. What we’re saying by making this council is that we have to have a very thorough knowledge of those markets. I will give you an example of this. Average individuals looking to pursue educational ties in India think Bangalore immediately and Gujarat. Those are phenomenal states doing wonderful work with respect to education. But what they fail to understand is that there is an abundance of other states where there are populations that are very hungry to get education and quality education, so states like Haryana and Punjab may not be on their radar.

Now, a further analysis of this situation would have one learn that in Punjab there are over a hundred thousand children – a hundred thousand children – that go to kindergarten to grade 12, so primary education, outside of the state of Punjab but within India. They do that, Mr. Speaker, because they are in search of quality education. What that means for our postsecondary institutions is that now they have access to a new state in India that is hungry for quality education. So they have the ability to go there – and this is a commercial venture – and train teachers from primary school education systems because the people want that.

Mr. Speaker, that sort of knowledge comes about when those that have been working in Asian markets for a number of years

come together, when various postsecondary institutions and commercial ventures, when the folks involved in those come together and say: “This is what we have learned. How can we now best ensure that we are advancing the interests of the Alberta public?”

Mr. Speaker, those are just small examples. Education and energy are obviously important.

3:50

Agriculture. The agricultural production in countries like India is very different in some ways from the agricultural production in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I’ll be the first to profess that I am no expert on agriculture. However, what I do know is that the governments of these countries are moving forth to find new and innovative agricultural techniques. When they do so, they are knocking on our door and saying: how can you help us in this area? Now, on a council such as this perhaps you have a person, an individual, who has an in-depth understanding of Alberta’s agricultural landscape who can assist such institutions.

The Premier’s mission to India was discussed a little earlier. Mr. Speaker, let me say this. For the first time in Alberta’s history Alberta and the state of Punjab signed a memorandum of understanding – for the first time in our history – during that visit to India. That is a powerful and profound first step in developing, I think, very financially as well as culturally rewarding relationships for both of our jurisdictions.

Now, when the whole world recognizes that nations like India, China, Japan, and Korea have incredible wealth and value to add to the rest of the world, what happens is that you have an abundance of western countries, European countries, and institutions knocking on the door of Asian companies, postsecondaries, and governments and saying: open the doors to us. So, Mr. Speaker, when you have an abundance of organizations knocking on their door wanting to forge relationships with them, you have to set yourself apart. By having an Asia advisory council that is empowered by legislation, that’s a small gesture of friendship, a small step in friendship that we are taking, that sets us apart from other jurisdictions.

With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, when you have discussions such as this and you mock this, this does not send the right message to the folks we want to work with more in the future. I don’t think that’s appropriate. This is about new friendships and old friendships. This is about us moving forth together, saying: how are we going to ensure that we find win-win solutions for all of our jurisdictions, solutions that work for the folks of India, China, Japan, and Korea and that work for Alberta? That’s what this is about. That’s what this is about.

This is a powerful and profound first step in a new stature in our relationship, a new stature to say: we are jurisdictions that take you very seriously. Just as you bow when you meet people from various jurisdictions and, you know, greet people in various languages and traditional greetings, this is our way of saying: we get you. We get you. We understand that relationships in Asia are not just formed by economic interests. They’re formed with respect, something that’s so often lacking in this very Assembly. Respect. Acceptance. It’s easy to say “tolerance.” People can tolerate a stone they get in the bottom of their shoe. What we’re talking about is acceptance. That’s what we stand for on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, acceptance. We stand for the fact that it is the profound strength of diversity that gives us an edge in international relations. When you form the friendships and the relationships first and then have conversations around business, the business comes much easier.

This act is a profound and wonderful gesture of friendship. This says: yes, our institutions have enjoyed wonderful relationships

and friendships in the past, and now we will as states – as states – enjoy new friendships on a state-to-state level, Mr. Speaker, not just on an institution-to-institution level, a strategic relationship based on mutual trust, understanding, and friendship, based on acceptance and respect. By putting forth this act, we are putting forth the best of us. We are putting forth our hand in friendship, the best of what the Alberta people believe in, not the minute dialogue that we far too often see in this House.

