



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

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Issue 24

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 27th Legislature**  
Fourth Session

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Berger, Evan, Livingstone-Macleod (PC)	Lukaszuk, Hon. Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)
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DeLong  
Forsyth  
Groeneveld  
Johnston  
MacDonald  
Quest  
Taft

### Standing Committee on Community Services

Chair: Mr. Doerksen  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Hehr

Allred  
Anderson  
Benito  
Bhullar  
Chase  
Johnston  
Notley  
Rodney  
Sarich  
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  
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Griffiths  
Groeneveld  
Horne  
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Notley  
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Swann  
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### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Lund

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Blakeman  
Campbell  
Hinman  
Lindsay  
MacDonald  
Marz  
Notley  
Quest  
Rogers

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Campbell

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Anderson  
Bhullar  
Elniski  
Hehr  
Leskiw  
Mason  
Pastoor  
Rogers  
VanderBurg

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Boutilier	McQueen
Calahasen	Morton
Dallas	Redford
Doerksen	Sandhu
Drysdale	Sarich
Hinman	Taft
Horner	Xiao
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### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Prins  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Hancock

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

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Chase	Sandhu
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Elniski	Xiao
Fawcett	

### Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services

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Brown  
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Cao  
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MacDonald  
Rogers  
Sandhu  
Xiao

### Standing Committee on Resources and Environment

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Lindsay  
Marz  
Notley  
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Rogers

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 18, 2011

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Welcome back.

Let us pray. As we all gather to begin a new week in our Assembly, we are reminded of the blessings which have been bestowed upon Alberta, and we give thanks for this bounty. May we conduct ourselves in our deliberations in ways that honour our province and all of its people. Amen.

Hon. members, I would now like to invite Ms Colleen Vogel, who is in the Speaker's gallery, to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. I would invite all to participate in the language of one's choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Ms Vogel.  
Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mr. Vandermeer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the former governor of South Carolina, David Beasley, and the director of Stewardship Foundation, Wes Anderson. Governor Beasley and Wes were involved with co-ordinating the national prayer breakfast for over 4,000 people.

We also have the former MP for Peace River here with us today, Albert Cooper. Albert served his constituents for three Parliaments and leads the organizing committee for the Alberta Premier's prayer breakfast. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Bill Purdy, a friend and former member of this Assembly who served the constituency of Stony Plain from 1971 to 1986. Mr. Purdy has served his community for many years in various capacities. He is a charter member of the Wabamun Fire Department and a former chief. He is the current mayor of the village of Wabamun and the current executive director of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association. As well, Mr. Purdy is the president of the former MLA alumni association. Bill is seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I would ask that he stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Royal Canadian Geographical Society, or RCGS, recently celebrated its 80th anniversary. Its founder, Dr. Charles Camsell, and its first honorary vice-president, J.B. Tyrrell, of dinosaur bone fame, are very familiar to Albertans. The society's worthy objective is: making Canada better known to Canadians and to the world.

Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery today is a man who has done exactly that. Mr. John Dunn is a noted arctic explorer. Financed in part by the RCGS, he completed a very notable feat last year, traversing Ellesmere Island in the High Arctic on a 55-day unsupported expedition on foot. Pulling a sled over 250 kilometres of ice, Dunn's small but intrepid group then put wheels on the sled for a further 250 kilometres, and if that wasn't enough, there was a final trek of an additional 250 kilometres on top of all that. Now, the *Canadian Geographic Magazine*, published by the RCGS, has featured five of his arctic adventures.

