



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

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Issue 21

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 27th Legislature

Fourth Session

Kowalski, Hon. Ken, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, Speaker  
Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort, Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Mitzel, Len, Cypress-Medicine Hat, Deputy Chair of Committees

|  |  |
|--|--|
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| Allred, Ken, St. Albert (PC)   | Knight, Hon. Mel, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)  |
| Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)  | Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)   |
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| Berger, Evan, Livingstone-Macleod (PC)   | Lukaszuk, Hon. Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC),<br>Deputy Government House Leader                                  |
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| Dallas, Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)   | Olson, Hon. Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC),<br>Deputy Government House Leader                                       |
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| Johnston, Art, Calgary-Hays (PC)   | Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)  |
| Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL)  | Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC),<br>Deputy Government House Leader  |

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| Parliamentary Counsel                                       | Stephanie LeBlanc      | Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms                | Gordon H. Munk   |
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## Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 67    Alberta Liberal: 8    Wildrose Alliance: 4    New Democrat: 2    Alberta: 1    Independent: 1

### **Executive Council**

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Ed Stelmach         | Premier, President of Executive Council, Chair of Agenda and Priorities Committee, Vice-chair of Treasury Board, Liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces |
| Lloyd Snelgrove     | President of the Treasury Board, Minister of Finance and Enterprise   |
| Dave Hancock        | Minister of Education, Political Minister for Edmonton  |
| Iris Evans          | Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations   |
| Mel Knight          | Minister of Sustainable Resource Development  |
| Luke Ouellette      | Minister of Transportation  |
| Rob Renner          | Minister of Environment   |
| Verlyn Olson        | Minister of Justice and Attorney General  |
| Yvonne Fritz        | Minister of Children and Youth Services, Political Minister for Calgary   |
| Jack Hayden         | Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Political Minister for Rural Alberta   |
| Ray Danyluk         | Minister of Infrastructure  |
| Gene Zwozdesky      | Minister of Health and Wellness   |
| Ron Liepert         | Minister of Energy  |
| Mary Anne Jablonski | Minister of Seniors and Community Supports  |
| Len Webber          | Minister of Aboriginal Relations  |
| Heather Klimchuk    | Minister of Service Alberta   |
| Lindsay Blackett    | Minister of Culture and Community Spirit  |
| Cindy Ady           | Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation   |
| Hector Goudreau     | Minister of Municipal Affairs   |
| Frank Oberle        | Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security   |
| Jonathan Denis      | Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs   |
| Thomas Lukaszuk     | Minister of Employment and Immigration  |
| Greg Weadick        | Minister of Advanced Education and Technology   |

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| Cal Dallas            | Finance and Enterprise   |
| Fred Horne            | Health and Wellness  |
| Broyce Jacobs         | Agriculture and Rural Development                              |
| Jeff Johnson          | Treasury Board (Oil Sands Sustainable Development Secretariat) |
| Diana McQueen         | Energy   |
| Janice Sarich         | Education  |
| Teresa Woo-Paw        | Employment and Immigration                                     |

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Tarchuk  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Elniski

DeLong  
Forsyth  
Groeneveld  
Johnston  
MacDonald  
Quest  
Taft

### Standing Committee on Community Services

Chair: Mr. Doerksen  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Hehr

Allred  
Anderson  
Benito  
Bhullar  
Chase  
Johnston  
Notley  
Rodney  
Sarich  
Taylor

### Standing Committee on the Economy

Chair: Mr. Bhardwaj  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Chase

Amery  
Dallas  
Fawcett  
Hinman  
Johnson  
Lund  
Taft  
Tarchuk  
Taylor  
Woo-Paw

### Standing Committee on Health

Chair: Mr. McFarland  
Deputy Chair: Ms Pastoor

Forsyth  
Griffiths  
Groeneveld  
Horne  
Lindsay  
Notley  
Quest  
Sherman  
Swann  
Vandermeer

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Mitzel  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Lund

Bhullar  
Blakeman  
Campbell  
Hinman  
Lindsay  
MacDonald  
Marz  
Notley  
Quest  
Rogers

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Kowalski  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Campbell

Amery  
Anderson  
Bhullar  
Elniski  
Hehr  
Leskiw  
Mason  
Pastoor  
Rogers  
VanderBurg

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Dr. Brown  
Deputy Chair: Ms Woo-Paw

|           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| Allred    | Kang    |
| Benito    | Lindsay |
| Boutilier | McQueen |
| Calahasen | Morton  |
| Dallas    | Redford |
| Doerksen  | Sandhu  |
| Drysdale  | Sarich  |
| Hinman    | Taft    |
| Horner    | Xiao    |
| Jacobs    |         |

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Prins  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Hancock

|            |           |
|------------|-----------|
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| Berger     | McFarland |
| Calahasen  | Mitzel    |
| DeLong     | Notley    |
| Doerksen   | Pastoor   |
| Forsyth    | Quest     |
| Groeneveld | Sherman   |
| Hinman     | Tarchuk   |
| Jacobs     | Taylor    |
| Leskiw     |           |

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. MacDonald  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rodney

|           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| Allred    | Griffiths  |
| Anderson  | Groeneveld |
| Benito    | Kang       |
| Calahasen | Mason      |
| Chase     | Sandhu     |
| Dallas    | Vandermeer |
| Elniski   | Xiao       |
| Fawcett   |            |

### Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Kang

Boutilier  
Brown  
Calahasen  
Cao  
Forsyth  
Johnson  
MacDonald  
Rogers  
Sandhu  
Xiao

### Standing Committee on Resources and Environment

Chair: Mr. Prins  
Deputy Chair: Ms Blakeman

Anderson  
Berger  
Boutilier  
Hehr  
Jacobs  
Marz  
Mason  
McQueen  
Mitzel  
VanderBurg

### Select Special Ombudsman Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Mitzel  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Lund

Blakeman  
Hinman  
Lindsay  
Marz  
Notley  
Quest  
Rogers

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 12, 2011

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Stelmach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'm privileged to have two introductions. First, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you on your behalf to the Assembly the participants in the 2011 Forum for Young Albertans, who are here today. This is a program for high school students that introduces them to the dynamics of government, and it includes representation from the major political parties and all three levels of government as well as the judiciary, civil service, the media, labour, and business. The group is participating in a week of sessions mostly in and around the Legislature. They are here to watch question period. They're seated in both the members' gallery and the public gallery. I'm sure I speak for all members when I say how wonderful it is to see young people take such an active interest in democracy and public service. There are nearly 30 members in the group, too many for me to name individually. They are led by the Forum for Young Albertans' executive director, Jason Stoltz. They are accompanied by Ms Tanya Hrehirchuk, Mr. Arthur Lee, and Miss Caitlyn Pettifor. I would ask all of them to rise in both galleries and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I have another introduction. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an outstanding Alberta doctor who has returned to his home province. Dr. Jayan Nagendran is a top heart surgeon who trained at the University of Alberta and ranked number one in Canada on his Royal College of Surgeons exam. He received a prestigious offer to join the heart transplant team at well-renowned Stanford University and spent several years there as a key member of their medical team. I'm delighted to say that Dr. Nagendran has recently returned to Edmonton, where he is a key member of the heart and lung transplant team at the Mazankowski Heart Institute. In addition, he is director of research for the cardiac surgery team and assistant professor in the faculty of medicine. We are proud to have him saving lives here in the best publicly funded health care system in Canada. He's joined in the gallery by his wife, Jessica, and his parents, Jay and Shyamala. I would ask Dr. Nagendran and his family to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. To you and through you I'd like to introduce a group of enthusiastic students from St. Lucy Catholic school in Edmonton-Castle Downs. They had a tour of the building, and they were just a lot of pleasure to meet with this morning. They are accompanied by Mr. Eugene Hirniak, Miss Dawn

Miskew, Miss Cassie Galley, and Miss Farah Rizwan. I would like them all to rise and receive the welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today on behalf of the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 12 grade 6 students from Radway school. These students are accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Sandra Moschansky, and parent helpers Mrs. Lillian Cherkawski, Mr. Gerald Yurkiw, Mrs. Tammy Kuefler, Mrs. April Chykerda, and Ms Gerri-Lyn Goodhope. I know their MLA, Jeff Johnson, and I thank them for making a trip down to the Legislature. I would like them all to rise and receive a traditional warm welcome from this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a significant privilege for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House this afternoon a very significant group of junior high school students from Rosemary school, accompanied by a good group of parents. They are also my friends and neighbours in the closest sense of the word in that we share the same communities. I also have some family in this group, so I'm going to begin by introducing my sister-in-law, Yvonne Doerksen, who is a parent helper with the group, and her daughter Monica. The rest of the group are the principal, Mr. David Blumell, teacher Mrs. Marian Wilson, and the other parents accompanying the group: Mrs. Lorna Retzlaff, Mrs. Angela Morasch, Mrs. Jody McCreadie, Mrs. Brenda Stimson, Mrs. Cindy Engel, Mrs. Cretia Morishita, Mrs. Willie Paetkau, and Mrs. Jennie Johnston. Their group is accompanied by about 20 junior high school students. I'm going to ask you all to rise and enjoy the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to introduce my friend and partner in life, my wife, Wanda, who has come to visit with a few of our neighbours who accompanied this group today as well. Wanda, stand up and enjoy the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce three very special guests who are here today to participate in a special ceremony that'll occur shortly here concerning another special guest. In the meantime I'd like to introduce to you Dennis and Halyna Elkow, who are lifelong friends of mine, former Shumka dancers years ago, and they are here with their son Toma Elkow, who among other things is my godchild. I'm really proud that he's here today. He's a PDD recipient, and it's just a delight that he's here celebrating his 30th birthday with us. Welcome, and please rise.

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

**Mr. Vandermeer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two groups of grade 6 students to introduce to you and through you today to the members of this Assembly. The first group will be showing up at around 2 o'clock. They are from the Abbott elementary school. There are 28 visitors altogether. They are accompanied by Mrs. Nicole Christian, Mrs. Adele Olson, and Ms Audrey Nederlanden. Like I said, they'll be showing up at around 2 o'clock.

We also have with us in both galleries 34 visitors from the Overlanders elementary school. They are accompanied by Ms Cindy MacLeod and Mrs. Jennifer Mulcahy. I'd like to give a special mention to one of the classmates, Avery, who plays hock-

ey with my son Samuel. I'd them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly five friends of mine who span four generations. Here today seated in the members' gallery are my administrative assistant, Shannon Clarke; her husband, Bud; and their new son, Maverick; along with Maverick's grandmother, Bonnie-Lea Clarke-Olive, and great-grandfather James McLean. Shannon just returned from maternity leave, and I'm very pleased to have her back in my office. She worked in the building for nearly four years for Housing and Urban Affairs and has been with my office since the ministerial shift last year. Shannon and Bud have been married for almost six years. Bud earned his business marketing diploma from NAIT and is now currently starting a career with Evolve Surface Strategies as a land agent. Most importantly, little Maverick is eight months old and was born on August 13. Perhaps it's wishful thinking on my part that he'd grow up to be a fan of the Calgary Flames. I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming Shannon, Bud, Maverick, Bonnie-Lea, and James to our Legislature.

1:40

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to introduce to you and through you two amazing Albertans. On December 5, 2010, Stars of Alberta volunteer awards were presented to six extraordinary people, and two of those are with us today. Today as we celebrate National Volunteer Week, we're fortunate to have them. It is our privilege to introduce to you two amazing citizens, Danny Guo and Olivia Butti. Danny Guo works for the Centre for Family Literacy and is founder of CHARIOT, a group aimed at improving access to healthier food choices for University of Alberta students. Former Edmonton alderwoman Olivia Butti serves on numerous boards and committees. As a volunteer she has worked tirelessly for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and has helped to raise more than \$20 million for the Lois Hole hospital for women. Danny and Olivia are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask them now to rise to receive the warm traditional welcome of this House.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure today to be able to stand up and introduce guests from Lethbridge. It doesn't happen very often. I'd like to introduce Donna Karl, who is president of the Galt School of Nursing Alumnae Society of Alberta; Ian Zadeiks, who is the lawyer; and Kathy MacFarlane, who represents the University of Lethbridge. They have come up here today to make comments on Pr. 2, and they're here to have dollars transferred from what was a scholarship fund that was endowed by the Galt family in 1907. These nurses have nursed these dollars all of these years, and they now have \$147,000 that they are going to transfer to the University of Lethbridge for scholarships in the nursing faculty. I would like to ask all three of them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Valour Place Military Family Support House

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since my election in 2008 I have had the opportunity to make 32 members' statements on

topics ranging from autism to the Victoria Cross. Today is especially meaningful for me as I express my support for a group of people whose hearts and minds are truly in the right spot. Valour Place will be the first facility of its kind in Canada, providing hope away from home for injured soldiers, veterans, and their families who are in Edmonton for rehabilitation and medical treatment. The Glenrose and Royal Alexandra hospitals have long provided excellent rehabilitation care for soldiers returning from conflict abroad. On Tuesday, April 19, shovels break ground on the new Valour Place site.

Now, of course, Mr. Speaker, we all know that it's all in Calder, but I must share this one with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre as the facility is located on the south side of 111th Avenue in that fabulous constituency. It's a squeaker, really.

Mr. Speaker, in January 2010 Honorary Colonel Dennis Erker of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment brought together a group of dedicated individuals to put this plan into motion. Now, just a year later, they are well under way. The Valour Place Society has been created to raise some \$10 million to build, furnish, and operate the facility, a facility with 12 suites set to accommodate both soldier and family.

It is very important that this facility happens here, Mr. Speaker. I believe that one would be hard-pressed to find a community that holds their military families in higher regard than we do in our province or in our city. Freedom is not free, and those who protect us do so at the ultimate cost. We are blessed with many who willfully put themselves in harm's way to protect our freedoms, our liberties, and our way of life, and it goes without saying that supporting this project is the least we can do. I would urge every one of you here today to show your support and learn more about this facility by visiting [www.valourplace.ca](http://www.valourplace.ca).

Thank you.

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

#### Support for Education

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The past two and a half years have seen the worst global economic slowdown since the Great Depression. Many parts of the world are still in bad shape and many Albertans are still un- or underemployed, yet by and large what was a major upset to most of the world has been comparatively a hiccup here in Alberta. Indeed, our jobless rate is two points below the national average, and there's serious talk about another labour shortage brewing here. That's mostly because oil is \$106 a barrel, and we've got more proven reserves than just about anybody.

It is good to be king. Well, Mr. Speaker, the thing about being king is that if you take more than a minute or two to sit back and gloat, somebody is going to come along, capture all your possessions, and leave you there in the dust. It's only good to be king as long as you can stay ahead of the conquering hordes.

Since our fossil fuels or the demand for them will not last forever, and since oil continues to keep us living a lifestyle that would take 10 planet Earths to support if everybody on this planet lived the way we do, and since there seems to be broad consensus that to sustain ourselves, we need to transition from a resource economy to a knowledge economy, and since this government makes much of its five-year commitment to sustainable health funding, my constituents are wondering: why is there no talk of a similar five-year commitment to education, both K to 12 and postsecondary, including a much sharper focus on trades training, and while we're at it, early childhood as well?

Over time, but not over that long a horizon, nothing will reduce the strain on health budgets like a better educated population.

Over time nothing will produce innovation and breakthroughs in science and technology, energy development, and environmental protection and nothing will produce more art and culture, stronger communities, a more diversified and more resilient economy, and a broader tax base like a better educated population. Then, Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't have to rely on the roller coaster of resource revenues, and we could stop balancing our books on the backs of Alberta's children.

Thank you.

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

### **Excellence in Teaching Awards**

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak about our province's excellence in teaching awards. This province is truly blessed with many exceptional teachers and principals. Heartfelt thanks to all of them for the tremendous work that they're doing at the local level to place children first. The excellence in teaching awards program celebrates its 23 years in existence, and it provides the opportunity to recognize some of the very outstanding educators that we have.

This week 135 awards program semifinalists will be recognized at events in Edmonton and Calgary. Overall 326 teachers and principals, Mr. Speaker, were nominated from across our great province. Nominees must show tremendous leadership, demonstrate creativity and innovation, work collaboratively with colleagues, and create positive learning environments that motivate students to have learning successes.

Semifinalists can also access up to \$1,500 for professional development. The 23 award recipients, to be honoured in Edmonton this year on May 28, will be able to access up to \$4,000 for professional development. Three recipients who receive the Smart Technologies' innovative use of technology awards will receive a comprehensive technology package, which includes a Smart board.

Mr. Speaker, the nominees for the excellence in teaching awards program are to be congratulated for making a positive difference at the local level for all the children for whom they contribute to their learning success as well as to their learning communities, the students that they inspire, as well as their families. The awards program serves to acknowledge some of the best and brightest teachers and principals as well in our system who, through their passion for teaching and leading, create the true joy of learning in all students.

Our sincere congratulations to these teachers and principals. Thank you.

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

### **Keystone XL Pipeline Approval**

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very pleased to rise to speak about the oil sands capital of the world, my home for 35 years. Fort McMurray has become a symbol of Alberta's robust resource economy, and we're very proud of what our community contributes not only to this province but to our entire country.

Imagine our dismay when we heard the Energy minister. In his typical way he told the U.S. President to, quote, sign the bloody order for the Keystone pipeline. Why would you, anyone, ever say that to your best customer? The minister does a lot of travelling around the world to promote the oil sands. We applaud that. But if he spews these types of things in public, can you imagine what he might be saying in private? He should be reminded that he speaks

not only for Alberta, but he also speaks for my backyard. His remarks are an embarrassment to Albertans who don't share his tendency to throw a tantrum when it looks like things aren't going his way. But we shouldn't be surprised. This is just the latest in a string of embarrassments for Alberta's once proud and stable energy sector.

**1:50**

Last week with the Energy minister's enthusiastic support the government indicated plans to tear up contracts entered into in the lower Athabasca region, striking another blow to investor confidence and creating more instability. So we've got a government that can't keep its nose out of the energy sector and an Energy minister who gets his kicks from lipping off to other countries and attempting to bully the world into getting his way. It gives new meaning to the word "diplomacy."

Mr. Speaker, this government is turning my hometown and, indeed, all of Alberta into a laughing stock. You don't know what you're talking about. To put it in the terms of the Energy minister so that he can understand it, he owes it to Albertans to stand up and, in his words, make a bloody apology.

### **Oral Question Period**

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

### **Patient Advocacy by Physicians**

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I recently asked this Premier to provide details on the dismissal of Dr. Tim Winton. Instead of answering the question honestly, the Premier deliberately misled Albertans by stating that if Dr. Winton was bullied, he should bring the evidence before the Health Quality Council. This Premier is not telling the truth. Both the Alberta Medical Association and independent lawyers have publicly stated that doctors who sign nondisclosure agreements are at legal risk if they appear before the Health Quality Council. Why is the Premier deliberately misleading Albertans by misrepresenting the legal problems . . .

### **Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language**

**The Speaker:** Okay. That's enough of that. [interjection] That's enough. [interjection] That's enough of that. [interjection] Would you sit down, please? [interjection] Would you sit down, please? Twice in that series of questions phrases and words that are inappropriate for use in this Assembly were used: "deliberately misleading" is a statement that is not part of the tradition of the nomenclature in this Legislative Assembly. Now, the Government House Leader rose on a point of order. I'm prepared to deal with that point of order at the end, but we're now going on to the second question.