With that, I think that we are at a wonderful stage in our international relations with many Asian countries. We are taking bold new steps. I am very excited to see how we will capitalize on these new relationships culturally, financially. Mr. Speaker, this is the future. This government, I'm proud to see, is enacting something that will enable us to make great future progress.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for allowing me to speak to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of comments or questions. The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose for those very insightful comments. When I had the opportunity to be with Premier Klein on a trade mission and we went to China and visited within China, I remember the reception we got and how important it was to have elected people and people from government.

We took a number of businesses with us. For example, the more interesting one – and I believe he probably ended up with a plant in China – was the person that grows sunflowers and processes them, the Spitz that you see in the stores. A very interesting type, he was along with us. I had the opportunity as a minister to meet with the third in command in agriculture and food in China. One of the very interesting things that he mentioned to me was the fact that to ship food products from Alberta over to China, where the bulk of the people are, was actually cheaper than them raising it in their own country and shipping it across. So I really appreciate that.

I would like to have the hon. member just expand a bit further on the types of businesses and the reception that you got on your trade mission to India.

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

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member has a great understanding of agricultural industries, so perhaps at some point I'd like to further expand on some dialogue that we had with respect to agriculture. One of the dialogues we had in India was around agriculture and food processing. India today has a very large percentage of their crops being grown on soils that are very, very addicted, as they say, to chemicals. This is an area where the central government of India has placed a focus. They are concerned with the high percentage of chemicals being used in growing food in India. Now, it's my understanding that there are some wonderful companies here that have in fact developed organic techniques and technologies that help reduce the soil's dependence on chemicals. That in my eyes seems to be a pretty simple fit.

4:00

In addition, Mr. Speaker, you have great issues in India with respect to food transportation and food storage. Now, it's my understanding that these are two areas where Alberta really excels, food transportation and food storage. However, the challenge in India is the infrastructure. In many parts of rural India they don't

have the infrastructure to allow, let's say, even tractor-trailers that could store and transport food from one region to another region, that would expand the life of the food. They don't have the ability to take a large tractor-trailer into a village in some parts of rural India where they need to. This is posing some very significant challenges in India because a large percentage of their food actually goes to waste. They're asking us now: "You are a leader in agriculture. How can you help us with these sorts of issues?" That's an area where I believe our two jurisdictions can again find synergies.

One more piece, Mr. Speaker, and that is water. Now, we have some great innovations coming about with respect to water in Alberta. For example, Olds College is working on some very innovative water treatment processes right now. Having an adequate supply of water . . . [Mr. Bhullar's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: On the bill, the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be able to rise and to speak against Bill 1, the government's Asia Advisory Council Act. I am, as with most of the opposition members, amazed that the government would pick this as their flagship bill and say that the most important thing that we can do is to form a committee in order to go forward. There are a couple of good things about this bill, and I'll start off with that, just to cover the one or two things. I always like to try and look at things first from an optimistic point of view and what it is.

The best thing is the expiry date, section 9. This act expires on December 31, 2014, so it's good that they're only looking at a three-year bill. That's good. The other good thing is that there's no salary for those. They're not going to actually pay them to go on a vacation. They'll just allow them to go on a vacation and pay their expenses, so at least we don't have to pay them to go on a vacation. It's interesting to me, though, that in section 4(5) the chair of the council may serve as a member for the council for more than six consecutive years. I have to ask: why are they putting in an expiry date, yet they have the provisions in here for this to continue on? That's concerning, that the real intent is that they're forming a council here.

It was interesting to hear the government member talk about this wonderful first step. I mean, good heavens, this isn't a first step. This is – I don't know – the first of a continual amount of blunder that we're going to have with the committee. I'm not sure if the government member is aware of the fact that we have five Alberta offices over in Asia now. We had a mission to Korea and Japan on November 4, 2010, that we spent \$16,000 on. They had another trade mission to India on November 1 at \$87,000; a mission to China and Japan on May 14 of 2010 at \$137,000; a mission to India, United Kingdom, and Hong Kong on the 2nd of January 2009, \$27,000; a mission to Asia on the 13th of June 2008, for \$20,000. So this isn't a first step. This talk about it being this huge hand out in friendship: what I see this as is a huge hand out in friendship to 10 more friends of the PC Party. The government is going to say: "Well, here's my hand of friendship. Would you go on a vacation, all expenses paid, and come back and report?"