Mr. Speaker, my current private member's bill, the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act, will be debated in second reading this afternoon, and I dare say that John is a staunch supporter of it. I was honoured to share adventures with Mr. Dunn and our illustrious Sergeant-at-Arms over lunch today, and they both have incredible stories to tell. John has spoken to many school groups about Canada's uninhabited, largely unexplored far northern reaches and his explorations there. Fortunately, he'll do so again at our very own School at the Legislature class. Mr. John Dunn is in your gallery today. I'd ask everyone to give him a warm applause.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you some bright young students from the School of Hope in Vermilion. The School of Hope is an online school that has very quickly developed as a centre of very good instruction and delivers very good students all over Alberta. They are here today with their parents – Mrs. Amanda Ulan, Mrs. Beverly Lunghamer, Mrs. Kelley Thompson, Mrs. Maria Sinding, Mr. and Mrs. Oudshoorn, and Mrs. Mary Jane Heck – and their teacher, Mrs. Elaine Johnston MacMillan. I would ask them all to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you a group of very bright and special young students and their parents and helpers from Boyle, Alberta, within my constituency. We've got 31 students accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Jahala Chrnyk, and parent helpers Karen Mandel, Sheldon Weatherby, Candy Nikipelo, Mel Brewer, Sheri Bencharsky, Susan Murphy, Margaret Gallinger, and Gleason Gallinger. They're going to be here all week for the School at the Leg., and I am very pleased to say that I'm going to be able to spend some time with them. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Merci, M. le Président. Je voudrais présenter à vous et, avec votre autorité, à tous les membres de l'Assemblée un groupe d'étudiants du neuvième niveau de l'école Branton qui nous visitent de Calgary-Varsity avec leurs professeurs, M. Boulanger, Mlle Laura Crosby, Mme Adriana Bobbitt, et Mme Shanna

Corning. If these students and their teachers could please stand so the members of the Assembly could please welcome them in our traditional fashion.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two introductions. If you'd allow me to proceed with the first, it's an honour and a privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature four very special guests. Mr. Jack Clements, a long-time constituent of mine and a good friend, is a member of the Edmonton downtown Rotary Club and serves on the student exchange services committee. You may also recognize that he has served on the board with the School at the Legislature.

Accompanying Mr. Clements today are three exceptional international Rotary exchange students. Carlos Antonio Roman lives in Portoviejo, Ecuador. He's 17 years of age and currently attends Ross Sheppard high school. It's been his desire to participate in the exchange program as a result of the wonderful experience that his brother received when he was in the program, and he tells me that he has, perhaps, a future in architecture.

Arthur Meert, from Liège, Belgium, is 18 years of age, currently attends Ross Sheppard high school, and has one brother 16 years of age and two sisters, 14 years and 10 years. Canada was his first choice in the program. We're very fortunate to have him come to Alberta to learn and experience what Alberta has to offer, including the cold weather and snow. He loves sports, particularly soccer, and he intends to go to university next year and take political science although he informs me that his life is not that of a politician but, rather, of a journalist because he thinks it might be less in the public eye. I think he's right on that.

1:40

Tobias Brander Hejslesen lives in a small town named Birkelse in Denmark. He's 17 years of age, living in Leduc, and he attends Leduc composite high school. He's hosted by the Nisku-Leduc Rotary Club. Tobias also loves sports. In Denmark he always played soccer; while here he's learned to play football. He played on the high school team in the fall and is now playing community football for the Leduc Cats as a starting receiver and kicker. We expect that he will be back with us shortly to play for the Edmonton Eskimos. He's looking forward to a career in mechanical engineering.

Mr. Speaker, these are truly amazing students with many special talents. They arrived in Edmonton and Leduc last August, sponsored by the Rotary clubs of Edmonton and area, and will be here until the end of the school year and into July. We hope that they continue to have a rich and rewarding experience in Canada and will take many great memories home with them. I would ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly on behalf of the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology a group of seven interns who are currently learning on the job within that ministry. These interns come to us with diverse educational and professional experience, so they are well equipped with the knowledge and skills to succeed. In fact, they've already made many important contributions to the division where they work. With us today are Stephanie Ridge, Ben Hartt, Rahul Deol, Susana Giron, and Matt Buffet, and they're accompanied by their department colleagues, Barry Tonge, Theresa Vladicka, Brent Wellsch, Janelle Derko, Jill Westergard, and Colleen Grawbarger. They're seated in both the public gallery

and the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly the 2011 provincial winners of the Caring for Our Watersheds contest. I had the pleasure of meeting with these outstanding young people earlier today, and in describing their projects that brought them the honour of winners, I can assure you that these young people are more than deserving of the honour that they have received.

The winners have come from Milk River, Calgary, Whitefish Lake, and Ponoka, and I'm very pleased to introduce them to you. The students are Cam Reed, Sierra Harty, Luke Hemingson, Austyn Nagribianko, Jenna Brake, Breanne Emes, and Rachel Selke. They are accompanied by proud parents Ms. Reed, Mrs. Harty, and Russell Hemingson along with their teacher, Daniella Perillat; also, Lindsey Metheral, the global Caring for our Watersheds project co-ordinator from program sponsor Agrium; and Nathalie Stanley, central Alberta Caring for our Watersheds program co-ordinator from the Battle River Watershed Alliance. I believe they're in the members' gallery. I'd ask that they stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of all members.