### **Patient Advocacy by Physicians (continued)**

**Dr. Swann:** Will the Premier answer this question truthfully? Did Dr. Tim Winton receive a financial settlement from Capital Health or Alberta Health Services when he was pushed out of chief of thoracic surgery, and was he forced to sign a nondisclosure agreement promising to keep the terms quiet?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the disclosure agreement, if it was signed, was between his employer at that time, Alberta Health

Services, and the doctor. That disclosure agreement was entered into by those two parties.

**The Speaker:** This is now the second supplementary on the first question. Proceed.

**Dr. Swann:** How will we Albertans ever know what happened to Dr. Winton with this government's culture of secrecy and intimidation and cover-ups? How many other government critics were silenced with nondisclosure agreements, Mr. Premier?

**Mr. Stelmach:** I thought, Mr. Speaker, that the member was talking about doctors and not government critics. That's quite different from a medical doctor and referring to government critics. As I said before, the Health Quality Council will listen to any physician, any health care worker that wants to come forward with any kind of evidence. If there is any evidence there with respect to misappropriation of funds, that should be taken directly to the police or to the Auditor General.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday Dr. McNamee, the lung surgeon who was victimized by this government's culture of fear and intimidation, said that he and other physicians would likely testify but only with sufficient legal protection such as that provided in a public inquiry. While the health minister claimed yesterday that Dr. McNamee was the only doctor who was calling for a public inquiry, in fact six sections of the AMA are calling for a public inquiry, over 2,000 doctors. Why should Albertans trust a Premier who can't even get his facts straight? Not one, not 200, but over 2,000 support a public inquiry, sir.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, you know, you've heard the opposition talk about a public inquiry. A public inquiry is that. It puts these doctors in front of a camera, in front of reporters, not behind a screen but in front of reporters, an inquiry that will have the doctor himself making the evidence, and they're calling for some sort of protection. How can there be some protection if it's done in a public inquiry in front of reporters that may go on for months? I don't see where the protection is there.

**Dr. Swann:** What are you hiding, Mr. Premier? You might have to appear also. How many more doctors need to speak out before the Premier stops deceiving Albertans by insisting no one wants a public inquiry?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I'd be glad – glad – to go if asked by the Health Quality Council because it's a very rare opportunity when a member of this government can talk about the good things that are happening in Alberta Health Services in a province that's delivering some of the best health services in the world.

**Dr. Swann:** When will this Premier finally do the right thing and admit the truth? We need a public inquiry. Do you want public confidence?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, no. We do not need a public inquiry. The Alberta Health Quality Council has very robust, rigorous terms of reference. They're proceeding. They'll have three reports coming to the Legislature: one in three months, the next one in about six months, and the final report in about nine months.

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

### Settlement Agreements with Physicians

**Mr. MacDonald:** An employee who believes they have been wrongfully dismissed has the right to sue the employer, and the parties have the right to reach a financial settlement to avoid a case in court. My first question is to the Premier. How many claims of wrongful dismissal by Alberta's health authorities have been filed in the courts in the last decade? You should know.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, that's Alberta Health Services. I'm sure if he inquired with Alberta Health Services, then he'd be able to get the information.

**Mr. MacDonald:** That's not true. The Premier is dodging it, and he knows it.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Okay. There's no preamble. Get on to your question.

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

**The Speaker:** Get on to your question. There's no preambles.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. How much have our health authorities paid out in financial settlements over the last decade to avoid having grievances aired publicly in the courts?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, that'll only be between those that have been dismissed for whatever reason that in some cases there are disclosure agreements that were entered into, and I'm sure there were two parties to that agreement, the individual that was dismissed and the employer.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, silence is appropriate in libraries but not in politics.

Again to the Premier: can the Premier please explain why these settlements require such nondisclosure agreements?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, it's between the employer and whoever filed the grievance or, in some cases, who was let go by the employer.

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

### Health Quality Council Review

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Doctors have indicated that short of a public judicial inquiry the Health Quality Council review may have limited impact in fixing our health care system. Yesterday the health minister indicated he was only aware of one doctor who wanted to see a public inquiry. Currently six sections of the AMA, which comprises over 2,500 doctors, have indicated that they support a public inquiry. My questions are to the Premier. How are you going to protect the physicians who have currently signed nondisclosure agreements?

**Mr. Stelmach:** I don't need to protect them because they have a disclosure agreement with their employer.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** It's not right.

What guarantee can you give physicians that if they testify, they will not be terminated or demoted and can continue to speak out without fear of repercussions from Alberta Health Services or, for that fact, the government?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the AMA, the college, and Alberta Health Services have entered into an agreement. They have put out a document that I think is very fair to all three parties with



respect to allowing and asking physicians and other health care providers to bring evidence forward if there is intimidation. Perhaps there are different ways of delivering services that may improve the services, the quality of services, reduce some of the costs. All of those areas: the Health Quality Council will be ready to hear their evidence.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Mr. Premier, you should be embarrassed.

Can the Premier confirm that the Health Quality Council has been so overwhelmed with complaints that they now have established two committees, one dealing with the clinical side and the second dealing with how the procurements of contracts have been handled?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Again, the Health Quality Council is going to do a good job. They've set very rigorous terms of reference, and they're going to conduct the business as they see fit.

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

## 2:00 Storage of Nuclear Waste

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. On March 30 the municipal district of Big Lakes voted to consider hosting a nuclear waste storage facility in their area. In addition to storing hazardous nuclear waste in our province, this would also require that dangerous radioactive materials be transported through dozens of Alberta communities from other parts of the country. I want to ask whether the Premier will commit today to protecting the health and safety of Albertans by introducing legislation to categorically prohibit the transportation and storage of nuclear waste in Alberta.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, once again the question is purely speculative. There is an authority that deals with this. It's a federal authority. What the authority has said is that they're looking at those provinces that presently have nuclear energy in their province. Alberta doesn't have any, and there's no reason for that to come to the province of Alberta.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the recent crisis in Japan shows that even well-managed nuclear materials can become extremely dangerous, will the Premier commit to protecting the health and environment of Albertans by passing legislation similar to that in the province of Manitoba which would prevent Alberta from becoming a nuclear waste dumping ground for the rest of the country? And don't say it's speculative, Mr. Premier.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, it is speculative. You read something in a paper, and then all of a sudden it's going to happen. It is speculative.

We'll watch the situation very carefully. As I said, the national authority will only look at those provinces that have nuclear energy in their province today. We don't have any.

**Mr. Mason:** Once a project like this gets approved, Mr. Speaker, it's too late, and that's the lack of foresight of this government that just comes through over and over and over again. Given the action of the . . .

**The Speaker:** Well, hold on, hon. member. We have no preambles on the third question.

**Mr. Mason:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Well, I'm not sorry. I'm just enforcing the rules.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, purely speculative, something just to get attention. If he read all of the article and saw all of what was in the print, he would know that there's no need to come to any province that does not have any nuclear energy. We don't have any, so nobody will be coming here to do any investigation of any storage of nuclear waste.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

## Abandoned Wells

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So far the town of Calmar has found 26 abandoned wells, three of which are leaking. That's 26 wells under or beside homes, schools, and businesses. But in Alberta, that's okay. Abandoned wells are allowed to be removed from land titles, so no one could know about the danger or even the existence until something goes wrong. To the government: who is responsible for this situation? Is it the Department of Energy, which has the ERCB regulation, or Environment, which signs off on abandoned wells, or Municipal Affairs?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, let's start off with the Minister of Energy, since the member sort of threw it out. First of all, the ERCB does have responsibility for this. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, proceed.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I would have liked to have heard the rest of the answer from the minister. But my question again to the government: if the point is to protect Albertans and make it possible for them to make informed choices, in this case purchasing a home, why do the legislation and the regulations continue to permit the opposite?

**Mr. Liepert:** I'll finish the answer, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to clarify the preamble of the member. Clearly, through the ERCB that information is available. But what is important is that if a municipality decides that it wants to subdivide and develop a parcel of land, it's up to the municipality to check with the ERCB relative to abandoned oil wells on the property. The ERCB has no knowledge of whether or not a municipality is subdividing. So that information actually is there.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Again to members of the government: stop doing this. There are three different ministries involved here, and the result is — people are buying homes. Now, which one of you is responsible?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, the member says, "Stop doing this." What does the member want us to stop doing?

We actually have the information. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Department of Energy are working on an amendment whereby we may make it a requirement for the municipality to check. We're working with the Minister of Municipal Affairs on that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

## Economic Recovery

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In many parts of the world the global economic recession is beginning to end. In fact, several

nations have already returned to economic growth. According to the IMF the overall world output is expected to increase by 4 and a half per cent in 2011. My questions are to the Minister of Finance and Enterprise. What is the estimated yearly growth for Alberta, and how does that compare with the rest of the world?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is hard to compare Alberta with the rest of the world. But it's very clear in IMF discussions that the parts of the world that are developing are coming out of the recession very strongly, and Alberta is, too. While they're talking about 4.5 per cent, we're looking at about 3.3 per cent, which is considered a very steady growth. To compare us to Brazil or China is difficult, but compared to the rest of the developed nations, Canada and Alberta are leading the pack.

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

**Mr. Prins:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the same minister. If average world growth is at 4 and a half per cent and Alberta is only growing at roughly 3 per cent, does this mean that we are losing pace with the rest of the world?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** No. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we're not losing pace with the rest of the world; we're leading most of the developed world. What it really shows is the fact that we had a plan to take Alberta through the recession. It was to manage our spending. It was to continue to invest in infrastructure so that we can sell goods to the rest of the world which is leading us out of the recession. We stuck to our plan. It's working very well, and Albertans see that.

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

**Mr. Prins:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again my last question is to the same minister. What steps is your ministry taking to ensure that the Alberta economy has access to these dramatically growing economies around the world?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, it's not our department; it's our government. It started with this Premier's initiative in the Asia advisory council. We have markets there of 4 billion people. We all know how important the pipeline is to the west coast, but it's not just oil. We have ag products that are wanted all over the world. We have to work with all of our transportation providers to sell them food. They want forestry products and a multitude of things that Albertans are very good at. So while the Asia advisory council is a very good step, everyone in Alberta I think would agree that we're positioned very well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

#### Transfer of Tax Recovery Land

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tax recovery land has been handed to municipalities without any environmental assessment, without any public input, and without any requirements on the future use of this land; for instance, the importance of protecting agricultural land in this province. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: why was this most recent transfer of 84,000 acres, which is 130 square miles of land, transferred now?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there's an ongoing requirement for us as a government to take a look at the land base that we manage on behalf of Albertans. From the point of view of moving public land into areas of either production or perhaps conserva-

tion, it goes on continually. I think that we're doing quite a good job of it.

**Ms Pastoor:** I'm referring to some of the land around Taber, which he's very aware of. Why was this transfer made before the land-use framework regional plan was completed? Wouldn't it have made more sense to wait until the regional priorities were set?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, of course, the member opposite is referring to a situation where the province of Alberta has been managing land that was initially in the hands of municipalities. We transferred the land back where it rightly belongs, in the control of municipalities. Any of that real estate that has an environmental or ecological value for Alberta's future is maintained as public land by the province. The rest of it is going back to the management of municipal entities, where it rightly belongs.

**Ms Pastoor:** I guess the question was: why now and why before the land-use framework has been put into place?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, why now? This thing has been going on since 1960. I'm not exactly sure where the member has been in all that period of time; nevertheless, living quite close to a lot of the area where this real estate exists and has been transferred for the better part of 35 years. Why now? We're just completing a piece of business that we started with municipalities, by the way with their co-operation, many years ago, and I think that they are all going to be quite satisfied when it's concluded.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

2:10

#### Lower Athabasca Regional Plan

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Following the release of the draft lower Athabasca regional plan last week, some opposition members said that the plan came out of the blue and caught many in the oil industry entirely off guard. That version of events doesn't seem to quite match my recollection of events. Could the minister set the record straight as to exactly when the regional advisory committee's report was released? How many months have been spent on consultation between the release of the RAC report and the release of the draft regional plan?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, one thing I will say, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite is that the plan, the whole plan, the land-use framework and the rest of it, did come out of the blue, Tory blue. And it's a very, very good plan. In fact, we have had consultation on this plan with more than 10,000 Albertans up to this point in time, and there is now one draft plan available for consultation, again a 60-day consultation period with Albertans. Nobody was caught by surprise with respect to the plan.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. With respect to the lower Athabasca regional plan, is there a risk that if we do not strike the right balance with respect to conservation of boreal forests and wetlands and cumulative effects on air, water, water quality, and endangered species, we risk losing jurisdiction to the federal government? If so, could the minister identify the specific pieces of federal legislation that could be used by Ottawa to take away jurisdiction?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there is an issue here, and there are a number of areas, of course, where the federal government has jurisdiction. Air would be one of them; water quality is another one. But two important things have happened to Albertans recently. The Species at Risk Act, that is federal legislation, has been brought into the province of Alberta in certain circumstances where the feds believe we are not doing enough to maintain proper protection of habitat or species at risk. Another one would be the Migratory Bird Act, which does a very similar thing, where they look at situations where migratory birds, in the federal opinion, are not being properly managed.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental is to the Minister of Energy. Last week, yesterday, and even again today there was a lot of hysterical fearmongering by certain opposition members about Alberta being a banana republic and that only absolute morons would invest in Alberta, but I haven't heard any of the industry players or financial analysts saying that. Could the minister possibly set the record straight?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct because the plan had barely been released, and I know there was one political party that put out a news release that was, frankly, outrageous and over the top, totally ridiculous assertions. It took about five seconds for all of those assertions to be dispelled by reputable organizations like the Canadian petroleum association, like FirstEnergy, like Barclays Capital. As the member says, that draft plan is now out for consultation. I think it's achieved a great balance.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Preambles to Supplementary Questions**

**The Speaker:** Look, the chair should only have to intervene once with respect to this question of the preamble, and then all members should be able to catch on to that intervention at the beginning and not have to go every time. I'd have had to intervene, I think, probably on all nine so far, which would not be anything more than intervention period instead of question period. Let's deal with the preambles, okay? Eliminate them on the second and third question. Let's move forward.

#### **Education Funding**

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, again I rise to ask the Education minister about cuts to our education system. Willow Creek composite high school, Pembina Hills school division continue on the list of organizations cutting because of the minister's budget. The minister knows that the change in per-pupil funding barely covers the salary deal the minister signed with the teachers. Will the minister acknowledge that school is more than just teachers and students and includes aides, support staff, and others who help support learning and who are being cut right now because of his budget?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, unquestionably a school, an education system, involves more than just teachers and administrators. Particularly when you include all students in the school, you have to ensure that you have the appropriate wraparound services, the appropriate supports to ensure that every child can come ready to learn and be supported in a safe, caring, and respectful place. No question about that.

**Mr. Hehr:** I thank the minister for that honest answer. I'm surprised, then, that he hasn't rectified the cuts to budget. Given that, will you return the funding to . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, what did I just say not three minutes ago? It's not a lifetime ago. It's not a decade ago. It's not a month ago. It's not a week ago. It was like about two or three minutes ago. Okay? Get that question in really quick.

**Mr. Hehr:** I got so excited by the answer that I just lost track.

I'll go to my second supplemental. Given that this government is able to find money for the Premier's legacy projects and we learned yesterday that the Minister of Education has apparently asked for an increase to the Education budget, can the President of the Treasury Board explain why he refused the Minister of Education's request for funding to ensure that no student with special needs will be left to fall behind and that teacher-to-pupil ratios will not worsen because of a lack of necessary funds?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** You know, maybe you should just give him longer preambles and no answer.

Mr. Speaker, no government commits more to education per student than us, not only K to 12 but advanced education. We are very aware of the pressures that have been put on education with the funding they got, but we understand reality. Everyone in Alberta has had to do a little bit more with a little bit less, and that's what we asked of education.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, last question.

**Mr. Hehr:** I'm fine.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. That really helps because we were extending it there with the exchange back and forth.

**Mr. Hehr:** I know.

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

#### **Municipal Franchise Fees**

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year I sponsored Bill 203, the Municipal Government (Local Access and Franchise Fees) Amendment Act, 2010. While it was defeated in the Legislature as per a recommendation of the Standing Committee on Community Services, the committee made a number of recommendations to the government that acknowledged the importance of the bill's intent. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Pursuant to the committee's recommendation that you consult with the AUMA and AAMD and C to explore the development of a formula that provides for consistency and predictability, could you provide an update on this process?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member has indicated, we are exploring the development of a province-wide franchise fee formula, and we're moving along very well in that area. Municipal Affairs is presently conducting consultation to look at how we can best strike that right balance, and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties as well as the cities of Edmonton and Calgary are being involved and consulted.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good news. My supplemental is to the same minister. Have you had any conversations with the municipalities that base their fees on the price of the

commodity, a variable the committee specifically recommended not using?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, letters were sent to the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary inviting their comments and suggestions in regard to this matter, and both the AUMA and the AAMD and C have also been asked to comment. We've asked that their input be forwarded to us by as early as next Monday, April 18. The important thing in this matter is that we want to provide consistency and predictability to utility consumers across the province.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplementary is to the Minister of Energy. Have you considered the necessary changes to regulation that would allow the utility companies to clearly disclose on the utility bills the name of the municipality that is the beneficiary of the revenue collected from these fees?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to outline the fact that in Alberta we probably have the most transparent retail bill that exists in the country because it includes everything from the cost of the electricity to who the specific billing company is, the names and telephone numbers of the distribution owner and the retailer. However, there is an anomaly relative to municipally owned providers, so that's something that both the Minister of Municipal Affairs and I have been exploring, and we'll continue to do so.

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

#### Support for Child Care

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Family budgets are being hard hit under this government's watch. This year the government has decided to cut funding for any new child care spaces, yet costs for spaces went up over 12 per cent on average last year. I want to ask the Minister of Children and Youth Services to reverse this cut so that more parents can find affordable care for their children.

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a small correction, hon. member, but the fees that the member is discussing aren't operational; that was capital dollars for child care spaces.

Actually, we have increased subsidies for parents. We did increase those by 78 per cent since 2008, and the number of children and families that that is helping has gone from 11,000 to 20,000.

2:20

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. At a time when families are struggling to afford child care, half of our child care spaces in the province are for profit, adding overhead to already inflated child care rates. Will the minister move to create more not-for-profit spaces at an affordable rate so that every parent who needs care for their kids can still afford it? Regardless of what she said, Mr. Speaker . . .

#### Speaker's Ruling

#### Preambles to Supplementary Questions

**The Speaker:** Boy, if that wasn't the longest preamble I've ever heard in my life. Please have a seat. We'll get to the answer right

away. But, you know, how many times do I have to say this? Is it every time? This is not going to be a question period; it's going to be an intervention period.

The hon. minister.

#### Support for Child Care

(continued)

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We don't regulate whether the daycare or day home is for profit or not for profit because parents do like to have the freedom to choose whichever daycare or day home they are going to place their child into to be safe and protected. I can tell you this: as with many businesses in the province the same is true for daycares as they hire very professional staff. The cost for staffing has increased, and that is why some of the rates have gone up. You mentioned 12 per cent. Up to 95 per cent of the cost for daycare is staff cost.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Third question, member.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that two-income families are a reality in our modern life and are drivers of our economic prosperity, and given that there are only enough spaces for 16 per cent of children under age 12 in Alberta – here's the question – why is the minister failing to offer more Alberta parents a shot at affordable child care so families can improve their lot?

**The Speaker:** I'm going to recognize the minister, but I want you to go home later today and read the text of what you just said, okay? Just read the text of what you said, and if you don't put a hand over your eyes and put your head down like this, then heaven help me.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very important to increase subsidies for parents when we know that there is a need. That's why you would have seen in the budget, hon. member, that the child care program at \$229 million had an operating expense increase of \$17 million for this year, and that is to assist parents overall with the cost.