That's another ironic thing, Mr. Speaker. If they're going to come and report back to the House, why would they report back on the 30th of June, when for all intents and purposes I don't know a time in history when the House was sitting? Yet the provision in the bill talks about the importance of getting it to the House within 15 days of when it is sitting. Why couldn't they

report, you know, on the 1st of March or the 1st of April, when the House could have some value from the report? But they want to report during the summertime, when no one is paying attention, when school vacations are on, June 30, when it's not going to be a big deal. The opposition can't speak up and ask: "What did we get for value? What was the cost of this council?" Again, you have to ask the question: are they going to make the numbers easily available to know what the actual cost is of these individuals going out? I would project that in all likelihood they won't.

The best thing that I could think of when the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo talked about this globe: what I see this as and what I summarize this bill as is a beach ball globe. I'll throw it over there, and they think, "Oh, what fun this game is, that we can bat this back and forth." Then I'll hand one of them a pin and say, "Five dollars to the first one who can pin where Asia is," and, poof, the beach ball will collapse. That's about as much value as this bill has. We're just going to have a little game. The government gets to throw it back and forth, and it's going to collapse, of no value.

You have to ask the question on these Alberta offices that we have in five different areas in Asia – Japan, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, and Korea – wouldn't it make sense that those would be the people, that they would bring a report together? They're there. They're working. They're in the area. I mean, what we're doing is having a great friendship here of trade committees. Trade missions are great, but that's kind of restrictive whereas if we have a committee: oh, my goodness, we can just be travelling all over Asia and coming back and reporting on June 30, once a year, on what a wonderful time and how uplifting and the wonderful friendships that we've developed.

I mean, I just do not believe, Mr. Speaker, that this is the role of government. It certainly isn't what I would call a flagship bill. This is a flagship boondoggle of money being spent for no business plan or direction that they have in mind. It's just hard to believe that we would go forward and that this government would be able to bring this bill forward with great pride and vigour and say: "Look what we're going to do. Asia is such an important part of the world." It is an important part. The government has been there. We do have a presence. Why we need an advisory committee is beyond my understanding of the purpose of this.

It's interesting, though. You know, when you look back a year ago, Bill 1 was, in fact, the Alberta Competitiveness Act. The reason I want to talk about the last Bill 1 is because what we seem to see with this government more than anything else is that they are like paramedics flying around in an ambulance trying to run over pedestrians so that they can stop and pick them up and then be heroes when they get them to the emergency room and show that, "Oh, we've got priorities" and get you through there so that they can come and make a member's statement or something and say: look what a great job we did. But what was the reason for the job? "Oh, because of a total boondoggle, where we ran over somebody that was in a sidewalk area." For all intents and purposes they're doing the right thing, but government just creams them out to bring them up.

That's what they did with the oil and gas industry. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I am so tired of listening to this government now stand up and say: look what land sales are. I spoke out so adamantly that you have to put A and B for revenue, A being mineral leases and B – this is about Bill 1. That's what we're doing, giving some historical reference on what Bill 1 should be and how this government just continues to put out Bill 1 to try and save what they've blown up previously. They're just blowing up their areas.

When it comes to the Competitiveness Act, they talk and talk about land sales and what a wonderful job they're doing. Why

don't they show what land sales did after they brought in the new royalty framework? It devastated our industry. Again, with Bill 1 here, with the Asia advisory committee, what is the purpose of that? Are they going to run over all the work that's being done and then this committee is going to swoop in and say: "Look at what a wonderful repair job. Look at the friendship?"

The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House brought up a very good point. I do understand and see the credibility of having elected people from government go and meet others elected at the government level. That really is where you open up to new regions, new opportunities. Often a business cannot go over there without the government opening up the door and setting up the meeting and saying: "This is an accredited business. This is something that we want to work." But a committee is not going to do that. I know that they're going to argue and say: well, but the committee is going to be the frontrunner. We have many things that are already going on that open up those doors, and we've been doing it in the past. It just seems to me that this is like so many things. This is the government coming to the party late.