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

#### Mental Illness Treatment Services for Children

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday of last week a 15-year-old girl refused to get back in her temporary caseworker's car after she left her group home to go for a coffee. On Friday her father, having received tips as to the whereabouts of his daughter, contacted the child crisis unit but was told to call back after shift change. Last night I learned that the girl had been assaulted and left unconscious, so I, too, contacted the crisis unit and was told that she was in care but AWOL. To the Minister of Children and Youth Services: please explain how a teenager can be considered in care and AWOL at the same time.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I met with the individual's family that this member has brought forward to the Assembly today, and I can tell you that I had very experienced staff at that meeting, that there's experienced staff from Health and Wellness there as well, and that our staff continue to work very, very closely with this family on a daily basis. But what I am concerned about is that you could pick up the phone and have private information given to you regarding this individual and their whereabouts, so I will look into that.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. How is it in this or any other teenager's "best interests" to be abandoned by Children and Youth Services to the streets?

**Mrs. Fritz:** As I indicated to you, Mr. Speaker, our staff are working very, very closely with the individual that this member has brought forward today. They're paying very close attention. A lot of resources have gone into the situation, and we have very experienced staff, not just at the caseworker level but at a very high level, working with this individual, and it will continue as that family does need our assistance.

**Mr. Chase:** Simple question, Mr. Speaker. Where is she now? Is she protected?

**Mrs. Fritz:** That really is none of this member's business at all, Mr. Speaker. Enough said. We are on top of this, and it's none of your business.

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

### Adult Literacy

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In every community there are those who face barriers in good times or bad due to their lack of literacy skills. Adult education is vital to building successful futures, raising healthy families, creating happy and productive lives. My questions today are to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. What is this government doing to address adult literacy levels in Alberta?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that question. Literacy is extremely important to this government, and in working in partnership with Alberta Education and Employment and Immigration, we've created a literacy framework that will help increase literacy opportunities in this province. Right now we fund over 200 community adult learning programs across this province to help with literacy and other adult learning needs.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My next question to the same minister: given that there are quite a number of Albertans having difficulty attending postsecondary education institutions, what is your ministry doing to make it easier for them to enter and be successful?

**The Speaker:** I think if we came back this evening, we'd probably get those answers as part of the questions for the estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and Technology.

Third question, please.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Final question: what concrete policy do you have in place to promote adult literacy programs in Alberta?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you. We continue to implement programs in partnership with the other departments of this government. It's not just literacy, Mr. Speaker, but it's financial literacy that's extremely important and also workplace and technical literacy so that our workers can be safe in the work environment. So we continue to create opportunities for our workers to increase literacy.

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

### Lower Athabasca Regional Plan

*(continued)*

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2008 this government made the grand economic boondoggle of breaking mineral leases' contracts by jacking up royalties. Investment was driven out of the province. With the regional plan released last week, the current government plans to turn a portion of our oil sands region into a protected park. It sounds nice, except that to do it, they are extinguishing leases from companies who have invested millions. To the Minister of Energy: can you please share with this House what additional debt will be added to our current cash deficit of \$6.6 billion, or was compensation something they never thought of?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier in the much better-framed question from the Member for Foothills-Rocky View, these particular charges that have been made in that party's release are – I know we can't use certain terms in this Assembly, but I'll try and stick within what is permitted. I would say that they are so far from the truth they are almost . . . I'll leave it at that.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** What a joke. You don't even know what compensation is.

### Speaker's Ruling Decorum

**The Speaker:** Okay. Now listen. Please sit down. This is not a debate. This is not a debate; this is name calling. I asked the man to sit down, and I asked you to sit down. If you cannot find civility, either one, I'm going to just forget about recognizing either one of you. Now, have you got a question? No preamble. No preamble. A question.

### Lower Athabasca Regional Plan

*(continued)*

**Mr. Hinman:** Given that the Supreme Court ruled in 1985 that governments must compensate not only for all developmental costs but for the full value of the resources when these leases are expropriated, does the government plan to challenge the Supreme Court ruling, or are they relying on the clause in Bill 36 so that taxpayers aren't on the hook for billions of dollars?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I think that the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development has made it very clear that what is out today is a draft plan. It's out for consultation. There is no suggestion that anything is being confiscated by anybody other than by a few fearmongers on the other side of the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Well, that's not helpful either.  
Short question, to the point.

**Mr. Hinman:** Mr. Speaker, that question was: how much is compensation going to cost? He didn't even do it.

Does the minister realize how totally incompetent it is for our government to be paying companies not to develop and extract our resources? You have no idea how much compensation this is going to cost the taxpayers, do you? No idea.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, unlike the member who asked the question, I've had a number of discussions with industry over the last week or so, and I believe the overwhelming view by industry is that what the government has come up with . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I don't know how many light bulbs are up there. I keep looking up and keep looking. I know where a few of them are burned out.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

## 2:30 Noise Attenuation on Stoney Trail

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've constantly advocated for my constituents in Abbeydale, Applewood, and Monterey Park and raised their concerns about noise from Stoney Trail. We have been awaiting the results of sound testing for many months now. To the Minister of Transportation: Minister, the sound testing is complete; where is the report?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the report is in. We're currently reviewing that report. When it's completed, the report will be posted on our web page. If we need to take any action, it'll be taken at that time.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Mr. Speaker, I sure hope that – actually, I shouldn't get into preambles.

Mr. Speaker, my next question to the minister is: will there be a sound barrier put up between Stoney Trail and the communities of Abbeydale and Applewood and Monterey Park to mitigate the noise?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, noise mitigation is considered if the noise levels adjacent to those communities happen to be over 65 decibels. That means that the province would consider sound attenuation after it reaches 65 decibels over a 24-hour period. Any decision on this would be done once the noise monitoring and the modelling studies are finalized later this month. I want Albertans to know that measuring noise levels is something that we actually do regularly on our ring roads.

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My last question to the same minister: Minister, should the noise level not reach 65 decibels, what other measures can you take to ensure noise reduction within that area?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the bylaw is that if it reaches 65 decibels, then we would try to do something, whether we do it in partnership with the communities or with the municipality. If it does reach 65 decibels, then it meets the requirements.

## Daycare Accreditation

**Dr. Taft:** Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Last summer after an unaccredited daycare in Stony Plain was ordered closed because of concerns with force-feeding and mistreating toddlers, the minister said, and I quote: we should have accreditation at 100 per cent. End quote. Now the minister has backtracked on mandatory accreditation, leaving it on a voluntary basis. To the minister: Why? Why did she abandon her commitment to 100 per cent accreditation for Alberta's daycares?

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, Mr. Speaker, to be clear, I haven't abandoned my commitment to 100 per cent accreditation, and neither has the community. In fact, the community has responded to accreditation where it's already 85 per cent fully accredited for daycares and day homes, 10 per cent are participating in accreditation, and 5 per cent are in transition, including newly opened facilities. I can tell you that with that voluntary commitment by the community this has become a very successful program and has been embraced by the daycare and day home operators.

**Dr. Taft:** Again to the same minister. She's talking about a voluntary program. I'd like her to give us an answer here. What is the firm deadline for 100 per cent accreditation for Alberta's daycares? Give us a deadline.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it might be helpful to this member if I explained about a daycare and day home and how they're licensed and they're approved. When a day home or daycare is licensed or approved, their safety is regulated – we have very high provincial standards – and they're also inspected and monitored on a regular basis.

Now, accreditation is completely different. Accreditation is about enhancing the child care program, creating better learning opportunities for children, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we established the accreditation program. That's why the . . .

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. Given that we probably all agree that accreditation is a valuable thing, why is this minister allowing some children in this province, little children, to go to daycares that are not accredited?

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I explained in my earlier answer that the community has embraced this program. Eighty-five per cent are accredited – no, don't shake your head; they are – 10 per cent are in the process of being accredited, and 5 per cent, the new facilities, are becoming accredited. That is mostly a hundred per cent compliance.

Mr. Speaker, we did increase the accreditation funding. We increased it by 12 per cent, from \$74 million to \$83 million, the only program of its kind in Canada.

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

## Pigeon Lake Waste-water Management Project

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The proposed Pigeon Lake waste-water project is very important to the residents of the summer villages of Sundance Beach, Ma-Me-O Beach, Noris Beach, Crystal Springs, Grandview, Poplar Bay, Wetaskiwin county, Pigeon Lake provincial park and, certainly, to myself as MLA. My questions are to the Minister of Transportation. What is the status of the Pigeon Lake waste-water project?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to start this one off with: Drayton Valley-Calmar are awfully lucky to have such an MLA. She's continually trying to speed up things for her constituents.

Mr. Speaker, this proposed \$26.7 million waste-water project involves piping waste water to the existing northeast Pigeon Lake regional waste-water commission. Through the provincial water for life program this project could be eligible to receive a grant of up to 90 per cent of the waste-water system. The first stage of the project . . .

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. minister. Thank you.  
Now we'll hear from that hon. member again.

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. minister.

My constituents are understandably very interested in seeing progress made on this project. When will funding for the first stage be approved, the line from Ma-Me-O Beach to the existing Mulhurst lagoon? When, Minister?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, my officials have informed me that a review has nearly been completed of the proposed line from Ma-Me-O to the Mulhurst lagoon. We know this is an important project. My officials are working with the Pigeon Lake regional waste-water steering committee, and I expect to have a report in the coming weeks. I will certainly review it thoroughly, and that's when we can provide more information and when the funding would be available.

**Mrs. McQueen:** My final question is to the same minister. Considering what I heard, that stage 1 of the Pigeon Lake waste-water project will be approved, when would construction begin?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, the project could be eligible for a grant of up to 90 per cent. As for when the construction would begin, it would be up to the proponents of the project, the Pigeon Lake regional waste-water steering committee. Alberta Transportation would provide the funding, and the construction process would then be managed by the proponents.

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

#### Flood Hazard Mitigation

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Disaster recovery by its very definition is reactionary and implies intervention after a natural disaster has occurred. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: besides flood hazard mapping and occasional one-time grants aimed at supporting emergency preparedness, is the minister satisfied that the government does absolutely everything it can to prevent or mitigate flooding before it occurs?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, the provincial government is doing a lot of work in terms of mitigation and helping municipalities prepare for potential disasters and emergencies that might come their way. On a yearly basis we continue to work with municipalities that are subject to flooding, for instance, to make sure that they are aware of flood plains and how high water levels may rise. So we continue to do that type of work with individual municipalities right across the province.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister again: what role does the Alberta Emergency Management Agency play in instructing regions on proper placement of sandbags since recent media reports have suggested that this is often being done improperly and may actually make flood damage worse?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware that the AEMA, or the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, is actually training people on how to place sandbags. If that's a broader issue that we see happening right across the province, then we could certainly look at that particular aspect. But, generally, we are providing sandbags and are making sure that equipment and facilities are

available for municipalities to use. If there's a need to use sandbags to protect property, those are available to them.

2:40

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again: are there any permanent, enduring solutions that could be employed to prevent or mitigate flooding in high-risk areas and reduce the impact on taxpayers? I'm thinking of last year's whopping \$191 million supplementary appropriation for disaster recovery.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, we keep on working with our individual municipalities, and municipalities are encouraged to purchase mitigation equipment. Through the municipal sustainability initiative funding they can choose to protect their individual communities. As well, we continue to do a lot of training with individual municipalities. If those municipalities actually buy equipment or have access to equipment, we encourage them to share it with their neighbours if there's a need to have that happen. We also make sure that that equipment is well known and documented so that there is the possibility of using it elsewhere across the province.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes Oral Question Period for today. Nineteen members were recognized. There were 111 questions and responses, and it's only Tuesday.

We'll come back in a few seconds from now to continue with Members' Statements.

#### Members' Statements

(continued)

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

#### Bethany Care Society Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak about some exciting achievements by two outstanding organizations aimed at improving the lives of seniors in Alberta. First, I want to recognize the Bethany Care Society, one of my constituents and a long-established provider of seniors' care in Alberta. Bethany was named one of Alberta's top 50 employers, one of only three nonprofit organizations among many major corporate entities. Nationally, the Workplace Institute named Bethany as one of three companies named as Canada's top employers for 50-plus employees.

Almost 40 per cent of Bethany's workforce is age 50 or older, with 36 employees over the age of 65 and the oldest being over 80. Bethany Care Society has an impressive record of receiving 10 national or provincial employers of choice awards over the past 11 years. This speaks volumes to the focus of Bethany on attracting and retaining qualified staff and providing safe environments that foster positive relationships among staff, residents, and their families.

Mr. Speaker, on April 4 the Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging at the University of Calgary was launched, thanks to a \$5 million gift from the Brenda Strafford Foundation. The centre on aging will promote the quality of life for seniors through developing programs in support of age-related applied research and public policy, interdisciplinary education in geriatrics and gerontology, community outreach, and public awareness.

The new centre was announced at a special event to celebrate Dr. Barrie Strafford's contributions to the university. To date he

has contributed more than \$8 million to the U of C through his foundation and personal philanthropy. These gifts have supported research in the faculties of kinesiology, medicine, nursing, and social work.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is blessed by the contributions of these individuals and organizations.

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

### Volunteer Week

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week, April 10 to 16, we are recognizing Volunteer Week in Alberta. I would hope, given the enormous workload carried by volunteer-driven agencies in Alberta, that there would be the sound of knees hitting the floor as their owners engage in fervent prayers of thanks to volunteers, particularly government knees, as this sector provides so many of the services that government used to provide and makes our cities and towns livable, creative, helping, and caring.

Volunteering has changed so much in the last several decades. More families volunteer together. Seniors put in an enormous amount of volunteer hours. In some cases, students volunteer for class credit. One thing is for sure. People have less time and want their volunteer experience to be both meaningful and also beneficial to the recipient and to themselves.

I remember a well-known businessman who reflected on his volunteer experience. He wanted to do something different, different from what he did every day. He wanted to get his hands dirty, to paint sets or pound nails, but he was immediately put on the board. He duly gave his well-informed input but left the board after only a year because he was never given the opportunity to do what he wanted to do. Recruiting, orienting, training, and retaining today's volunteers is complex and challenging. What the volunteer gets out of the experience is just as important as what they give. So, government, pay attention.

The volunteer centre of Camrose is closing on June 30 of this year. Sector colleagues say that this is a well-run and valued organization. So what's wrong? Well, a couple of things. One is the loss of funding pools. Prior to 2009 volunteer agencies could access several different grant programs to fund different aspects. Now there's only one CIP, and there's a competition for dollars. Two is the emphasis on quantity not quality, and that has a particular impact on rural centres. Organizations are judged by outputs rather than outcomes. Third is the insistence that organizations' eligibility is based on how much money they raise.

So this week and all weeks a shout-out to volunteers and volunteer centres: for all the benefit we receive as Albertans, my profound thanks.

### Presenting Petitions

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present two petitions. The first petition, from approximately 250 residents in the Strathcona area, reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to: Firstly, ensure that the underground option and not the overhead line option for the proposed 500Kv transmission line for the East Transmission Utility Corridor between the Ellerslie Road corner and Baseline Road, an area which is densely populated and with nearby schools in Strathcona County, be implemented. Secondly, as this is a regional line, to ensure that the cost of this underground line is borne by the entire province of Alberta.

And thirdly, to ensure that all future 500Kv transmission lines which may be built near any other densely populated area in the Province of Alberta, be built according to this same or a similar underground option.

The second petition, from approximately 5,000 residents in the Strathcona area, reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that: (1) the underground, not overhead, line option is used for the proposed 500 kV transmission line for the East Transmission Utility Corridor between the Ellerslie substation and Baseline Road; (2) the cost of the underground line is borne by the entire province of Alberta; and (3) all future 500 kV transmission lines located in densely populated areas be built using the underground line option.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table the appropriate number of copies of the following two annual reports. First is the 2009-2010 annual report from the College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta, and the second is the 2010 annual report from the Public Health Appeal Board.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of documents referenced in Culture and Community Spirit's main estimates on March 23, 2011. Included are two reports. The first is entitled A Dialogue with Alberta's Arts Sector. The second is entitled A Dialogue with Alberta's Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector. Both are available online.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm tabling Castle-Crown clear-cutting concerns from the following individuals: Marianne Dufour, Mandy Rowe, David Manning, Greg Michaux, Catherine Talbot, Disa Hovatta, Donna Jabillo, Chris Jones, Jonagh Fairbrother, Ruby Rowat, Karel Sanders, Jennifer Smith, Marilyn Hurrell, Margaret Yorke, Chris Dunn, Jeffrey Phillips, Tonya Bourque, Rachel Christensen, Ron Williamson, Cathy Wolfe, Fiona Mansfield, Jenny May, Rebecca McEvoy, John Gaul, and Evelyn Abell.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition documents in which are the quotes that he spoke about today from lawyers that the Alberta Health Quality Council doesn't have adequate protection for doctors who sign nondisclosure agreements.

2:50

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Two tablings today. The first is tablings from constituents who've written with their concerns about the future of the physician and family support program, a program which they feel is focused on keeping current physicians in the best possible mental health. These constituents



are Dr. Lisa Burback, Dr. Thea Chibuk, Dr. Nick Etches, Dr. Warren Ma, Dr. Daniel Miller, and Dr. Edwin Zhang.

A further tabling on behalf of my colleague for Calgary-Buffalo is a petition signed by a number of parents and teachers at Silver Springs school in Calgary voicing their opposition to the recently announced budget cuts that will severely impact the Calgary board of education. They underline that their children's education needs to be a priority for the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I've also had notice that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar wanted to table something. Is anybody doing it on his behalf? Okay.

Hon. members, we do have a point of order to deal with. The hon. Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take your advice on this, but I thought you did more or less deal with the point of order at that point in time in an appropriate way. The point of order was, as you indicated, with respect to parliamentary language. I would refer to the Speaker's memo of February 18, 2011, and specifically to attachment 1 of that memo, page 6, with respect to the use of the term "deliberately misleading" and to pages 14 and 15 with respect to the term "misleading." Of much lesser stature I'd refer to the authorities of our own Standing Order 23(h) and (j) – making allegations against a member, using abusive or insulting language – and 23(i), introducing a matter in debate that "offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly."

*Beauchesne* also supports the point of order that I am making with respect to its sixth edition, 489, pages 145 and 146, where it refers to terms which are unparliamentary, "deliberately misleading" and lying being included in those. At 491 *Beauchesne* indicates that the Speaker "ruled that language used in the House should be temperate and worthy of the place in which it is spoken." That's why I raised a point of order.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am very reluctant to raise points of order on this because we could be doing it incessantly, and what it normally does then is just afford another opportunity for people to make speeches on the same topic and refer to the reasons why they were using intemperate language. But there does come a point at which we have to intercede, in my view, and say: "This is a House which is supposed to be the highest form of debate of public policy in our province. It is a forum which should bring respect to the discussion of public policy and to the political affairs of our province and to the leadership in our province." It is for that reason, in my view, that language has been termed unparliamentary, that we do have rules in place which suggest that if a member makes a statement, we are to presume it to be true.

If we are going to attack the veracity of a member's statement, that is a very severe intervention, and we do have processes for that. There are times when you can go to the Ethics Commissioner or to the privileges committee when someone is engaging in inappropriate conduct, but in the normal give-and-take in the House it is not that difficult for us to formally lay our questions to make our purpose and make our point without being disreputable, without being disrespectful of each other. We can hold our opinions in this House very strongly. We can disagree, as is often said, without being disagreeable. In this case the language that was used by the Leader of the Official Opposition was unparliamentary and inappropriate. Now, you addressed that, but I would ask that you do rule it out of order.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Official Opposition has asked me to respond to the point of order on his behalf. I know the citations that the Government House Leader has brought up, and I agree with him when he says that our discourse here should be of the highest form and should bring respect.

I note that in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at 427 it talks about: questions should not create disorder. Interestingly, there is also an answer to that because on 431 it talks about: replies to oral questions should be "phrased in language that does not provoke disorder." So there are two sides of the same coin there.

I also find that reflected when I look in *Beauchesne*. If I look at *Beauchesne* 410(5), it's talking about "the seeking of information and calling the Government to account," which, I would argue, the Leader of the Official Opposition was trying to do. At *Beauchesne* 417 it talks about: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

We have both of those things happening over a long period of exchanges here, Mr. Speaker. I don't have access to the question as written by the Leader of the Official Opposition. I would believe, sitting next to him, that the language that was used was that which came from extreme frustration with the answers and the repeated information that the Premier has brought forward.

Mr. Speaker, we all have access to the same information here. The Premier keeps saying that physicians are protected by the Evidence Act, which is what he said yesterday. Today he said that they're protected by robust . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please. One of the rules is that we're not continuing debate in a point of order. Let's deal with the point of order.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much for that guidance, Mr. Speaker. That is what I'm trying to do, deal with the point of order.

We have an accusation from the Government House Leader that the leader used language that he shouldn't have used, and 23(h), (i), and (j) were quoted, which is sort of a catch-all. But what we have here is the Premier insisting on putting information before the House that is not matching the publicly available information, and from that has arisen the leader's insistence on trying to get to the bottom of the question, to literally hold the government to account, as they are urged to do in both *Beauchesne* and the House of Commons book. We have information that is publicly available from the AMA, which is on their website, which talks about physicians not being able to do this.

**The Speaker:** Let's deal with point of order, please.

**Ms Blakeman:** It is to the point of order.

**The Speaker:** No, it isn't. I've interjected twice now. I'll have you sit down if you don't deal with the point of order.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, yes, indeed the Speaker has the power to do that, and I acknowledge that. But what we are having repeatedly happen in this House is that the Leader of the Official Opposition asks the Premier to deal with something, and the Premier answers with a completely different set of information. Now, there is no requirement that the answer is . . .

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

This was the first question today. This was on the first question. There was no previous background today to anything. These are the

words that were used, and these are the words that the point of order is about. These are the words that would be intervened on by the chair regardless of who they were used against in this House. This is the Leader of the Official Opposition in the first question, in only the third line of today's question period. "Instead of answering the question honestly, the Premier deliberately misled." That's a direct accusation against a member of this House. If it was said against any member of this House, there would be intervention.

Then in the next line: "This Premier is not telling the truth." This is not oblique. This is not indirect. It's not: the government is not telling the truth. It's an accusation against one member. "The Premier is not telling the truth."

Then in the next line: "Why is the Premier deliberately misleading?"

Those are three direct attacks on a member in a couple of lines on the first question in the question period. As I hear the argument, that was okay because, after all, the guy got pushed, anxious. That's ridiculous. These are direct violations of the rules of this Assembly. They are absolutely directly put against another member of this Assembly. They violate the rules of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* in all the pages I can give – pages 614, 618, 619 – and *Beauchesne* paragraphs 485 to 492. Then throw in our Standing Orders 23(h), (i), and (j), which by the way are the most important of the orders.

3:00

The Leader of the Official Opposition knows full well. He stood up in this Assembly not too many years ago and, basically, gave a great big speech about ethics and all the rest of the stuff, civility and everything else. The language used in crafting these questions for this Assembly violates our rules. They should be tempered. They should be worthy of the place they're spoken in. These comments I suppose were withdrawn because I did intervene. I did interject. I ruled, basically, the question to be out of order. This is inappropriate language, absolutely inappropriate.

It's only Tuesday. It's only April 12. I will intervene repeatedly in this Assembly, and I will call recess of question period unless the decorum improves. I have called recess before the question period in the past, and it had to do with decorum in this House. That means that the question period ends, to return later.

If men and women here cannot have civility, that is really, truly unfortunate. These are three deliberate attacks and should not have been used.

## Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

**The Chair:** The chair would like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

## Main Estimates 2011-12

### Executive Council

**The Chair:** Before I call on our hon. Premier, I would like to talk about the process here. The first hour would be reserved for the Official Opposition. The next 20 minutes would go to the third party, which is the Wildrose Party. Then the next 20 minutes would be for the fourth party, the ND. The 20 minutes after that would be for independent members, and thereafter any other members.

Now I would like to call on the hon. Premier to begin the estimates under consideration. Hon. Premier, please.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. members, I'm pleased to appear before this committee to discuss the 2011-2012 Executive Council budget estimates and 2011-2014 business plan.

I'd like to begin by introducing the staff who are with me today. On the floor we have my chief of staff, Ron Glen; Brian Manning, deputy minister of Executive Council; Dwight Dibben, deputy secretary to cabinet; Roxanna Benoit, deputy chief of policy co-ordination; Lee Funke, managing director of the Public Affairs Bureau; and Elaine Dougan, executive director of corporate services. Some of my staff are also up in the gallery, including George Samoil, deputy chief of staff for operations and legislative affairs; Jason Ennis, my executive assistant; Bob Fessenden, deputy minister to the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy; Cam Hantiuk, director of communications; Ken Faulkner, director of the McDougall Centre, the southern Premier's office; and Karen Lindgren, who's our senior financial officer. I think I've got everybody there.

First of all, since this is my last time here in Committee of Supply, I'd like to take a moment to say what a pleasure it has been to work with such a committed group of people from both sides of the House. It has certainly been a roller-coaster ride going from the boom to the recession. But during that period we've learnt a lot, and I know our government has accomplished a lot as well.

We're investing in infrastructure now to ensure that Albertans have the schools, hospitals, and roads that they need today and as the province continues to grow. We have plans to manage that growth. We were the first province in Canada to develop a 10-year plan to end homelessness. And we have done it all with responsible budgeting that meets Albertans' needs. This is why in this year's budget we took a balanced approach, to enable government to focus efforts on areas that are most important to Albertans: education, health care, and infrastructure.

Executive Council is one of the nine ministries that has a decrease in its 2011-12 operating budget. The budget for Executive Council is \$28.6 million this year, down \$2.3 million from last year. This reduction was mainly achieved by reducing spending for our promoting Alberta program, formerly the branding initiative, by \$1.8 million and by reducing the budget for the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy by \$500,000.

The business plan. Executive Council's program areas and priorities are as outlined. Executive Council includes my offices in the Legislature and in McDougall Centre in Calgary, the deputy minister's office, the cabinet co-ordination office, the policy co-ordination office, the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy, the protocol office, administrative support for the office of the Lieutenant Governor and the Order of Excellence Council, and the Public Affairs Bureau.

The 2011-14 business plan lays out the following priority initiatives for Executive Council: supporting policy development, co-ordinating government strategic planning, supporting the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy, continuing to implement a strategic communications plan, supporting ministries in the effective use of social media and continuing to implement a government-wide social media policy, and co-ordinating with ministries and organizations to promote Alberta's energy, immigration, employment, investment, and tourism potential to the world.

I'm going to cover a few of these initiatives in detail to put them into context, starting with the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy. I established the council to provide advice on strategic decisions and initiatives to put Alberta in the best position possible for the long-term future. The council has consulted with Albertans all over the province, including students, businesses,

and community leaders. They looked at what the expected growth in China and other emerging markets means for Alberta, what policies will best foster sustainable development, how we can create and sustain future wealth, and how we can ensure that Alberta continues to be an innovative and prosperous province where Albertans continue to enjoy a high quality of life built on vibrant communities and a healthy environment.

3:10

Their final report, which is expected in the next month or so, will offer us a road map on how to boost the position of our province for a bright, sustainable future. A key part to securing our future is keeping Alberta top of mind for people around the world, and that is for trade, for tourism, and for immigration. We have now seen how much decisions made in other jurisdictions can affect our livelihood. That is why we must ensure that the legislators and opinion leaders in influential markets have all the facts before they take actions in sectors like energy.

I believe we are getting our story out, and we are seeing some positive results, though we still have more work to do. That's why we made growing our economic presence in Asia the top of our priority list with Bill 1, and that is why we are continuing to focus on promoting Alberta's potential to the world through investment and the promoting Alberta program. Promoting Alberta is the extension of the Alberta brand. The program engages other ministries, Alberta organizations, businesses, and all Albertans to help tell our story.

In 2010-11 we were building off of our success from the Winter Olympics in Vancouver. We supported trade shows, conferences, collected and shared the stories of Albertans and what they can accomplish here, connected with brand ambassadors, and created cultural experiences for visitors in the province through involvement in events like Alberta Arts Days. We are seeing a positive impact for our efforts nationally and internationally, but we still have a further way to go as people and organizations continue their efforts to tarnish the reputation of Alberta and its industries.

We see this program as a long-term effort to protect and promote our province. Next year we will focus on telling Albertans the story about the best place to work and invest, recognizing the burgeoning economic climate in our province. We will also continue to engage Albertans around the world through the use of social media and strategic communications. We are proud of our people and our industries, and we are committed to ensuring that the world knows it.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going to stop here and now prepare to take questions from committee members. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Each member's speaking time is 10 minutes, but you can combine it for 20 minutes. Hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, would you like to combine it for 20 minutes with the Premier?

**Dr. Swann:** I would.

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead. Twenty minutes.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the Premier and his staff for joining me today for discussions around the estimates for Executive Council. The Executive Council's business plan states that a priority initiative is to co-ordinate the government's strategic planning process and support the development of the government of Alberta strategic plan.

This year government ministries, including Executive Council, have reduced the amount of information in their ministry business plans. In September we saw a comparable reduction in the scope

of reporting in many ministry annual reports. This coincides with the usual regular changes in government organization and the scope of programs, but some of the changes require reconciliation between fiscal plans and estimates from last year to this year. In some cases there appears little correlation between the goals and the budget lines.

We find significant differences between the way ministries are reporting on spending for the same functions, such as the ministry support services in some cases covered under just two or three lines and in others there are seven or eight lines with no apparent relation to the amounts involved. In the case of Executive Council core businesses and goals have been reduced from three to two, and some performance measures have been dropped. For example, the branding initiative has become the promoting Alberta program, and the performance measures have disappeared even though \$5 million has been allocated to the program for this coming year.

Can the Premier explain why all of these changes in reporting and budgeting have taken place and the differences in the manner of reporting between last year and this? More importantly, can the Premier explain how this promotes transparency and accountability and in particular the stated goals of performance measures such as understandability and comparability and completeness?

At a time when the government has been grappling with a record deficit and there is intense public interest in the government's actions to reduce the deficit without compromising programs valued by Albertans, why are we seeing less opportunity for public scrutiny rather than more? Why has it become necessary for the Official Opposition to request information about spending through written questions rather than clear, consistent, comprehensive reporting in the first place? Can the Premier explain why now, so late in his mandate, we're seeing changes that make it so much more challenging for Albertans to hold the government accountable on its spending?

Last year in this forum the Premier stated that the government would be "back in the black in three years." That was *Hansard*, March 9, 2010, page 368. How do the changes in the presentation of estimates affect the bottom line; that is, the current deficit and the timeline to be back in the black?

Last year in the government's business plan there was a section entitled The Premier's Vision for the Future, with shared values in support of the vision. That section has been dropped in the 2011-2014 government business plan. Can you explain that? Given that the current Premier has announced that he will step down, to what extent can Albertans assume that the government's priorities for the 2011-12 fiscal year will continue through 2011-12, after he steps down?

One of the better initiatives of the Executive Council in recent years was the development of the public agencies governance framework, one that we applauded, and the passing of the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act for 2009. I quote the framework documents:

An Agency Governance Secretariat has been established to support ministries and agencies in implementing the Framework by providing further advice, assistance and implementation tools. The Secretariat will be located in Executive Council and led in a way that promotes coordination, fosters a wide range of perspectives, and respects the role of the responsible minister.

The work of the secretariat was reported in the most recent annual report of Executive Council, page 12. Responsibility for the act was subsequently transferred to the Treasury Board together with the secretariat. Given that the public agencies governance framework, almost two years old, was an initiative of Executive Council, which has the role of providing policy support to the

government and policy co-ordination, can the Premier explain why the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act has not yet been proclaimed? Has the initiative been sent to die in Treasury?

Under the policy goal that government policy and planning are co-ordinated and effective: "Decision-makers need comprehensive and coordinated policy and planning . . . Ministries need analytical and coordination support to ensure that initiatives align with government priorities."

With respect to policy development that aligns with government priorities, I want to raise health care. One of Executive Council's priority initiatives is to provide advice and analysis to support policy development that aligns with government priorities. Goal 2 in the government's 2011-14 business plan is to "increase access to quality health care and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health care service delivery." In 2010-11 the Premier's vision for the future of Alberta included the goal of having "the best performing public health care system in Canada."

In 2010-11 Albertans saw a profound mismatch between this priority and the actual achievements. We've talked about many of those issues here in the House. Can the Premier explain what advice and analysis Executive Council plans to provide in 2011-12 to ensure that "policy development . . . aligns with government priorities." We saw in this House documentation, clearly reviewed by the cabinet, that indicated a phase 2 in development of our health care system that includes private options, insurance companies, user fees, these kinds of issues. That only came out through a secret document.

It raises questions about: just what is the plan for health care given the wait times, the concerns about quality of care, the lack of long-term care in the province, and cuts to prevention programs? I think Albertans have a reasonable question that we are trying to reflect here with respect to leadership on health care policy and how Executive Council is or is not involved in establishing where we're going in the health care system and how we can expect to see some better, clearer planning for the future that would ensure that Albertans, whether professionals or patients, have a sense of whether we're moving towards a more sustainable, quality, accessible system or if, in fact, we're going in another direction.

Can the Premier, then, tell us the purpose of this policy co-ordination role specifically in relation to our health care system? It's obvious to most Albertans that the buck stops here. We have to assume that the health decisions that have been made, the health impacts that we've experienced, the demoralization of the health workforce, and the frustration of patients have to be addressed. There's a mismatch between what the Alberta Health Services Board is saying, what Alberta Health and Wellness is saying, and what I hear the Premier saying on a number of occasions.

3:20

Another area has to do with home ownership and safe communities. Goal 1 of Executive Council is that government policy and planning will be co-ordinated and effective. The government makes efforts to communicate strategy, to stress that it is one government, yet we constantly see that when it comes to matters that affect Albertans, the approach is simply not working. Policy and planning appear to be not co-ordinated or effective.

For example, the evacuation of residents from condominiums in Fort McMurray raised the anxieties of homeowners, as it has over the last 10 years, with the dream of home ownership. We found that Alberta Municipal Affairs is responsible for building codes, but municipalities are responsible for inspections. Albertans making the biggest purchase of their lives have to rely on home inspectors who fall under the doubtful purview of Service Alberta.

The Condominium Property Act is also the responsibility of Service Alberta, but the promised review of that act has been ongoing for years. A committee was struck to review residential construction issues three years ago, in 2008. Where is the policy co-ordination on standards, inspection, and outcomes? Where are the results?

We've also seen a proliferation of cross-ministry committees and the creation of more advisory bodies as well as an extensive array of grant programs in support of cross-ministry initiatives. The safe communities initiative is just one example. At a time when many areas of government are reducing spending on core programs, we see funding going to things such as community crime reduction projects instead of policing, where Alberta ranks 12 out of 13 among provinces and territories for police per population.

My questions. Given the role of Executive Council in policy co-ordination can the Premier tell us what is being done to evaluate the value for money coming out of these cross-ministry programs? What is being done to evaluate the value for money in these cross-ministry programs? What kind of cost-benefit analysis is being done to ensure that funding is not being taken away from programs that provide greater benefits to Albertans? How are these decisions being made? What are the criteria?

With respect to the public affairs program goal 2 relates to government communications being co-ordinated and effective. Albertans need comprehensive, two-way communication about government programs and services that matter most to them.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, the 10 minutes have been used up, so it's time for our Premier to reply. Then you can continue on the next 10 minutes.

**Dr. Swann:** Very good. Thank you.

**Mr. Stelmach:** I'll try to cover all of the questions. In terms of priorities the budget responds to the priorities of government. If the budget is passed, then the priorities of this government will be met.

We presently have oil estimated at \$89.40. It did go up to as high as \$116, \$117, and today it's down to \$106 and may continue to drop. I believe a very conservative estimate of \$89.40 is reasonable. If there is a considerable amount of hoarding that may happen at higher prices, I'm sure we're going to see a drop in oil prices before we end the fiscal year. It reminds me of when we were at \$147 a barrel and all the opposition was calling for more spending. By the end of that year we were down to \$35. We have a good budget in place. We also have a good way of tracking. It's the best in Canada in terms of quarterly reports.

With respect to where government money is going, I don't know of anyplace else in Canada where you can go on the web and pull up where and to whom government cheques were issued, you know, even government aircraft manifests. You want to know where the ministers are flying? Go on the web. You can find out exactly that same day. They don't have to ask for information; that information is available immediately. All of the changes that were made have been very positive, so Albertans do know where their money is being spent.

With respect to the documents, you know, for planning they're much more concise. They're readable. People can get more information from those documents, and the estimates are tied to the priorities of government. I know that the changes made will allow more Albertans to actually read the document because it is much more concise, and a person can read it in a much shorter period of time and get more information.

There were a number of questions in terms of policy co-ordination and outcomes. We have, for instance, the policy co-

ordination office, the performance measures for 2010. The results will appear in the 2010-11 annual report. The last actual figures that we have currently available go to 2009-10.

Satisfaction of policy co-ordination office clients with products and services. This measure rates the satisfaction of government clients with the products and services they received from the policy co-ordination office. From March 22 to April 12 a survey was conducted of government clients of the PCO. A total of 857 clients were invited to participate in a web-based survey. Two hundred and nine responded. Eighty-one per cent of those who responded were very or somewhat satisfied.

The second goal, that government communications are co-ordinated and effective. The Public Affairs Bureau is in the process of completing its performance measures for '10-11. Again, they will appear in the 2010-11 annual report. For actual figures we've got to go back, again, to '09-10. The bureau has not reached the targets set in its performance measures, but those targets are very aggressive compared to other jurisdictions. We have come very close to achieving them. We look at the feedback received and work hard to make improvements, strive to achieve the targets, and continue to look for ways to increase ratings; for example, by using emerging web technologies and improving two-way communications with Albertans.

Public satisfaction with government communications. This measure rates Albertans' satisfaction with information they receive directly from the government about Alberta government programs and services. For the '09-10 results 1,008 adult Albertans were interviewed from April 22 to May 10. Figures show the average results of a series of questions. The average satisfaction rate was 64 per cent. The target of 71 may seem low, but it is fairly high for public satisfaction with government. Once again, it's measuring how that information is presented, and in this particular case it's difficult to measure because it may be issues with political ideology and not necessarily in terms of the communications.

Public satisfaction with the government of Alberta home page. Of respondents, again, 84 per cent found the home page to be useful, just below the target of 90 per cent.

Government client satisfaction with the communications support and services received. Again, 1,193 clients were contacted via e-mail. Responses were received from 772. The figures reflect the average results of a series of questions on the various services provided by the Public Affairs Bureau. Ninety-four per cent of those responding were satisfied with the services and support they received, and the target we set was 95, which is quite extensive.

There was, I believe, also the role of policy co-ordination in health. Executive Council assisted Health and Wellness to develop the Alberta Health Act, passed in the Legislature just last fall. We provided the co-ordination through the very thorough process of decision-making through cabinet, caucus, and the legislative drafting. It's an act that was passed.