4:10

There are so many businesses that have been going over to China and Japan and India and Korea, the Philippines, all through that area, and opening up businesses. We're doing fine with that. Now the government wants to swoop in there and get credit and say: oh, look, it's our wonderful committee. [interjection] You do. You literally go in and say: "Look what we've done to the oil and gas industry. Look how great it is." You destroyed it. You ran over them. Then you bring back a new one.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, please address the chair and on Bill 1.

Mr. Hinman: I'm sorry, but when we start talking about these things, Mr. Speaker, there's just no question.

Anyway, what we need to do is send this bill to a committee. I'd like to have a notice of amendment to Bill 1. Perhaps I'll sit down while this gets distributed.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the pages please have the amendment distributed to hon. members.

Hon. member, continue on your amendment.

Mr. Hinman: Yes. I'd like to move a motion to second reading of Bill 1, that the Asia Advisory Council Act be amended by deleting the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Asia Advisory Council Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[interjections] I'm enjoying the remarks already because here we are now forming a committee or sending this to an already existing committee, and the government is mocking.

I'm going to explain to them that we already have a committee, and they want to mock this and make this rhetoric: "How much is that going to cost? How much paper is that?" So immediately it's being referred over to a committee that's already being paid to exist. If this is the number one priority of this government, I would think that that would be the number one priority of our Standing Committee on Resources and Environment, where we can actually go through these things and say: "What is the business plan? What is the purpose? What are we going to do?"

This is only a feel-good bill to extend a hand of friendship to 10 PC Party supporters. That is all that I see in this. By referring this over to the standing committee, which already exists, which already

meets and gets paid monthly to exist, it would actually perhaps come up with a business plan on what they're really trying to do. Bill 1 is actually, I think, the thinnest bill that the government has brought out this time, which is commendable, that they can actually bring a bill that is that short.

What it talks about here in the preamble of this bill and why this needs to go to the committee to be studied is that it says: "Whereas competitiveness is core to the Government of Alberta's plan to position Alberta for long-term prosperity." Well, actually, this should go to the economic committee because, boy, with their plans and what they've done with health care, with the new royalty framework, with the ambulance service: everything that they've done to date is not about prosperity, and it certainly isn't about quality of life. It's about running people over.

Also: "Whereas the Government of Alberta's international strategy sets the overall course for the Government's engagement internationally with the goal of making Alberta more globally competitive." Wow. That sounds exciting, that we're actually going to go to a competitiveness Olympics of economics and see what we are doing here in Alberta that's preventing us from being able to export. When I think of that, the first thing I think of is: what are we doing in order to advance our exports to Asia? We need a pipeline to the west coast. Is the government engaged in acting in the best way possible to ensure that we have a second opportunity to export our biggest export? That's bitumen and oil from the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo area. No. They're not engaging in that.

Again, I could see if that was to be Bill 1, if it was to say: "You know what? We need to open up a route, an access for our products – agricultural, petroleum, industrial – to get to the west coast to ship things out." Mr. Speaker, they're failing to do those things. What we have is a bill here that is flimsy. There is no content to it. There's no thought on what we're actually going to do to be globally competitive. There's no thought on what we're actually going to do to ensure prosperity for Albertans. How are we going to trade with these individuals? What good is it to go over there and try and sell some oil or gas products when we don't even have a pipeline that we can ship it out with? I think that should be a priority.

Government understood that when they first came together. They built a railroad in order to connect this country. We are an export nation. Alberta is an export province. What are the transportation corridors that we have in place to export our products? More important, how good is that transportation corridor to the west coast, which, really, is our neighbours and the link over to Asia? It's critical. If all we have are north-south lines and roads and transportation, we're kind of limited in that we have to export south. This whole Bill 1 is about Asia. So what are we doing? What are our links to open up to Asia and allow it to get over there?