With respect to the secretariat transfer, it was transferred to the Treasury Board April 1, 2010. It fits very well with the central agency role of the Treasury Board. It aligns with the ministry mission to promote effective and efficient government and the office of the Controller's role of communicating on financial issues with agencies. We transferred 622,004 FTEs. What is currently in progress is the development of the regulations supporting the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act. More time is needed. There are about 190 public agencies in Alberta. Alberta public agencies administer about 50 per cent of the government of Alberta's annual operating budget. The act builds on the public agency's governance framework, which was released by the government in 2008. It received royal assent on June 4, 2009. It has not been proclaimed. About 80 per cent of public agencies have

made their mandate documents and codes of conduct publicly available. We're working to complete that part.

3:30

With respect to Alberta Health Services, I mean, a lot has been talked about with respect to Alberta health. We have 102 acute-care hospitals in the province. There are 6,800 acute-care hospital beds, 18,000 long-term care and supportive-living beds and spaces, and seven urgent-care centres. These are '08-09 figures because those are the last figures available: 1.9 million emergency visits, 163,000 urgent-care visits, 354,000 hospital discharges, 247,000 surgeries, over 50,000 births, 60 million laboratory procedures – 60 million – 147,000 MRI exams, 419,000 CT exams, approximately 10 million home-care hours, and 900,000 Health Link calls.

More than 500,000 Albertans saw a physician for mental health concerns. Of those who were surveyed about their satisfaction with mental health services, approximately 90 per cent indicated they were satisfied with the treatment received.

Annually more than 45,000 cancer patients received treatment, care, and support. In total there were 495,000 cancer patient visits. Approximately 16,000 Albertans are newly diagnosed with cancer each year.

There was a question with respect to promoting Alberta and branding. With respect to recognizing the brand, 57 per cent of Albertans recognize the brand, and 78 per cent agreed with the approach being taken. We're looking at a separate performance measure meant for the promoting Alberta program. It's now going to be a key part of our public communications efforts and will be measured as a part of that.

There was a comment made with respect to cross-ministry initiatives. I'm surprised that safe communities was mentioned because this is one of the most successful programs in the country of Canada. We have heard that from people who have tremendous experience in crime prevention dealing with addictions, dealing with those issues that drive people to either homelessness or to crime. We have put 300 more police officers on the street. [A timer sounded] I shall continue after because it's a good-news story.

**The Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for those comments, Mr. Premier. I didn't hear a clear answer to why we're delaying proclamation of the act. I wonder if you could comment on that. If you're serious about an act duly passed by the Legislature, I'm not sure why we wouldn't move it forward.

I also didn't hear much of an explanation for why this government is sharing less detail about its spending compared to last year, a government that says it wants to be open and accountable to Albertans.

With respect to the Public Affairs Bureau I recognize that about half of the budget of the office of the Premier is going to activities with the Public Affairs Bureau when the office of the Premier is actually responsible for all of the activities relating to policy development in this government. If we add the promoting Alberta budget, the new term for the rebranding – this is also a communications function – spending is double the spending on policy development and policy co-ordination. This suggests that again style prevails over substance by this government.

When we think of the role of executive management in successful enterprises, we tend to think of strategic planning, financial management, and human resources management. Can the Premier explain, then, why of all the roles of the Executive Council in leading government in Alberta it has chosen to make communications the most significant role?

We see on the Public Affairs Bureau website that its mission is to help government communicate effectively by providing quality, co-ordinated, cost-effective communication services. Now, we know the Public Affairs Bureau has a performance measure on public satisfaction. It's aiming to increase from 64 to a modest 71 per cent. Can the Premier explain what the Public Affairs Bureau is doing to measure how well it's achieving its mission of providing cost-effective services?

The government has embraced centralization in a big way in information technology, human resources, procurement, and communications. We constantly hear about economies of scale. Often these costs rise dramatically. At a time when all ministries are looking to protect their core programs, they're often required to contract for services provided centrally or to comply with standards imposed centrally at costs that are higher than necessary in their particular circumstances. We see this clearly in the public face of government, the ever more standard government of Alberta websites.

The current version of Website Standards May 2010 on the PAB website consists of 70 pages of instructions, and that's on top of a corporate identity manual. Can the Premier explain what cost controls are placed on Public Affairs Bureau standards setting? What cost-benefit analysis for Albertans is done to ensure that there is a reasonable return on investment from standardizing?

With respect to the old branding initiative, now called promoting Alberta – it's taken over the title – previous spending for the branding initiative is given in that line, so we can assume this is a continuation. Spending on the project was \$5 million in 2008-09, \$3.7 million in 2009-10, and \$6.8 million in 2010-11. The current total, including \$5 million for 2011-12, is \$20.5 million. The original three-year estimate for the project was \$25 million. In the estimates debate in 2010 the Premier referred to 2010-11 as the final year for the project. The 2011-14 business plan still projects \$5 million in each of the years 2012-13 and 2013-14.

The promoting Alberta program aligns with priority 2.4: "Co-ordinate with ministries and organizations to promote Alberta's energy, immigration, employment, investment and tourism potential." I guess from our perspective, Mr. Chairman, if we had better environmental and energy policies, we would not have to spend \$25 million in greenwashing to counter bad news and a reputation that has been tarnished internationally. Last year in this forum the Premier said that, again, 2010-11 was the final year of this brand project, so can the Premier explain the significance of this change? Does the change recognize that Albertans don't relate to the idea of their home province as a brand? Does it reflect a change in scope from advertising to something more like damage control? Does it indicate that we can expect to see not just an extension of the original project but a long-term program with continual, annual funding?

The priority initiative relating to this budget line refers to promoting those industries. What has been the approximate spending in promoting each of these areas in 2010-11, and what do we expect in 2011-12?

Given the experience in the past year with international criticism wouldn't it be better to address the issues in policy? Since the ministry business plan indicates continuation of the program into '13-14, what is the long-term plan?

Will the Premier give some examples of how the performance of this program will be measured? Will it be provincial GDP? Will it be oil and gas revenues? Will it be the total amount of investment? Will it be increases in tourism? How will Albertans know they're getting value from this program and that it's not just a gift to advertisers? Isn't this conversion from a project to develop a new slogan to a permanent program an example of a government

problem of function creep or scope creep? We begin with a finite project with a fixed price tag, and it mutates into a small empire and an ongoing liability to taxpayers.

Isn't the purpose of communications to handle public relations? If promoting Alberta is a priority, why can't communications take on the program and manage its other priorities within its budget? Can the Premier tell us whether any aspect of this program will be funded out of the budget for public affairs or any other budget? Is the \$5 million in the budget the full cost going forward? How much of the \$5 million budgeted for this program will go to consultants? Given that this project is to continue through 2013-14, will funding to consultants continue under the existing contact?

3:40

With respect to social media can the Premier explain the main risks to government of using third-party social media sites, the risk avoidance or risk mitigation strategies used in the social media program, the methods used to ensure compliance with a social media policy, and the policy he envisions to address noncompliance? What plans are there to deal with the consequences of changes in policy by the third-party site, such as sale of data, which is a concern to all Albertans?

With that, Mr. Chairman, I'll take my seat and listen to the responses.

**The Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Thank you. I'll try and continue from where I left off in terms of the previous questions that were raised. When we're talking about some of the cross-ministry initiatives, part of that was safe communities. Of course, there were not only more police officers but more probation officers, more Crown prosecutors, and more addiction counsellors that were added so that we could reduce crime.

Just putting more police on the street is not going to reduce crime. You have to get at the root of the problem and ensure that we build on the very successful Alberta mentorship program that we have in our schools, finding the students in our schools that may feel like they're left out or not part of the team and are easy pickings for, certainly, the gang elements to recruit them into various gangs. It is very successful.

Another cross-ministry initiative that took a number of ministries to work together on is homelessness. It's a 10-year plan to end homelessness. I know that there was a lot of, you know, criticism when the program was first announced saying that it wouldn't work, but we have exceeded our established goals of improving the homelessness statistics. In fact, this past winter was very cold, and we had a number of beds that were empty in our shelters. We have now more than 900 of the 3,000 that were homeless actually contributing positively to society because we've broken that chain. We've given them safe housing and allowed just that break to allow counsellors to work with the individuals, whether it was an addiction issue or, perhaps, something with respect to mental illness. That to me is very successful, and we know that there are speakers that are using Alberta data and sharing it with others around Canada.

With respect to the branding initiative and getting the message out, it was quite heartwarming to see the latest statistics from a poll that was done in the United States. If I remember the statistics, about 80 per cent of Americans feel that Alberta is the best place to get their energy because it's a safe, secure supply, and we have good working policies in place, good environmental policies, and our companies treat our workers fairly. That to me tells us that we've done a good job in promoting this province. Are we ever going to

stop some of the criticism that's levelled at this province? No. We do have one of the world's largest proven supplies of oil, and we will continue to attract that attention because anything that can be done to stop the flow of oil to the United States will immediately raise the price dramatically, not to say that other countries wouldn't be interested in seeing the world price of oil rise dramatically.

It's promoting the province not only for energy but also for agriculture and for tourism. We've seen an increase in those areas. Something that we did that, again, hadn't been done in Alberta was introduce a ministry of culture. That in itself has attracted so many people to the province. People, yes, want to come to work here, but they also look at the dimension of whether we have a culture policy. Do we have libraries in place? What is there in Alberta other than a high-paying job? The introduction of the culture policy has definitely positioned us very well on the world stage, and it is a good story.

With respect to the original estimate for branding it was \$25 million over three years: \$5 million in '08-09, \$10 million in each of the two years. In 2010-11 we reduced it to \$7 million. We've only spent about \$14 million for all the three years. All we said: we will spend what is necessary. We supported trade shows. We supported conferences. We collected and promoted the stories of Albertans, what they can accomplish here with our brand and ambassadors. We created cultural experiences for visitors to this province during involvement in events like the Alberta Arts Days. These are all very important things that we have done. The estimates include \$5 million for each of the next three years. We're going to promote the province, and we have to keep reminding ourselves that this isn't a sprint; it is a marathon. It requires a very aggressive and sustained long-term approach, but we have seen positive results.

We were able to reduce funding from \$7 million to \$5 million because core communication materials have been developed, so now it is a matter of execution. Our efforts are being supported and enhanced by communication programs for individual oil sands companies and associations like CAPP and the Oil Sands Developers Group.

In terms of what value we've got for our money, the promoting Alberta program is a continuation of a branding initiative. It's telling Alberta's story. We built a strong suite of communication materials to tell the story. A good example is the Tell It Like It Is campaign, which was developed in response to billboards suggesting American tourists should stay away from Alberta because of our oil sands activities. Of course, those working in tourism were deeply offended. All Albertans were deeply offended and expressed a desire to tell the world what the province is all about. We designed advertisements for use in print and on radio with major online presence.

In international markets we purchased electronic billboard space in the world's media centre, Times Square. Our spots ran a total of 2,450 times over a six-week period with an opportunity for our message to be seen 1.5 million times. That is extraordinary. The original cost of the billboard was \$70,000 U.S., but it was reduced to \$17,000 U.S. We had a similar billboard in Piccadilly Circus in London, England, at a cost of \$30,000. It's a major traffic intersection well known as a busy meeting place and tourist attraction. We also revamped our oil sands website with new online videos and still shots from Fort McMurray and Cold Lake. We compiled folders of information, including DVDs, for distribution when we travel and when others travel here as well as a new Z-card. This is a foldable business card sized fact sheet for easy distribution.

There was a question with respect to the proclamation of bills, a common practice in all Legislatures, where widespread education is required with stakeholders to make sure that they are aware of

the new law and how to comply. I can use the example just recently passed, distracted driving. It will not come into force until an education and awareness program has occurred in the province.

With respect to social media it was established by Service Alberta and the Public Affairs Bureau. The policy has been presented to all deputies and will be monitored by Service Alberta and Public Affairs. Some statistics: on an annual basis the government of Alberta home page has had more than five million views. Now, this includes Albertans, Canadians, and international audiences. We always look for more ways to make information easy to find and accessible. We are increasingly using social media to have a two-way, engaging dialogue with Albertans, and again we continue to look for more ways to do so.

I personally use videos, photos, blogs, and status updates on Twitter to communicate major announcements to Albertans. We've now got 20 government-related Facebook pages from our main Your Alberta page to a page on employment supports and others on museums and historic sites.

3:50

We have seen a very positive response to government engagement on Facebook. We've been using YouTube to share information with Albertans in the form of videos. In November we started using YouTube to provide regular video updates on government news. The short webcast Your Alberta Online allows us to communicate directly with Albertans. We also use YouTube to share educational information with Albertans. Two of our most-watched educational videos are on how to use bear spray properly and another one highlighting motorcycle safety. Interesting.

Across government we also use more than 40 Twitter accounts, eight Flickr photo-sharing accounts, and a blog. Twitter is a great way to provide information quickly.

We also use social media to engage with Albertans on a policy direction with Alberta Education's inspiring education campaign. Education used Twitter, YouTube, and blogs to connect with stakeholders, including teachers and students. It was a very successful two-way discussion on the future direction of education in Alberta. That particular area is a very, very good example of how social media tools can be used. I'm out of time.

**The Chair:** We are getting to the last 20 minutes.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The Premier's Council for Economic Strategy was announced with great fanfare in 2009. The most recent information on the Executive Council website about the council's activity is over a year ago, March of 2010. Priority initiative 1.4 in the ministry's business plan is to receive and release the report from the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy providing advice on strategic direction and initiatives to put Alberta in the best position for the long-term future.

Can the Premier tell us what progress has been made since the last update to the website in March 2010? What is expected in the coming year for the \$4.3 million investment to the end of the 2010-11 fiscal year? What amount will be spent on the council in 2011-12, and what is the estimated total cost of this council? What is the Premier hearing from the council, and when can Albertans expect to see their \$5 million report? Looking back, how would the Premier evaluate this investment?

Again, Mr. Chairman, I hesitate to repeat, but it's hard to get answers to questions in this Legislature, and again I would ask: what's the delay in proclaiming the act? Secondly, why are we showing less detail in our financial line items this year compared to other years?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Stelmach:** We'll continue with the questions from the first 10 minutes. There were questions raised about the communications budgets across government; \$14.3 million was budgeted for the Public Affairs Bureau. That represents less than .04 per cent of the 2011-12 program spending estimates for government. As a comparison the B.C. government's Public Affairs Bureau is about \$26 million. We do need very strong, clear communications to and from Albertans by the provincial government. We make sure that they receive the information they need when they need it in the best way possible.

Advertising generally. We have a duty to tell citizens about the initiatives, decisions, and priorities that will affect them. The province advertises to inform Albertans about their rights, responsibilities, government policies, programs, services, and initiatives and about dangers and risks to public health, safety, or the environment. The final numbers aren't in, but we are estimating that in 2010-11 the government will spend around \$8 million through the agencies of record on advertising campaigns for issues such as traffic safety, farm safety, bullying, family violence prevention, victims of crime, and wildfire prevention. This includes notices of legal tender and recruitment advertising. There are measures in place to ensure that advertising across the government is well co-ordinated, effectively managed, and responsive to the diverse information needs of the public and that it provides good value for money.

Where we can be more efficient and save money on resources, we contract one agency to provide specific services for the entire government over a period of time. There are four agencies in place with three-year contracts: an agency that buys advertising space, an agency that produces recruitment ads, an agency that produces legal and tendering ads, and an agency that produces basic public information ads. All agencies, Mr. Chairman, are selected through an open, fair, and transparent competition process that complies with the government's established purchasing procedures.

With respect to the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy they will be reporting in May with their final report. It will have some controversial recommendations, I'm sure, but it's going to stimulate good debate among Albertans. The council will be wound down this year.

We have had the distinct pleasure, really, and the honour of having some of the world's most forward-thinking, well-established individuals not only in business but in academia. From the United Kingdom Professor Sir John Bell, professor of medicine at the University of Oxford; Professor Jennifer Welsh, professor in international relations, University of Oxford; Clive Mather, who is the former president and CEO of Shell Canada and now chairman of Iogen Corporation; from the United States Juan Enriquez, who is the managing director of Excel Venture Management in Boston, Massachusetts, a very interesting gentleman; from across Canada Elyse Allan, president and CEO of GE Canada; David Dodge, senior adviser for Bennett Jones in Ottawa and former governor of the Bank of Canada; Courtney Pratt, former president and CEO of Stelco, now chairman of Toronto Region Research Alliance; and from our own Alberta we have Bob Brawn, chair of Alberta Economic Development Authority; Jim Gray, director of Brookfield Asset Management; Anne McLellan, who was a federal cabinet minister, now with Bennett Jones; and Lorne Taylor, who is the chair of the Alberta Water Research Institute and a former minister in this Legislature.

Now, there was a comment made that communications programs are designed to support – well, I guess it's called greenwash or some such comment was made. The communications programs are designed to support government policies. We are focusing on continuing improvement of performance in the oil sands. We are

working towards a world-class monitoring system, which I believe will be the best in the world. We, of course, have our land-use plan in place, which is important, improving tailings pond management, reducing water usage, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions per barrel of oil produced. We continue to communicate that to not only Canadians, you know, especially other provinces; we also communicate it to Americans and many of the investors in Europe. It's something that we're going to continue to do because it is very important.

I believe there was something with respect to consultants. We have had consultants in Washington. Those contracts have now expired. We have one individual that is in waiting, so to speak, if necessary to help us lobby in Washington.

This is quite a task. We know that presently, before the pipelines to the coast are built, the United States is our biggest and most important customer. So we do need very accurate, timely information on U.S. policy initiatives that impact our province. It's a lot of work because there are approximately 8,000 to 10,000 bills introduced every year in Washington compared to the 40 or so here in the Alberta Legislature. In addition to monitoring Capitol Hill, we are also through our DC office responsible for monitoring 50 state Legislatures, each of which has hundreds of bills introduced every year as well.

4:00

So we have no contracts with any firms presently, but we'll continue to monitor the U.S. public policy climate and engage firms as required on the very complex policy issues. We'll continue to be a partner with the western governors. We have a very good working relationship through PNWER. We also have a very good working relationship with the state departments of agriculture, especially in northwest United States, and will continue to build that relationship deep down into the country of Mexico.

That has worked for us extremely well. But, as I said, you can't slow down in this area. I firmly believe that we're getting good value for the dollars that we've invested in promoting our province.

I think there was a question on proclamation. I'm going to answer it again. The regulations are being worked on. Once the regulations are completed, in consultation with all of the agencies and boards and commissions that answer to the government, then the act will be proclaimed and will be proceeded with.

**The Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the Premier. I'm pleased to hear that he's confident in the Premier's council on economic development and that he has retained significant, very reputable experts in the area of economic development. I guess I'm puzzled about his decision some time ago to create a Health Services Board that didn't have health experts on it. I'm wondering if he might explain how he's very committed to putting financial experts on the economic development council but he was not so interested in getting health experts on the Health Services Board when it was first formed back in '08. There's a real contradiction there.

I'd appreciate also some comment with respect to health again, the question that I think many professionals are raising in the province. We now have a single health employer in the province. That health employer has to be maintained in good relationships with staff, or they have to leave the province. There is no other employer for health professionals, these 90,000 or so people that are employed in Alberta Health Services.