I've sat on these committees. We have a lot of interesting people bringing forward their views, their ideas, and I think it's a far better position for this government to be in, to have this committee listening to experts and bringing in ideas on how, in fact, we do connect with the Asian market and how we export our products. But to just say that they're going to appoint 10 individuals when they already have . . . [Mr. Hinman's speaking time expired]

The Deputy Speaker: We have the amendment. Those to join the debate on the amendment? The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to talk a little bit about why I like this amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I forgot about Standing Order 29(2)(a). Do you want to use that or continue on the amendment?

Mr. Anderson: Sure.

The Deputy Speaker: You want the five minutes of comments or questions?

4:20

Mr. Anderson: Sure. I'll ask a question of the member.

Hon. member, I was listening intently to your comments. [interjection] That's right. The one thing that I just don't understand about this government is – I was looking under, for example, section 7 of the Government Organization Act. It says:

A Minister may establish any boards, committees or councils that the Minister considers necessary or desirable to act in an advisory or administrative capacity in connection with any matters under the Minister's administration.

Then it goes on to say:

A board, committee or council established pursuant to this section may, with the approval of the Minister, make rules governing the calling of its meetings, the procedure to be used at its meetings, . . .

et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

So there's an act here under the Government Organization Act that specifically allows the minister involved to set up a committee without needing to pass legislation, without having to waste people's time, in order to cut down on the amount of legislation that's being brought forward. I mean, if we used the same logic as we are now for setting up this committee that the government is using, we would have to establish a committee under every single committee imaginable. I mean, we'd have to use legislation to establish it, and that would be, obviously, a gross waste of time and resources.

I think of the homelessness secretariat, for example. Did we need to pass a piece of legislation to have the homelessness secretariat and the oil sands secretariat? That's not to say that committees aren't important and so forth, but it is to say that you don't need a useless piece of legislation to set one up.

So my question is: why do you think that the government would, I would say, almost abuse the legislative process to bring forward a piece of legislation that is entirely redundant, unnecessary, completely unneeded when they have so many other ways to do it? They could refer it, as your legislation says, to the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment so that we could bring in people, experts, that could tell us what we need to do. We wouldn't have to pay an extra cent to anybody because we're already being paid for that. So why do you think the government would do that?

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

Mr. Hinman: Well, thank you. I'm happy to express my thoughts on why I think they did this. I thought I did a little bit earlier. It's one that they want to shake hands with the friends of their supporters and put them in that position.

But I think you had some interesting points there about being tired, redundant, unnecessary, could be replaced. That kind of summarizes the position this government is in. It's not until they've run over something and wrecked something that they look back and say: oh, we need to fix this.

I don't know that they've wrecked anything in Asia yet, but it makes me very nervous that maybe there's something that's happened that we don't know about, some relationships that they're trying to mend. It just seems that the only plausible reason they would do this is because they couldn't think of anything else to do, and when you get a bunch of people together in government, these elected MLAs, they think: well, what are we going to do about this;

what are we going to do about this? Government bloats because they say: let's form a committee.

The purpose of this amendment, Mr. Speaker, is that we already have a committee. That's why I want to in this amendment refer Bill 1 over to a committee that already exists and not need to go and spend – can I not answer his question?

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you. Your hand motions were . . .

The Deputy Speaker: There's an hon. member wishing to ask a question.

Mr. Hinman: I can appreciate that, but I need to answer the one that's up.

These committees have a purpose. The government has put in many committees in the past, like the oil sands secretariat. They've put together committees and commissioned reports. I looked at the report that they brought together for the ambulance integration that came forward. When they first came up with that committee and that report, they estimated it to be \$50 million. That's why these things need to go to an all-party committee. Because this government seems to fail when they put their committees together and do the research.

It's like the ambulance integration research. They first came up and said that it was only going to be \$50 million. [Mr. Hinman's speaking time expired]

The Deputy Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. Thank you. On the amendment that's put forward, that reads that, ultimately, it should be referred to a Standing Committee on Resources and Environment in accordance with Standing Order 74.2(1). I think it's important to recognize what a standing committee is. A standing committee is an existing infrastructure we have in place, where the costs of the standing committee are already absorbed. The time and effort by all members of this House who participate in that from all parties as well as the government, I think, is important.