Not only that, but the contracts with the Alberta Health Services Board have a clause indicating that there could be readily termination of employment within 90 days without cause. I'm wondering



if the Premier has any comments about how that builds a sense of confidence and trust and, I guess, a healthy atmosphere for health professionals to work in the Health Services Board when they could be terminated within 90 days without cause as part of their contract. For a Premier that says he wants to build confidence in the system, confidence in the professionals, be open and transparent, there seems to be a contradiction there. I'd appreciate it if he could make some comments about that.

My final question, Mr. Chair, relates to the fact that we've pointed out specific examples of lack of indicators, lack of evaluation standards for the way Executive Council is spending money, particularly on communications, how we evaluate as well the governance council and the lack of co-ordination and evidence of value for money. Why is the Premier not addressing these very concerning questions on value for money for Albertans?

I've put forward three questions. I'd appreciate some responses, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Stelmach:** With respect to the comments made about only one employer, well, we only have one system in Alberta. It is a publicly funded, publicly administered system, and we're committed to that. So I'm not quite sure what the question is all about. There is one board.

With respect to the members of that board, the comment made earlier I believe is inaccurate in terms of the people on that board lacking in some experience. We needed a mix of health and management. We also needed a mix of accounting expertise and legal expertise. We continue to have a good mix of all, some with nursing backgrounds, some with medical backgrounds. Obviously, there is, I believe, at least one chartered accountant, if not two. Many come with a business background as well. So it does have a good representation of people on the board that are prepared to manage the affairs of delivering health services in the province for Albertans.

**The Chair:** Hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, you still have seven minutes left. You're okay.

Now we start the 20 minutes for the third party, the Wildrose Party. The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you. If we could go back and forth.

**The Chair:** You have 10 minutes to speak, and the Premier has 10 minutes to reply. You can combine it for 20.

**Mr. Anderson:** Yeah. If that's okay, we'll just combine it, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Anderson:** Today I'd just like to look over your ministry's goals, Mr. Premier, specifically initiative 1.2. It talks about co-ordinating the government's strategic planning process, supporting the development of the government of Alberta strategic plan, and reporting progress of government priorities. I'd like to focus on the government of Alberta strategic plan that your ministry oversees. In particular, I'm looking at your government's five goals. Some of the goals that you mention are: resourceful, responsible, ensure that Alberta's energy resources are developed in an environmentally sustainable way. You talk about health care and strong communities and so forth.

One of the things that, obviously, is on everybody's mind right now is health care, and that goes to the second goal of your strategic plan. I wanted to first maybe pick up a little bit on what was being said before. You talk a lot about – you're committed ob-

viously, as we are, to a publicly funded system, and you say publicly administered as well. I want to understand a little bit more what you mean by publicly administered.

What I mean by that is that we just had, of course, the head of the CMA come to town and say that we needed to start looking at some alternative ways of delivering health care. He referred in his remarks very much to looking more at private delivery options and other delivery options within a publicly funded system. I saw some of your comments after, and I wasn't quite clear on where you were going with it. Could you please clarify for the House what you meant by that? Are you in favour of looking at private delivery options of publicly funded health care services?

**Mr. Stelmach:** I guess we had some comment with respect to the goals. I don't think I have to read all of the performance measures that were given in the goals that are in the document. The first one is responsible, resourceful. That's ensuring that Alberta's energy resources are developed in an environmentally sustainable way. There are a number of measurements.

Something that we're doing in this province that none are doing, that I know of, in Canada is a cumulative airshed emissions study to make sure that as more industry is added in one particular area, we don't overload the airshed. The same with water management. It's very important because we are building towards 5 million people, and we have to make sure that we protect our environment. To me that is extremely important. It's something that we want to leave in good shape for the next generation.

**4:10**

Now, the next goal, I think, was about increased access to quality health care. We've established goals. Obviously, here the performance measures are aggressive. They complement, go tandem with the five-year funding agreement, which once again is something that is unique in Canada, to make a commitment to the Alberta Health Services Board so that they know how much money they'll be receiving over the next five years. So it will help them to plan. I know that they'll be dealing with an ever-aging population, more people moving to the province. I'm sure there will be new drugs that will be insured during that period of time, new technologies supplied to health care delivery.

The last question. My comments simply were that the physicians – you know, the CMA represents physicians right across the country – stand shoulder to shoulder with governments in this country and work together to deal with the many challenges that we're being faced with in the delivery of health care.

**Mr. Anderson:** Okay. So if the CMA president and the CMA in general will stand shoulder to shoulder with the Alberta government in support of private delivery of publicly funded services and allow for that type of competitive delivery model, is that something that you would stand shoulder to shoulder with the CMA on if, in fact, they extend that offer, to stand shoulder to shoulder with you and your government?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Here again, we just passed the Health Act. The Health Act was very explicit that any government that wants to bring forward any changes to the delivery of health care must consult the public and make sure that the principles of the Canada Health Act are adhered to. I have not heard of any ideas coming from the CMA. Part of my comment is that if you're talking about introducing new ideas, be very explicit and direct so that we all know what the CMA is considering. There was no evidence of that at all in any of the discussions that they had in Alberta.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I wish to draw your attention. We're talking about the estimates of the Executive Council department.

**Mr. Anderson:** Yes. Absolutely, Mr. Chair. They spend a great deal of money on the planning and co-ordination of policy of the Alberta government plan, and the Alberta government plan specifically mentions health care as one of their priorities. It's imperative for the public to know that they're getting value for their dollar on that planning and co-ordination of those ministry goals.

I'd like to move on to this issue of – well, one of the ministry goals is a skilled and educated workforce. It's part of your fourth goal there, creating opportunity. I think we can all agree that we need a skilled and educated workforce. We have in this province right now in several communities, as you know, Mr. Premier – you've talked with the mayors and so forth in those communities – a very severe school shortage in places like Beaumont, Airdrie-Chestermere, Fort McMurray, and others. I was disappointed that the schools that were announced before the last election, 2008, promised among other things seven new schools for Edmonton public, when it decreased in population by roughly a thousand students, while in Airdrie we received zero schools, when we had increased by a thousand students in the years between 2004 and 2008. This is concerning. There's no doubt that every place needs schools.

For a government that says one of its goals is to have a skilled and educated workforce, I think it's important that decisions that are made with regard to schools and where we put them are done in a completely objective way, and I think that should be part of the planning and co-ordinating that you pay for under your ministry. I was in your government at the time when I approached a senior official, not the Education minister but in his department, to explain why Airdrie had been overlooked. He simply rolled his eyes up and said: politics.

I know that the people of Airdrie and the people of Chestermere and Beaumont and others would like to know that in the future when school announcements are made, schools will be allocated according to need rather than politics. I know that right now in the constituency of Airdrie it's so desperate. I mean, we have kindergarten classes over 40 students large. My own little guy's kindergarten has taken their library, shut it down, and partitioned it into two classrooms, so you can't really go and use the library. You can go get the books, but then you have to leave. You can't read there or anything like that. In fact, the municipality is actually talking openly about putting together a municipal charter school because we're that desperate, especially now that we're approaching 42,000, 43,000 people.

I'm not asking you to justify those decisions that were made previously, but I would like a commitment from your government that moving forward, you will be making sure that schools are apportioned based on need and not on politics. I would like to ask you if there are any impending announcements to help out these communities that are right now very, very under the gun.

**Mr. Stelmach:** First of all, there is \$704 million committed to capital in schools in this province. Schools are built in many communities, but there definitely is an even greater need for schools in a number of communities across the province. It reflects the optimism of people moving to the province, and it reflects the optimism of our youth in Alberta, because we do have one of the highest birth rates in the country of Canada. We know that given the birth rate today and if that continues, we're going to have 100,000 extra students from original projections. That's 100,000 more young people to educate in this province.

So there'll be continued investment in the schools. We're going to continue to build that infrastructure today even though there are

some that are saying that we should stop building the infrastructure, not build anything and wait for a few years. Costs will go up, labour will be scarce, and we'll just pay more. I'm one that's not going to listen to that kind of advice, and we're going to continue to build the schools. I've made the commitments, and I live up to my commitments. We're going to look after those communities in the province that need new schools to be built in their communities.

You know, there has been a lot of discussion over this budget. There were discussions by the party across that we should cut \$1.33 billion out of this budget. You can't cut that out without severely reducing the construction of infrastructure. We need schools, yet those cuts were to Health and Education, so I suppose we would have built a new school, but we wouldn't be able to hire any teachers. But I'll just leave that for another day because we can argue over the point. All I know is that we're going to look after those students that do need schools in this province. I made that commitment earlier.

The capital plan is very clear. We are the only jurisdiction that I know that has a 20-year strategic plan. It's a capital plan that rolls out the capital investment. We're continuing to invest at least 50 per cent more than any jurisdiction close to us in spending, but now is the time to build. We have labour available, building materials.

We've just heard the investments that will be necessary to rebuild the country of Japan, which is, I believe, about \$390 billion from some of the estimates that were given the other day. That's not to say that Australia will be sitting idle. They have a huge rebuild after the unbelievable floods, and then, of course, they had a cyclone pass through.

4:20

The other issue that we're going to be facing is that we're going to see an inflated price on building materials. The oil industry is moving very quickly. They're prebuying. They're preparing for a huge investment in building in this province not only in the oil sands but also in conventional oil as well.

That is driven by our investment in carbon capture and storage: \$70 million this year will ramp up to the \$2 billion over a period of time, but that \$2 billion for us, Mr. Chairman, is going to deliver about \$25 billion in new royalty revenue because we're going to go back to the old fields and extract something like 60 per cent of the remaining resource in the old, established oil wells in this province. It is a policy now that has been followed and looked at by so many jurisdictions around the world: a \$1 billion investment now by the United States and, of course, significant investment by the Netherlands. They want to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in their port operations, and they're looking at capturing CO<sub>2</sub> and sending it, actually, all the way to the United Arab Emirates.

It just shows the progress that we've made. I know it's a decision that was made in the best interests of Albertans because this will position this province and deal with many of the issues that have been raised with respect to the environment and how we continue to green our barrel of oil produced in this province.

So the schools will be built, and we will continue to build the infrastructure in this province because we probably only have this year and maybe part of next year before we see a huge escalation in prices.

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

**Mr. Anderson:** Yeah. It is important to build the schools. I just find that it's very ironic to me that – well, it's difficult for me to understand why this Premier can then justify spending \$250 million on MLA offices, \$300 million on new museums, \$2 billion on carbon capture and storage, boondoggle after boondoggle after boondoggle. He says: oh, we've got to build everything right now.

Well, yeah. We should build what we need right now, our priorities: schools, long-term care facilities. We're building hundreds of millions of dollars, billions of dollars in new hospital infrastructure, and we don't have anybody to staff them. Why don't we start focusing on long-term care, getting people out of hospital acute-care beds that are already staffed instead of building buildings we can't afford to staff? I don't understand this government's prioritization, but that's, I guess, a story for another day.

Because we only have a couple more minutes, I have one more question, regarding the lower Athabasca regional plan. This goes to your ministry goals under competitiveness, creating opportunity, the fourth point in your strategic plan. That was your flagship bill last go-around, last spring session. Since then, ironically, this year your government has decided to increase by over a hundred per cent, over double, the cost of registering a new business. It's not a very good indicator of your commitment to competitiveness.

What has just blown me away has been the absolute incoherence with regard to the way that you treat our most important and lucrative industry from a dollars-and-cents perspective, the oil and gas industry. You know very well, Premier, that at the caucus table and other places we had disagreements when I was in your government about your new royalty framework, one of the major reasons why I left. You have slowly over about six or seven steps essentially undone all the harm that you did there. It will take time for the harm to be economically undone, but you've essentially reversed your entire position. You've never apologized for it, but you've reversed that, and jobs are slowly starting to come back.

What you've done here in this province with this newest initiative here with the LARP is, that, yeah – you know what? – it is only about 24 mineral lease companies that are affected by this out of, whatever, 2,000 oil and gas energy companies that are out there, but to those 24 you're talking about essentially extinguishing their rights to billions and billions of dollars worth of oil underneath Alberta ground if you go through with the draft plan. I'm trying to figure out how you plan to compensate these folks. Are you going to give them the full value for that oil? If you are, you're going to bankrupt our province even further than you already have. Or are you going to give them what they paid originally? In that case that's kind of like taking someone's house and saying: oh, we're going to give you the price that you paid for it in 1980 but not what it's worth today.

I'm not sure how that fits into your overall plan of creating an investment climate that will attract business investment here because every time we turn around, you're either raising taxes on the energy industry or, alternatively now, you're unilaterally taking land and not making it clear what kind of compensation you're going to give. I just find, Mr. Premier, that I do not understand where you see the congruency between – you're saying you're being competitive, but you're doing nothing to become competitive. I don't understand that.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, the 20 minutes for the third party has terminated.

Now I'm going to recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have some questions for the Premier regarding the budget 2011-12. Mr. Premier, I would like to ask some questions regarding the level of budgeting for the present year compared to the budgets of 2010 and 2009. I've noted that there is quite a substantial decrease in the budget for Executive Council, about \$2.3 million I believe it is. I wonder if the Premier could tell us where those savings are coming from and elaborate a little bit on what impacts those savings might have on the way that the programs are run and the efficiency of the department.

**The Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Thank you. We are reducing spending in Executive Council. It is one of the nine departments that we had to look to reducing. It's \$2.3 million, or 7.5 per cent, from the 2010-11 budget. It's an overall reduction composed of \$1.8 million for the program promoting Alberta and also a \$500,000 reduction to the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy.

We are going to continue to promote the province of Alberta. A lot of the work has been done in terms of building the communication tools. That has worked out very well. I know just given the recent poll that was done in the United States that it is very positive for Alberta, and we are getting ahead, except you can never give up because there are some NGOs that will continue to work against Alberta. I've always been of the opinion that there are some that want to raise the price of oil as high as they can because higher priced oil, of course, will allow some of the other green energy sources to be more competitive. That, I believe, is some of the goal.

If we can produce oil responsibly in the province, show that to the world, we will build a very strong economy. We do have the strongest economy in Canada notwithstanding what some people that don't understand economics very well will say. This is a place where we are attracting investment, and that investment will continue to come. It's not only our flat rate personal income tax, but we do have the lowest tax advantage overall, and that will stay.

4:30

As we look around the world, the recent increase in oil prices came as a result of a number of issues that have surfaced, especially in north Africa and in the Middle East. We don't know how long it'll continue or when it'll come to an end, but I suspect that we'll see oil prices in that range of \$100 million or more over the next year unless – unless – speculators purchase so much that we'll maybe see a rapid drop in oil, which again will prove devastating for us in terms of our revenue estimates.

With respect to the actual spending with Executive Council the 2009-10 budget was set at \$35 million. We spent closer to \$27 million, which gave savings of about \$7 million. The '10-11 budget was set at \$31 million. We only spent \$27 million. Of course, the budget decrease in '10-11 was supposed to be \$31 million, and we came in, I believe, with a decrease of \$4.1 million. We'll continue to find as many savings as we can here and put them towards priority programs.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Premier, for your response. Another thing I would like to follow up on is – I asked a similar question last year, Mr. Premier – relating to your priority initiative 2.1, which is to ensure co-ordinated and effective two-way communication with Albertans by continuing to implement a strategic communications plan.

Last year, you may recall, I asked you a little bit about how the implementation of new media and whatnot was progressing. I'm wondering if you could inform us a little bit about the way that we are continuing to develop the strategic use of new media, the various social media, the various ways of getting the government's message out to Albertans and, conversely, making that a two-way communication and getting information back from Albertans regarding the operation of the programs and how they perceive government operations.

**Mr. Stelmach:** We are increasingly using social media. It provides an excellent opportunity for a two-way dialogue with Albertans and a very quick response, sometimes quicker than we want in some areas because people, when they hear of a govern-

ment announcement or government news, can very quickly respond. Sometimes they may not have all the facts and may put a comment in that we could actually reply to in a hurry.

The other is that the blogs and the tweets have been productive. We're getting a lot of youth involved, and what I heard very positively is that we've attracted a lot of youth to government in terms of interest and support only because we're communicating with them on a one-to-one basis, and they feel honoured by the fact that we are conversing with them. That, to us, is important, and we'll continue to do that.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** No other hon. members wishing to speak?

Then the chair shall call for the committee to rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration resolutions for the Department of Executive Council relating to the 2011-12 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, reports progress, and requests leave to sit again.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Those in agreement with the report please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

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

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 1 Asia Advisory Council Act

Mr. Hinman moved that the motion for second reading be amended to read 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.

[Debate adjourned March 24: Mr. Boutilier speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. member on Bill 1?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is on the amendment.

The chair shall now put the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 1 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Now we get back to the bill. Any hon. member wish to speak on Bill 1?

Seeing none, the chair shall now call the question on the bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a second time]

### Bill 4 Securities Amendment Act, 2011

[Debate adjourned March 17: Mr. Hinman speaking]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any member wish to speak on the bill?

Seeing none, the chair shall now call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a second time]

### Bill 5

#### Notice to the Attorney General Act

[Adjourned debate March 1: Mr. Rogers]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. member wish to speak on Bill 5?

**Mr. Rogers:** I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 5, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

### Bill 6

#### Rules of Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2011

[Adjourned debate March 1: Mr. Zwozdesky]

**The Deputy Speaker:** On Bill 6?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

4:40

### Bill 7

#### Corrections Amendment Act, 2011

[Adjourned debate March 1: Mr. Zwozdesky]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. member wish to speak on Bill 7?  
Seeing none, the chair shall now call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a second time]

### Bill 8

#### Missing Persons Act

[Adjourned debate March 1: Mr. VanderBurg]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. member wish to speak on the bill?  
Seeing none, the chair shall now call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a second time]

### Bill 10

#### Alberta Land Stewardship Amendment Act, 2011

[Adjourned debate March 8: Mr. Boutilier]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. member wish to speak on the bill?  
Seeing none, the chair shall now call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a second time]

### Bill 11

#### Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act, 2011

[Debate adjourned March 24]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. member wish to speak on the bill? Hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, you wish to speak on the bill?

**Dr. Taft:** I do, yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must begin by registering my concern as a parliamentarian about what is clearly an abuse of power.

**Some Hon. Members:** Shame. Shame.

**Dr. Taft:** The shame is on your side because there was an understanding among House leaders, Mr. Speaker, and your Government House Leader knows this.

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** There is a point of order.

#### Point of Order

##### Scheduling Government Business

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 23, I believe, it is making allegations against another member, a specific allegation against the House leader that something is being done that abrogates an agreement. The understanding of the House was that Committee of Supply would sit in the afternoons, and the Committee of Supply for Executive Council was scheduled for this afternoon, and it could go all afternoon. The Order Paper very clearly indicates that if any business is concluded that's scheduled, it's then as per the Order Paper.

There is absolutely no good reason why this House should adjourn at 4:30 in the afternoon simply because no member of the opposition is available to ask questions and the questions on the government side have been dealt with. It is then prudent and, in fact, in the public interest that the committee rise and report, as it did. In fact, the rules require that the committee rise and report.

The next question is: does the House go home, or does it do business? As House leader I think it's my obligation to ensure that business is done and that it's done in accordance with the Order Paper. As we always say, there's scheduled business, and then it's as per the Order Paper in case business goes quicker than scheduled. It's not my job to make sure that members of the opposition or other members even on the government side are in their places to speak at any particular given time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member on the point of order.

**Dr. Taft:** Yes, on the point of order. I would make it clear to the Assembly and to the Speaker that the smooth operation of this Legislature depends upon constant, honest, and open verbal communication and unwritten understandings among all parties. There was an unwritten understanding, which was clear to us, that these afternoons were set aside strictly for budget debates. Now, that was the understanding communicated to us, Mr. Speaker. Clearly – clearly – if that had not been our understanding, we would not have allowed the current situation to develop. So that would be the position I take. That's why I don't believe there is any point of order to be argued here. I think what's happened here is pretty clear. A government majority with a huge hammer to bring down on the parliamentary process saw an opportunity to take full advantage and take advantage of a situation in which there simply was an unfair opportunity. So I don't think there is any point of order whatsoever.

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I need to join our Government House Leader and argue against the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. I believe there was, in fact, a point of order although all it requires is that he retract the comments. He clearly indicated that the Government House Leader had broken an agreement, which he doesn't have; there is no such agreement. Now, in his rebuttal he says the business of this House depends upon honest communication, alleging thereby that the minister has broken an honest communication or provided dishonest communication. I'd just ask that the member retract his remarks.

I might point out that the business of this House first and foremost depends upon attendance in the House. We're here to do the business of Albertans, and that's what we're doing this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs on the point of order.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Solicitor General has made several points which I wanted to make, so I will just be very brief here. It is not up to the opposition to do the government's job, and it is not up to the government to do the opposition's job. Absent any agreement that we have seen here, the allegations made clearly fall under 23(h), (i), and (j). The member talks about being an honourable parliamentarian. I think he should take his own advice and withdraw these comments.

Thank you.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly there's no point of order on a point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Well, I have listened. I've been here since 3 o'clock, and I must say that there was no violation of democracy. We proceed on the parliamentary business here. I asked if members wanted to speak on those bills, and nobody rose, so I had to call the question. So the process is very, very clear.

With that stated, hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, I sense that you have sat pointing to our House leader and said something to that effect, which I think needs some sort of clarification or retraction. It's not his business to run the Assembly; it's the chairman's. We have the process to go on. So just make a statement to the effect that it's not the Government House Leader that ran the session today. It's the business that we have, and I guided that through the process. So please make a clarification that it's not the House leader that runs the business in the House.

**Dr. Taft:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will affirm what you said, which is to make it clear that it's the Speaker's job to run the business of the House. Is that what I understood you to ask me to do?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Dr. Taft:** Okay. That seems to have made the Government House Leader happy.

**The Deputy Speaker:** So now go on to Bill 11.

#### Debate Continued

**Dr. Taft:** Bill 11, Mr. Speaker, is the Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act, and I think we need to consider, first of all, the basics of this legislation, which is the livestock industry itself. We all know that historically the livestock industry, if we want to go back to the beginning, is probably the second industry developed in Alberta after European contact, following the fur trade, and that it's played a crucial role in the development and settlement of Alberta from just post-Confederation right up to the formation of Alberta as a province and throughout the 20th century. But we also all know that this is an industry that has struggled mightily in the last decade, most dramatically a result of the BSE crisis.

4:50

We had arguably by historic standards overdeveloped the cattle herd in this province. It was an industry that had become geared

very, very heavily to export. When those export markets dried up, we ended up with an industry that was in instant crisis and an industry that needed to go through a very painful and expensive correction, particularly on the beef side.

We are now having to reconsider the nature of the livestock industry in Alberta. How do we diversify that? How do we manage that? How do we move into the future in a way that learns lessons from the past? The lessons from the past have been difficult and expensive, and if we are to proceed on a more stable, more prosperous basis, then we need to take some action, Mr. Speaker.

The livestock diversification act may – may – help us to improve the functioning of the livestock industry in Alberta. I think, though, that we have been caught by many surprises. Related to the BSE crisis were growing concerns over chronic wasting disease, which is more or less the cousin, the related disease, the equivalent of BSE among deer and elk and related animals. There are concerns and there have been concerns from the beginning of the domestication of those animals in Alberta that chronic wasting disease was going to be incorporated into the domestic herds and then perhaps spread to the wildlife, to the wild animals, or vice versa, and there were real concerns with the contamination of the land where we were having domestic herds of elk and related animals. So this has been a controversial move to diversify livestock development in Alberta.

There's been somewhat more success and particularly promising in the last couple of years with diversifying into the bison industry. It's been a very long, slow process, Mr. Speaker, but when we talk about diversifying livestock, I think there's probably more hope for success in that when it comes to bison than with elk or other creatures.

I mean, I remember experiments in diversifying livestock where we were encouraging people to get into the raising of ostriches. In fact, one of the remarkable moments when driving around Alberta for me was maybe eight years ago. I might have been actually driving on the highway through the constituency – maybe not Stettler; it might have been east of Stettler. I was driving down the highway in Alberta, looking out the window, and there was a herd of ostriches. I thought for a moment: "What the heck. What's going on? Am I in Africa or what?" But I wasn't. I was here in Alberta, and somebody was experimenting with an ostrich farm. I don't think that's gone very well.

But I do think that there are possibilities for the future of bison farming. I think if we're to encourage diversification of Alberta's livestock industry, that's one of the more promising directions, but it's a direction that, frankly, is going to take decades to fully realize. The markets are slow to develop for bison meat despite its benefits in terms of health and, frankly, the natural advantages that bison have on the Canadian prairie compared even to domestic cattle.

I think that there are a lot of issues that we need to address when we're looking at diversifying the livestock industry and considering the effects of Bill 11. I'm also aware that Bill 11 has been the subject of some significant controversy around the province because of concerns over its effect on designating different kinds of animals as livestock.

Mr. Speaker, I think that with those kinds of concerns being on the record, I look forward to other comments, other debate such as there may be on Bill 1. Thank you.

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

Seeing none, now on the bill, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. Hayden:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe we have a wonderful piece of legislation here, and I think that it's really important that we as a government make sure that the correct and factual information is out there for people to consider. First of all, when hon. members from the other side make reference to BSE and elk, it's impossible for that to happen because they are different types of species. Cervids are not affected by BSE. It's important that people know that so that they're not frightened.

Further to that, when we talk about disease with respect to domestic livestock, which is what Bill 11 proposes to do, make cervids domestic livestock, nothing can be backed up with respect to a disease concern. I use as example the fact that we have tested 5,000 domestic cervids a year for the last eight years without one occurrence of disease that can be spread from other areas such as chronic wasting disease. In fact, we have a very healthy, very clean herd in the province.

With respect to the development of markets, Mr. Speaker, the industry and the government have worked hard for that. We have already developed markets. We have European markets, and we have a very strong domestic market. We have a good, strong processing industry that's operating in our province right now, and we have some very enthusiastic producers.

Mr. Speaker, this is legislation that Alberta agricultural producers in the cervid industry have been asking the government to move forward with for many, many years. It's long overdue. These are hard-working Albertans. This is a safe industry. This is a product that we produce that the world wants and that our domestic market wants. It's a healthy food source. There is nothing but positive for this.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks and be happy to take questions.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. minister. You mentioned chronic wasting disease. If I heard you right, do we have a clean herd inside Alberta in the game industry? Is it just in the wild? I understand it's got pockets and problems. At the prion disease research centre it's a major concern. Could you expand a little bit on where we actually are on that and clarify? Your words were a little confusing to my understanding of the problem with chronic wasting disease.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Comments and questions.

**Mr. Hayden:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, I'm pleased to respond to that because there is a great deal of confusion out there. We as a province through our provincial veterinarian services have required testing on domestic cervids for the last eight years. We have tested up to 5,000 head of cervids a year. All cervids that have been processed within the province and any cervids that have gone down according to natural causes have been tested within the province. As I say, that number is up to 5,000 a year.

In the past eight years not one case of chronic wasting disease has been found in our domestic herd. We have a clean herd. I believe that we've turned a corner in developing an amazing industry here. We absolutely do have, as the member opposite mentioned, cases of chronic wasting disease in the wild herd, but we do not have any in our domestic herd.

5:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, a comment or question?

**Mr. Hinman:** Yeah. Just to follow up on that, it's such a devastating disease. If it was to cross over and get in there, what programs

do we have in place, and what are the incidents? I realize that you're not the Sustainable Resource Development minister, but how many cases have we had in the wild? My understanding is that hunters send in their kill for testing. How many wild cases do we have, and how many pockets are known in the province in the wild for chronic wasting disease?

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

**Mr. Hayden:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member mentioned, that is not the area of my ministry. The legislation that we're dealing with, of course, is dealing with the domestic cervid industry in the province. I can assure the member that we have not had one case of chronic wasting disease in our domestic herd in testing up to 5,000 per year over the last eight years.

As a hunter myself I know that there is a problem in the wild that at one time was strictly on our eastern border and is now in different pockets of the province. I know it's something that we really need to take care of, but I think that our domestic herd being free and clean and healthy is a real positive thing for us to have in the case of difficulties in our wild herd.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** Yeah. Perhaps the minister could also expound on, from page 8 under permits, section 10.1(1). It says that the minister "may issue a permit authorizing a prescribed activity that would or could otherwise constitute a contravention of this Act." That's a pretty broad, scary statement. Could you please explain why you feel you need to have this in here? What's the purpose of that?

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

**Mr. Hayden:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, and I thank the hon. member for the question. It's possible that we may need to do some clarification as we move forward with this bill just to make sure that it's very apparent what we're referring to.

What the reference is referring to is predators. We will need to allow predator control within the confines of domestic cervid operations. When I talk about predators, I'm talking about cougars, that are throughout the province. I'm talking about wolves. I'm talking about coyotes. I'm talking about those things that would love to make a meal of a domestic cervid. You are allowed to discharge a firearm in the control of predators within a domestic cervid operation, but you are not allowed to use that firearm for the purpose of game hunting or anything like that. That is absolutely forbidden under section 18.

**Mr. Hinman:** To follow up on that a little bit more, my understanding is – and the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill will probably correct me on this as he is astute in law – that whenever we pass legislation, what happens when we don't start to actually name predators or other things is that we leave it wide open. When we start to list actual areas or something else, all of a sudden it becomes inclusive or with only those things being included. But right now this is all exclusive and has total jurisdiction for the minister to go outside of just the guns and discharging of guns. I do hope, as he seems to be indicating, there are going to be some amendments to that and that it would actually list in that amendment . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

**The Deputy Speaker:** On the bill, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. I'd like to follow up on what the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore had to say on that. Certainly, I've

been receiving a great deal of correspondence and telephone calls from people who are very concerned about this. However, my understanding is that there is an amendment coming forward – and I think it will probably come forward in committee – that may address what my hon. colleague's concern was. The concern certainly is that there is no game farm hunting allowed in this province. That's one of the main things.

However, I would ask the minister if he could clarify. When I've seen elk farms, the fences are very, very high. I'm not sure that wolves can jump over fences that high. Now, cougars I'm not sure of. Then my other question would be: are cougars an endangered species? What else may be able to get in there that would be an endangered species?

**An Hon. Member:** Gophers.

**Ms Pastoor:** Gophers, yeah. I don't think that bears would be able to go through. I also have a concern that animals can be killed inside that compound, for lack of a better word. Certainly, I would hate to see that anyone would be able to actually pay for the privilege of killing predators on a farm.

I'm not really that familiar with this, but one of the things that they're talking about is elk velvet. Evidently, it used to be a really highly valued commodity in Asian communities, who felt that they were using it as an aphrodisiac. However, I do believe that probably Viagra has been a little more successful, a little easier to use, and a little easier to buy. So I'm not sure that elk velvet really is going to be a legitimate commodity that would help the elk industry.

I'm going to save some of the things that I'm going to talk about because these conversations will come up under the budget in Agriculture, so I'll leave that for the moment. If the minister would like to perhaps comment on some of my comments.

All right. I'll talk about farm hunting, which I am absolutely appalled at. I think that if you're a hunter, you're a hunter, but to know that your game is entrapped takes away, in my mind, the object of being what you could consider a really good hunter and having to actually stay out overnight to stalk your prey, to live in those little huts that they have so that they don't see you, to figure out whether you're downwind or upwind. There are a number of skills that good hunters have, and I don't think you have to have any if you're hunting on a game farm, where you know the animals are trapped.

One of the things that I have heard – and I haven't had a chance to absolutely authenticate it; however, I've had a number of people that probably know tell me that, yes, it is true – is that in Texas they have game farms, and they actually hunt cloned zebras. That was more than I could handle at that point in time. I mean, I just think that's beyond disgusting.

**Dr. Brown:** On page 12 it's prohibited.

**Ms Pastoor:** What's prohibited?

**Dr. Brown:** Hunting a big-game or controlled animal.

**Ms Pastoor:** No. There's another part in that bill that will be amended – that is my understanding – so that we for sure will not have game hunting on farms.

One of the reports that I've received that I haven't had a chance to go through because of its thickness really is quite concerned about the CWD actually getting into the herds because what happens is that they don't know until after the animals are dead. At that point in time there are herds that probably would have to be destroyed. But there still is a concern that it can be transferred to

people. I think that's part of what this report that I'm working my way through is, that it can be transferred to people.

I guess another concern of mine would be: just exactly how much is this government subsidizing the elk industry? I know that there were fairly hefty subsidies when it first got started, and then it sort of went flat because there really wasn't a market for it. According to the advertising out there it is picking up. However, I guess I would be very concerned that if this is supposed to be a free-market industry, the government is actually subsidizing it. I don't think anything that's subsidized could possibly be considered free market, at least from my understanding of free market. There is a level playing field created for an industry, and how people work on that level playing field is actually whether they make money or not, and that's not my concern. My concern is that there's a level playing field with standards that people should meet.

I think that for the moment, Mr. Speaker, I will cede to other commentaries. Thank you.

5:10

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for comments or questions. The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. Hayden:** Thank you. I'm going to try to be careful with this because it has to be a question, of course. I wanted to know if the member was aware that, in fact, with the testing on chronic wasting that is done on the domestic herds, it gives us an extra area of safeguards. If something was discovered, exactly what the member suggests could happen. It is a control on those animals, which is something, of course, that we don't have the ability to do in the wild herd. From that point of view, it is good.

I wonder if the member was also aware that, no, there weren't any subsidies or subsidization to the industry. In fact, it is now very healthy and has an excellent market in Europe and also a domestic market and a lot of followers because of the lean nature of the product and the health benefits that are seen by it.

I wonder if the member was also aware that a number of things have been attributed to velvet, far more than what the member referenced. We're talking about enhanced immune systems and the ability to fight colds and things like I have in my sinus right now, and I should probably consider that. I wondered if the member was aware of that.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, I was aware of most of the things that he said, but I wasn't aware of the subsidies.

I guess that one of my concerns would be with the testing. Because our labs are backed up, how long does it actually take for something to be identified and then get back to that farm? That would be one of my concerns for that process.

The other concern. If the elk is being slaughtered at the same place that beef is being slaughtered, those tests should be almost immediate with the results. Once you start putting it in, it could well end up in the beef line, going into the food chain.

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

**Mr. Hayden:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also wonder if the hon. member was aware that the processing of these animals would take place at a place like the processing facility in Lacombe, as an example, where bison are processed and beef are also processed. There is a rotational system, where multiple species are not done in one day. They're all done on an individual basis, and an entire

cleanup is done. Was the member aware that the turnaround time on testing for something like chronic wasting disease would be in the neighbourhood of 24 hours? I wondered if the member was aware of that.

**Ms Pastoor:** No, and I thank you for that information.

I guess I would question the minister again on the 24 hours. We can't even get blood tests back for humans in 24 hours, so if that actually is a fact, then I guess I'm impressed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other comments or questions?

Any other hon. members wish to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the bill.

**Mr. MacDonald:** On the bill. You bet. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Campbell:** We're talking elk, Hugh, not jackrabbits.

**Mr. MacDonald:** You're talking elk, not jackrabbits. Well, I'm pleased to hear that. Certainly, I was in your constituency, hon. member, three weeks ago, and actually we had a discussion not only on the photo op for the hospital in Edson but also, incredibly, about elk and about this piece of legislation. Nothing to do with jackrabbits. I know the Conservatives are hopping around for obvious reasons these days. [interjection] Well, they're concerned about wild roses. Yes, they certainly are, and they're afraid to pick on them because the thorns may pierce their skin. When they bleed, they're like us. It's red, Mr. Speaker.

However, Bill 11, the Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act: in Edson there was quite a discussion about this. Whenever you're driving back, of course, from Edson to the city, you will see where there was an attempt some time ago, with considerable government support or subsidy, to develop this industry. I'm pleased to hear, if I heard correctly from the hon. minister of agriculture, that government support or subsidy is no longer necessary.

This bill will move responsibility for farmed elk and deer from Sustainable Resource Development to the ministry of agriculture. It's quite a comprehensive bill. We're looking at amending the Wildlife Act, the wildlife regulation, the Livestock Industry Diversification Act as well as consequential amendments to eight other pieces of legislation.

Now, there are some concerns about this proposed bill, certainly section 12 and also, I think, Mr. Speaker, section 21. Maybe it could be amended; it's hard to say. But as I understand it, the proposed amendments in this legislation are designed to transfer legislative responsibility for elk and deer farming as identified in the Wildlife Act, the wildlife regulation, as I said earlier, to the Livestock Industry Diversification Act. Basically, what we're doing is moving the responsibility for the farming of elk and deer from Sustainable Resource Development to the department of agriculture.

The sponsor suggested in second reading in a statement in this House that this bill will streamline the regulatory process for elk and deer farmers, that it will create a one-window approach and reduce the regulatory burden on both industry and government. He also stated that the intent of this bill is not to allow for hunt ranches in Alberta.

I'm going to stop there, Mr. Speaker, and share an experience I had in Lethbridge. I always enjoy going to Lethbridge. I had an opportunity to visit a facility there. The organization of this visit was ably done by the staff of the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East. This facility was involved in the practice of cloning animals. I was surprised to learn that in parts of the lower 48 states, where



they have these hunt farms, the hunters are unaware that the animals that they are pursuing are cloned. The characteristic where one has five or seven points on their antlers is a characteristic that's transferred, as I understood it, through the cloning process.

There are many people in this province who have expressed concern about these practices of having these sorts of guest ranches where one can go and pursue an animal in a large tract of privately held land and hunt it down. If that's what hunters want to do and they've got the money and they're willing to spend their money in that way, well, I guess, who am I to stop them? But it's certainly not something that . . .

**Dr. Brown:** It's unethical.

5:20

**Mr. MacDonald:** It's unethical, the hon. member is suggesting, and perhaps he's right. We'll hear his comments on this, I'm sure, in debate as this bill progresses through the Assembly.

Certainly, those activities that are a current practice in America are not, to my knowledge, going on here, and I certainly hope that this bill will not at some point facilitate that. I'm hearing from member's across the way that that will not happen, and I'm pleased to hear that. The sponsor of this bill, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, also stated that the intent of this bill – and as I understand it, he was quite plain – is not to allow for hunt ranches in Alberta. Again, I am pleased to hear that.

However, there are two potentially conflicting sections in this act which are the cause of some concern regarding this matter, Mr. Speaker. Section 12, which I spoke of earlier, amends section 10 of the Livestock Industry Diversification Act, and this gives broad powers to the minister that the minister may issue a permit authorizing a prescribed activity that would or could otherwise constitute a contravention of this act. If I could get an explanation of why section 12 is necessary and if there are any examples of what the minister may want to do with that power authorizing a prescribed activity and an example of a prescribed activity, I would be very grateful.

Now, section 21, we spoke about earlier. Section 21 specifically states that:

- A person shall not hunt nor permit a person to hunt
  - (a) a big game or controlled animal within the assigned meanings in the Wildlife Act on any diversified livestock farm, or
  - (b) a diversified livestock animal.

The issue is whether section 12 provides a loophole in the act which would allow the minister to allow hunt farms through special authorization.