I describe this amendment as one that really is like putting meat to the bones because at this point it's clear that the flagship bill does not have that meat to the bone. So in enhancing that, I think it's important that a standing committee, a standing committee that is very different than what is being proposed in this legislation, would actually get to the root cause and to the issue of building and strengthening the important relationships that Alberta businesses and universities and colleges have built with the Asian community over the past 15 years.

That being the case, I think this amendment, clearly, Mr. Speaker, in reference to going to the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment in accordance with Standing Order 74.2 is a good one because I think it is one that, ultimately, will add meat to the bones of this skeleton. It's like when you have an idea; you at least have to think out the idea. Not only do you want to be down the road, but I have always taken the approach of being down the road and around this corner. So this is intended to help get this government around the corner because, clearly, they're not even down the road yet, let alone around the corner, where most Albertans are.

Businesses, farming communities, the Asian community and the relationships that have been forged over the last 15 years are already around the corner, and here we are with a piece of legislation that

says: let's go down the road. Well, even members on that side – I certainly know the Member for Rocky Mountain House is down the road and around the corner. Maybe it's time for some of his colleagues to join him around the corner because, clearly, in my judgment, he is one that has the wisdom to be able to see down the road, unlike what's being proposed here in this Bill 1.

The amendment, Mr. Speaker, that has been brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore is one that is important. I think it will clearly put some meat to the bones and also help guide the government to a destination that most Albertans and some members are already at. Sometimes it's said that it's the destination; sometimes it's the journey to get there. But on this amendment I don't want one cent spent on the journey of a lame-duck Premier going over to Asia before he retires. I think it's more important that we get good value by going forward.

This amendment will put meat to the bones of something that really has not been clearly thought out. It will provide an opportunity to be able to use an existing infrastructure that's already in place, called the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment. I think that, Mr. Speaker, is a good use of our time under this amendment. It's of good use to peel back the onion. As Ross Perot used to talk about: peel back the onion and get to the core of what's being attempted here. That really, for those who may not understand it, is not only being down the road but around the corner so that we can join the rest of Albertans.

I do know there are some members in here, that I made reference to earlier, who are already around the corner, but it's time for the government to get around the corner with everyone else because, clearly, there are many that are just looking and peeking around the corner. The standing committee will provide some of the necessary infrastructure for being able to see what many of us can already see around the corner.

Mr. Speaker, that's why I believe this amendment is an important one. I'm certain that most of the members here will give the green light to this amendment today to go to, as you know, a committee that's essentially controlled by the governing party, the government. But that's okay. It's a standing committee. Fortunately, maybe, in talking to the wisdom of some of their senior members on that side, with their experience in the many ministries they've been in, they'll be able to understand the importance of going around the corner and realize the importance of this amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today regarding that

Bill 1, Asia Advisory Council Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment in accordance with Standing Order 74.2,

because 74.2, I believe, is really an excellent provision for us to go forward, peel back the onion, and look and see what Alberta businesses and universities and colleges and many of the natural partnerships that some of the hon. members have talked about, the respect that we have for the Asian community, the billions of people who are impacted. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, let's put meat to this flagship bill . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member. We will continue this business at a later date.

It's 4:30. Pursuant to Standing Order 3(6) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, April 11. You have good constituency weeks.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m. to Monday, April 11, at 1:30 p.m.]

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

Activity to March 24, 2011

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

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

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

1 Asia Advisory Council Act (Stelmach)

First Reading -- 6 (Feb. 22 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 132-33 (Mar. 1 aft.), 189-95 (Mar. 3 aft.), 553-62 (Mar. 24 aft., adjourned, amendment introduced)

2 Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2011 (Brown)

First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 133-34 (Mar. 1 aft.), 380-82 (Mar. 15 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 408-16 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 438-39 (Mar. 17 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 18 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2011 c4]

3 Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 2011 (Rogers)

First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 134-35 (Mar. 1 aft.), 313-14 (Mar. 10 aft.), 382-83 (Mar. 15 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 416 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 439-40 (Mar. 17 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 18 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2011 c3]

4 Securities Amendment Act, 2011 (Brown)

First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 135 (Mar. 1 aft.), 383-84 (Mar. 15 aft.), 416-17 (Mar. 16 aft.), 440-41 (Mar. 17 aft., adjourned)