We talked earlier about consequential amendments, Mr. Speaker. This bill includes the consequential amendments of changing "domestic cervids" to "diversified livestock animals" in the following acts: the Agricultural Operation Practices Act, the Agriculture Financial Services Act, the Employment Standards Code, the Labour Relations Code, and the Law of Property Act. Minor changes are made to the following: the Agricultural Pests Act, the Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2002, and the Line Fence Act.

Now, the intent behind this bill, again according to the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, is to give the elk and deer farming industry in Alberta an opportunity to grow. There was talk earlier in debate about chronic wasting disease and what happened to the markets as a result of that, and it is quite unfortunate. This was quite a profitable industry. There's a demand for elk, and there's a demand for deer.

You can go to, of all places – and maybe the minister of agriculture would be interested in this – Deer Lodge at Lake Louise, and

one of the best things they have to offer in their restaurant is elk. After a day of skiing, it's quite nice. Now, I don't know if it's wild or whether it's domesticated. I asked the waiter, and I could tell right away that he had no idea. But Deer Lodge, hon. members. If you're at Lake Louise and you're doing some spring skiing, check that out. It's a nice Alberta restaurant. In fact, it's on the guide of places they suggest you should eat. So perhaps the minister of agriculture – and I know he's not going to take the expense account and go there. He's going to take his wife, and he's going to go and have a nice dinner and look out the window, and I appreciate that.

Now, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency requirements for testing prior to human consumption will be unchanged as a result of this bill. All elk and deer slaughtered for human consumption must be tested prior to processing.

So if we could get the issues in section 12 and section 21 addressed, I think it would be interesting to hear why the government feels we need to go in the direction of section 12 and section 21. I would agree with the hon. member here that we do not support nor do we need hunt farms in this province.

Now, it is not new for this government to tell us that we need a more streamlined approach and that they're simply trying to improve the process surrounding the farming of elk and deer in this province. The risk, however, hon. members, with this streamlining – and with it I would expect an increase in elk and deer farming – is the spread of disease, chronic wasting disease being of primary concern. I know we have put a lot of effort – and I think it is working – to improve or restore consumer confidence. I wish the minister all the best in opening up other markets to our agricultural products.

In this session in previous discussions and debates I have suggested that before we allow the contracting out of a lot of our steel fabrication to the Far Eastern markets by oil sands developers, those markets should be open fairly to our agricultural commodities. They are not. Some of the largest trade barriers or the highest trade barriers, I should say, Mr. Speaker, in the world are in some of those Far East markets, where our farmers, in my view, do not have fair access to those markets for their products. That has to change. I know the minister will work at that, but we need to keep this in mind whenever we talk about any diseases that these herds may get or may have been reported to have had. That's important, too. That would be an excuse for people to deny us access to their markets for our agricultural products.

Now, our research indicates to date that there has only been one reported case of chronic wasting disease in a farmed elk, and as long as mandatory testing by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is maintained, I don't believe this should be a concern to members of this House or to consumers or to any agencies abroad that may be considering increasing the market accessibility of our products. If the regulatory streamlining and potential future growth of the industry is partnered with increased capacity and continued diligence in testing for diseases such as chronic wasting disease and if the confusion over the above-listed sections in the ability to open ranch farms is clarified – and that is, let's be clear here, Mr. Speaker, not allowing hunt farms – then this is a direction I think this House would be comfortable going in.

I think Albertans, whether they're living in urban areas and like to eat elk or those who are contemplating further developing it as a business in rural areas where they have land and they have access to feed and whatnot to see their herd grow – so if the conditions in sections 12 and 21 can be explained, certainly, I would consider supporting this bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of comment or questions. The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. Hayden:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was wondering if the hon. member opposite knew that it was against the law to sell wild game in restaurants in this province, that they have to be domestic.

5:30

I also wondered if the hon. member was aware that there is no cloning of cervids in North America and that, in fact, what some people refer to is selective breeding programs to bring out the proper traits. So one can say that it's genetic modification through a breeding program, which is something that, of course, is what we've done with domestic animals all the way through history. This is why we have the characteristics we do now in our dairy herds and in our beef cattle, where we have a better producing, more tender animal, the same as with chickens or ducks or turkeys or anything else. Through selective breeding we get the best traits out of animals, and of course that's available for domestic animals in all areas.

I wondered if the member was aware of that and also if the member was aware that we have to go through CFIA-approved federal inspection plants in order to export any of our meats overseas to other markets and that they, in fact, have expanded amazingly and, further, if the hon. member and his colleagues were aware that, no, these predators weren't jumping over the tops of the fences. In fact, they were going through the bottom with an empty stomach and leaving through the bottom with a full stomach, which is what's trying to be controlled. That's in reference to section 12, that could be corrected and I expect will be as we all go forward with a clarification that section 12 does not in any way, shape, or form allow for the hunting of these domestic animals but only for the control of predators.

I think those are the questions that I have for the hon. member.

**Mr. MacDonald:** There are lots of questions there. After that display, Mr. Speaker, I can only suggest to the minister of agriculture that he'd make an excellent member of the opposition.

Now, certainly, I was aware that not only with game but with fish as well that there are requirements necessary before that fish or that game is placed on a restaurant menu. I'm sure the minister is aware of the inspections that the government conducts to make sure that fish and game that is in restaurants comes from the appropriate places, but it's surprising how often one reads in the newspapers where this individual or that individual has been unlawfully providing various provisions to some restaurants. That's why I asked that question.

Now, I am unaware that the cloning of cervids in America doesn't happen. The information that I have been provided – and the minister can have his staff check this out. Certainly, in Minnesota and Wisconsin there are game farms, and I have been told that the game farms are stocked with cloned animals. One of the advertising techniques that's used to gather the interests of hunters so they'll lay down their thousands of dollars is that these animals have so many points on their antlers, and that can be a guaranteed thing, so people are anxious to visit these sites and hunt down these animals. That's what I'm told.

If the minister knows for sure that there's no cloning, I'm surprised and pleased to learn that, but certainly from what I can gather from visiting the facility in Lethbridge, this is a common, standard practice in certain parts of America.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have 25 seconds. The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Mr. Hinman:** Yes. I'm sorry to hear that. I always appreciate the comments and the thoughts of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I was hoping he could expand a little bit more on hunt farms because he started to bring up some interesting discussions that I think certainly could and should be held here in the House on whether they're ethical.

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today and take part in the debate on Bill 11, the Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act, 2011. The primary purpose of this amendment is to enable Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development to exercise full legislative authority for domestic cervids, which will help to reduce the regulatory burden for government and the industry.

Under the current system when an animal escapes, SRD issues a collection licence to allow the owner to collect his animal and, if necessary, to destroy it. Under the new LIDA amendment an escaped animal would be treated as a stray. Due to this change, Mr. Speaker, regulations will be made that are tailored to adapt to the uniqueness of the situations faced by owners of diversified livestock. These include provisions regarding the recapture, the trespass, and the liability issues.

Mr. Speaker, if I can just use an example, an escaped farm cervid will remain the property of the producer so long as they are visually identifiable as a diversified livestock animal. One way in which identification could quickly be made is if strays are wearing ear tags. This is done in the livestock industry. Additional details specific to ownership will be addressed in full in the regulations associated with this act.

In conclusion, this amendment is a very important step forward for both industry and government and speaks to the cultural shift in the way diversified livestock are thought of and treated. I look forward to the debate and to receiving the support of members for proceeding with this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity, and I will be glad to answer any questions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of comments or questions. The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the hon. member might be able to let us know about some of his constituents' feelings in his area. I know that in his area there are a number of cervid ranches and farms, and you may want to let us know what sort of consultation you've done in your riding.

**Mr. Danyluk:** If I can answer the question, as many people know, there is a wide array of feelings about the bill. I do understand that there has been consultation with people and different groups on what could and should take place in the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Speaker, I can say to the hon. member that they are embracing the opportunity for this particular legislation to come forward, moving it from SRD to Agriculture.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Mr. Hinman:** Yes. I was wondering if the hon. minister could perhaps answer another question. There's no question in the number of e-mails and letters and phone calls that I've received that Albertans are against hunting on these cervid farms. The hon.

Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar brought up a very interesting aspect of that, you know, the debate on whether or not this is ethical. I guess I find it somewhat challenging, when you look at different people and the way they want to live and make a living, what the government's role is. I think the government has spoken out on this, but I'd love to hear the minister's view on it.

If you were to ask vegetarians whether or not we should be allowed to raise animals and consume them, they would want to say that, no, that shouldn't be allowed, and there would be a huge outcry about it. The hunters have spoken out quite loudly, saying that, you know, it's just unethical and wrong to shoot a caged animal or a fenced-in animal that has no ability to escape or run away.

5:40

I guess I look at these businesspeople and the fact that we have hunt farms in other jurisdictions. It's interesting. My understanding – and perhaps someone over there has already got the answer to this – is that we used to actually export some of these trophy animals over to Saskatchewan so they could be hunted there. I believe that they still hunt in Saskatchewan, but there's a ban, and those who raise trophy elk and deer are not allowed to export into Saskatchewan. Is this an area that we as legislators should be looking at and saying, you know: why do we allow one form of hunting where, again, there's too high a result of animals that are wounded and not properly looked after and that die three days or five days later?

I've had a few phone calls from cervid ranchers that would love to be able to hunt on whether they're going to because of section 10.1 possibly allowing hunting in a larger area, perhaps 640 acres of wooded area. Could you expand on any of those and what your thoughts or, perhaps, discussion in cabinet have been on those areas?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, if you will.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very apt to make some comments on some of the questions that you have asked. I'm not going to make comments on the questions that you've diverted through another member. I will say to you that when we look at the keeping, if I can call it that, of a domestic animal, in actuality this is what's taking place. I do have some sympathy for the fact that if you are hunting an animal in the wild and that animal is wounded, you might not be able to find it.

This legislation does not address or condone hunt farms. But I would say to you that there is that view that if an animal was shot or wounded and not able to be claimed right away, in a confined area that animal is to be found. In that aspect I would say there is some . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. member wish to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to stand up and talk to Bill 11, the Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act, 2011. It's interesting, the bill number here. It's often a mark of bad luck on the part of the government to have a bill with the number 11. It goes back over a number of sessions of this Legislature.

Back to Bill 11, which is a lucky one for me, Mr. Speaker, because it was the bill that helped me get elected in the by-election in 2000, following the passage of that bill to deal with private hospitals, just one of many subsequent attempts on the part of the government to bring that type of health care to our fair province. This one I think may be a more lucky number now that

it's been amended or will be amended to eliminate any prospect of the minister approving hunt farms.

I don't intend to go into the issue of hunt farms as extensively as some others have done. I accept the intention on the part of the government to make sure that hunt farms do not take place in this province. I think that's only right and proper. Having dealt with this in previous years and raised the issue when, in fact, the government was contemplating that very prospect, the public reaction at that time I think impressed the government so that they're not going to consider that further.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Livestock Industry Diversification Act to enable Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development to exercise full legislative authority for domestic cervids, which creates a single-window approach in order to reduce legislative burden and help improve economic diversity by stimulating the farm raising of diversified livestock animals.

The bill makes a number of amendments that are reordering words and definitions, keeping up with minor changes for clarity, as well as a few substantial changes to the structure of the act. One section sets out new powers of the minister. That's section 10.1.

The term "domestic cervid" is replaced with "authorized diversified livestock animal" to broaden the prospective livestock animal to potentially more than just cervids.

The bill sets out the power of the minister to issue a permit for authorizing a prescribed activity that would or could otherwise constitute a contravention of the act. This is the piece I think that the government is proposing to amend to preclude hunt farms. The bill adds that the minister may also by regulation provide for permit, licence, or other kind of permission under other legislation of Alberta or other jurisdiction.

The bill would repeal provisions regarding farms, slaughtering, transportation, and importation of animals and replace those provisions with the following proposed sections: hunting regulations forbidding the hunting of controlled animals or big game, with the exception of the hunting of predatory animals for the purpose of prevention or control of depredation authorized by the Wildlife Act.

Permits would be required to possess, transport, import, or export diversified livestock.

The bill would set out clear limitations on prosecution by indicating that a prosecution in respect of an offence against the statute may not be commenced later than two years after the act was committed or when evidence first arose.

The bill would add several additional powers of the minister to create regulations, including regulations regarding the application and provisions in the Livestock Identification and Commerce Act, the Stray Animals Act, or the Wildlife Act.

The Livestock Industry Diversification Act gives authority to farm deer, elk, and moose in Alberta and is administered by Alberta agriculture and food regulatory services division. The Wildlife Act and regulations also apply in some circumstances. They are administered by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, fish and wildlife division, enforcement field services branch and the wildlife management branch.

Currently legislative responsibility for the regulation of farm cervids is shared by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. This change would see the transfer of that legislative responsibility for farm cervids as identified in the Wildlife Act and wildlife regulation in the Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act. Once the transfer is complete, ARD will have full administrative authority to administer and enforce all programs related to farm cervids. By doing this, the government claims it will create a one-window approach to dealing with cervids to streamline processes and reduce unnecessary administrative duplication.

The government also has announced that this act would improve the economic diversification of rural Alberta by broadening rural agriculture and livestock-raising alternatives. The cervid livestock industry is often cited as a dying one, but we are led to believe today by the minister of agriculture – and I have no reason to dispute him – that, in fact, the industry is doing very well.

But there is an article I want to bring to members' attention. The Alberta Wilderness Association claims that the game farming industry is both environmentally and economically unsustainable. It has played a role in infecting North American deer and elk with chronic wasting disease, and that has animated the Alberta Wilderness Association's consistent opposition to the licensing and support of the industry. Alberta Wilderness Association claims that chronic wasting disease management has already resulted in substantial economic losses to both ranchers and the provincial government, who are forced to eradicate the cervids and compensate the owners. The chronic wasting disease hunters' surveillance program alone cost half a million dollars in 2009-10.

5:50

Chronic wasting disease was first found in Alberta back in 2002 on a northern elk farm in Federal. Chronic wasting disease eradication measures were introduced immediately. It became a larger problem when it surfaced again in wild deer populations in Alberta in 2005 and has caused concern that this finding would create significant costs related to the farmed elk and deer industry. These potential costs can be used to assess the economic returns from chronic wasting disease containment and eradication programs. Cost estimates of chronic wasting disease to cervid farms range between \$12 million for additional farm fencing and, potentially, up to hundreds of millions of dollars in payments by governments to discontinued cervid farming.

Hunt farms were thankfully banned in Alberta back in 2002. The Alberta Elk Commission has expressed strong support for the bill for several reasons related to elk farming. This includes concerns over ownership of elk: whether or not the elk leaves the property of a ranch, it becomes a possession under the Crown. This is going to be fixed in the act, apparently.

Classifying elk as diversified livestock should also help with the labelling of product meat and encourage performance in the marketplace. Simplifying and streamlining the process in obtaining permits and registration would also be of benefit to elk ranchers.

The concerns raised by the Alberta Wilderness Association are several. First of all, they have said that no consultations with the public have taken place about the contents and amendments to the bill, and they are concerned that the act will reclassify wild game as livestock. Because cattle and other classic livestock have been studied and domesticated for decades, or centuries in many cases, the knowledge base and safety concerns, diseases, and population density are much better understood. However, the knowledge base around population density and the carrying capacities of the close-quarter living of elk and deer species is quite limited. For example, chronic wasting disease has been found in wild deer populations in the province, causing extermination programs to be set in place. The disease could be potentially devastating if there was an outbreak in a localized farming operation.

Finally, the concern that's been expressed to us is that the amendments place all the power in the hands of cabinet by granting the minister, in section 10.1, the power to remove any legal barriers outlined in this act. The Alberta Wilderness Association believes this amendment is to bypass – well, I think that part has been dealt with.

In a letter to the editor March 14, Mr. Randy Collins, past president of the Alberta Fish and Game Association, also expressed

concerns about the legalization of hunt farms. I think that's a concern that the government has dealt with. The minister of agriculture on March 21 indicated that the province will amend Bill 11 to make certain Alberta does not unwittingly sanction controversial hunt farms and has made a strong commitment, which I appreciate.

I think that, Mr. Speaker, the primary concern with respect to this act has been the question mark around hunt farms, which, as I've just indicated and the minister has indicated, is going to be amended. I think that takes away the greatest degree of concern.

I do want to express, though, the importance I see of taking a piece of legislation like this and consulting more broadly than just with the industry. There are others, Mr. Speaker, in this province who have interests that are affected by this industry and by this legislation, including hunters, environmental organizations, and other people involved in agriculture, in regular farming activities. They also ought to be consulted when the government brings forward a piece of legislation like this.

Simply consulting only with the industry and only attempting to reflect the industry's interests is not good enough. You have to balance these things in government – that's my view, at least – and make sure that the impacts of a particular industry do not unduly hurt the interests of others or that, at the very least, they know what's coming and have been given a full chance to consult. I think that it's regretful that that wasn't done in this case, Mr. Speaker.

Regardless, I think that the legislation could be supported with the amendments that the minister has proposed, and I will await the passing of those amendments. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the very good comments the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has made. You made reference to, of course, an amendment on this bill that you're anticipating to come forward. With that, I guess my question to the member would be that if that amendment was not forthcoming, I'd be very interested, with the bill as it presently exists in this House, in the position that he would take relative to it as it stands right now.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, going back a number of years, our position has been very strongly against hunt farms. There was a time when, I think because of mismanagement by the government of this particular sector, people were left with large populations of elk that they couldn't sell, and that was because chronic wasting disease made the markets disappear. The ranchers were desperate for some way to try and realize some return on their investment there, and that's where the hunt farm idea came from.

The NDP led the charge at that time against hunt farms, and the government backed off that position, which was something they were actively considering at the time. It's now become a mainstream position, I think, that's shared on all sides of the House, and I think that that's indeed progress. If, in fact, the door was left open for that kind of activity by this legislation because the amendments were inadequate or didn't come forward as promised, then we would certainly take a very different view of support for this act.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** Yes. I always appreciate, again, the research from the NDP caucus and the extra funding that they have, so perhaps they have some of these answers. There are hunt farms in the

North American jurisdiction. Could you expand on or do you have knowledge of those areas that are currently there and that have access? One of the provisions or comments that we see in here is that they can export Alberta elk and deer and moose to other jurisdictions that have a hunt farm. Do you know where any of those hunt farms currently exist and if there is any export going on with Alberta cervids?

**Mr. Mason:** I'm not familiar with the answers to some of those questions, which really speaks to the need for additional research funding for the caucus. I know that there are hunt farms, for example, in Saskatchewan, I think, and in the United States. I'm not familiar with the situation right across the country. You know, we have been able to over the years learn how to squeeze out every dime that we get, and perhaps we can share some of that with you.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** Yes. The ingenuity of business to jump through loopholes always amazes me. I'm just wondering. Again to the hon. member: from their research what happens if a domesticated deer or elk escapes or breaks through the fence? Is that something that happens? Is it legal then to hunt those animals and to shoot them down? Do you have any knowledge on that direction and on whether we have the possibility of gates being left open and what-

not in order to enhance one's income by then having to hunt down these escaped animals?

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm not quite sure about what exactly the member was getting at, but I can tell him that, in fact, the escape of these animals into the wild is quite common. That's how, for example, chronic wasting disease got out into the native deer population in this province, creating that problem. It came from animals that escaped from farms, and then it began to spread into the general population, which caused a great deal of problems. Again, it goes back to some serious mismanagement of this industry by this provincial government in the early days.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but it's 6 o'clock. The Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

The policy field committee will reconvene tonight in this Chamber for consideration of the main estimates of Advanced Education and Technology. Tonight's meeting will be video streamed. Have a great evening meeting.

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



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