5 Notice to the Attorney General Act (Rogers)

First Reading -- 18-19 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 136 (Mar. 1 aft., adjourned)

6 Rules of Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2011 (Olson)

First Reading -- 19 (Feb. 23 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 136 (Mar. 1 aft., adjourned)

7 Corrections Amendment Act, 2011 (Oberle)

First Reading -- 73 (Feb. 28 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 137 (Mar. 1 aft., adjourned)

8 Missing Persons Act (VanderBurg)

First Reading -- 73 (Feb. 28 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 137 (Mar. 1 aft., adjourned)

9 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2011 (\$) (Snelgrove)

First Reading -- 113 (Mar. 1 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 185-86 (Mar. 3 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 244-47 (Mar. 8 aft.), 254-57 (Mar. 8 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 305-08 (Mar. 10 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 14 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 14, 2011; SA 2011 c1]

- 10 Alberta Land Stewardship Amendment Act, 2011 (\$) (Knight)**
First Reading -- 122 (Mar. 1 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 247-54 (Mar. 8 aft.), 257-58 (Mar. 8 aft., adjourned)
- 11 Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act, 2011 (Prins)**
First Reading -- 208 (Mar. 7 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 313 (Mar. 10 aft.), 552-53 (Mar. 24 aft., adjourned)
- 12 Alberta Investment Management Corporation Amendment Act, 2011 (Dallas)**
First Reading -- 208 (Mar. 7 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 364-65 (Mar. 15 aft., adjourned)
- 13 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2011 (\$) (Snelgrove)**
First Reading -- 328 (Mar. 14 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 365-67 (Mar. 15 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 403-08 (Mar. 16 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 432-38 (Mar. 17 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 18 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 18, 2011; SA 2011; c2]
- 14 Wills and Succession Amendment Act, 2011 (Drysdale)**
First Reading -- 328 (Mar. 14 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 365 (Mar. 15 aft., adjourned)
- 15 Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2011 (Oberle)**
First Reading -- 329 (Mar. 14 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 363-64 (Mar. 15 aft., adjourned)
- 16 Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2011 (McQueen)**
First Reading -- 482 (Mar. 22 aft.)
Second Reading -- 552 (Mar. 24 aft., adjourned)
- 201* Health Insurance Premiums (Health Card Donor Declaration) Amendment Act, 2011 (Sandhu)**
First Reading -- 55 (Feb. 24 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 73-86 (Feb. 28 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 464-68 (Mar. 21 aft., adjourned, amendments agreed to)
- 202 Legislative Assembly (Transition Allowance) Amendment Act, 2011 (Anderson)**
First Reading -- 55 (Feb. 24 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 209-24 (Mar. 7 aft., defeated on division)
- 203 Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act (Rodney)**
First Reading -- 152 (Mar. 2 aft., passed)
- 204 Justice System Monitoring Act (Forsyth)**
First Reading -- 304 (Mar. 10 aft., passed)
- 205 Municipal Government (Delayed Construction) Amendment Act, 2011 (Taylor)**
First Reading -- 362 (Mar. 15 aft., passed)
- Pr1 Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties Amendment Act, 2011 (Rogers)**
First Reading -- 550 (Mar. 24 aft., passed)
- Pr2 Galt Scholarship Fund Transfer Act (Pastoor)**
First Reading -- 507 (Mar. 23 aft., passed)
- Pr3 Auburn Bay Residents Association Tax Exemption Act (Johnston)**
First Reading -- 515 (Mar. 23 aft., passed)
- Pr4 Cranston Residents Association Tax Exemption Act (Johnston)**
First Reading -- 516 (Mar. 23 aft., passed)
- Pr5 New Brighton Residents Association Tax Exemption Act (Johnston)**
First Reading -- 516 (Mar. 23 aft., passed)

Pr6 Tuscany Residents Association Tax Exemption Act (Johnston)

First Reading -- 516 (Mar. 23 aft., passed)

Pr7 Hull Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2011 (Rodney)

First Reading -- 516 (Mar. 23 aft., passed)

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