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly five guests representing the Alberta Rehabilitation Integration and Care Services and Sabrang Radio: Mr. Pierre Hournou, Mr. Rajesh Angral, Miss Ellen Adahnom, Jean-Claude Jassak, and Dr. Félicien Mufuta. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you a group joining us from the Academy of Learning and Digital School in Edmonton, all seated in the members' gallery today. Elmer and Audrey Brattberg are the owners of the two schools. With them today are Coryne Yacocha, administrative co-ordinator; Michelle Chez, the west Edmonton Academy of Learning valedictorian; Colin Spallin, the Digital School valedictorian; and Dagmar Sánchez, a student at the Academy of Learning, legal administrative assistant diploma program. At this time I ask all of my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly an honour and a privilege for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests that are seated in the members' gallery from the constituency of Edmonton-Decore. Levent and Mine Cetin are two very hard-working individuals, wonderful people who immigrated to Canada from the country of Turkey to make a better life for themselves and their two-year-old daughter, Mavi. Levent is a chemical engineer by profession working on the APEGGA certification while working with the company WorleyParsons. Mine, a true-spirited individual, a new Canadian citizen this year, is currently attending the international nursing program at NorQuest College. It is truly an

honour and a privilege, and I am proud to receive them today at the Alberta Legislature, their very first visit here. I bid them all the best and success in their chosen professions, and I would like to ask them to please rise now and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure for me to rise and introduce to you and through you a number of constituents seated front and centre in the members' gallery today. We have Jeff Suderman and his wife, Kasie, and with them are their sons, Justus and Kaden, as well as their daughter, Zoë. The purpose of their trip today is an educational one as they home-school their children. They're here to witness question period, and I trust that it will be a positive experience for them; I can only hope. I would ask them to now rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Alberta Academic Health Sciences Network

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is known internationally for its leadership and success in the field of academic medicine. What many Albertans may not realize is that the key to this success is not only the result of this province's record of funding medical research; it is due largely to our commitment over many years to a fully integrated academic health sciences model that incorporates research, clinical care, and education of health professionals in one organizational structure.

Here in Edmonton a unique partnership between the former Capital health region and the University of Alberta positioned this city as one of the top academic health sciences centres in North America. This model was the driving force for projects such as the Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute, the Alberta Diabetes Institute, and many other Alberta success stories.

Until recently, Mr. Speaker, the creation of a single provincial health services authority raised some serious concerns about our ability to maintain Alberta's proud record of success. That is why I was pleased to learn of the creation of the Alberta academic health sciences network, a partnership between Alberta Health Services, the University of Alberta, and the University of Calgary. This provincial approach to ensuring excellence in academic health sciences is not limited but, in fact, made possible by the creation of Alberta Health Services and its partnership with not one but two universities of international distinction.

It will improve care, increase the translation of research into action, and enhance Alberta's competitive advantage nationally and internationally. It will help us deliver on Alberta's health research and innovation strategy and Campus Alberta initiatives, and it will ensure that we are positioned to recruit, train, and maintain the very best clinicians, researchers, and educators the world has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, for those sincerely interested in improving health and health care for future generations, growing and diversifying our economic base, and positioning this province as the global leader we know it to be, I encourage all members to actively support and promote the work of the Alberta academic health sciences network.

Thank you.

### 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. The Alberta Medical Association, representing over 6,500 physicians, has joined the now deafening chorus calling for an independent judicial inquiry. What did the Premier do? He immediately dismissed the AMA's call. The AMA president is quoted as saying: "A public inquiry should be held 'into issues of physician intimidation in Alberta's health care system' . . . it is time to clear the air, and a public inquiry . . . is the best forum in which to accomplish this." Mr. Premier, will you finally listen to the AMA and the 6,500 doctors it represents, do the right thing, and call a public inquiry?

1:50

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the AMA president also said that if the government will go ahead with the Health Quality Council, they will participate, they will co-operate, and they will do whatever they can to get all the information to the Health Quality Council.

**Dr. Swann:** Duck and dive, Mr. Speaker.

Given that we don't know how many millions of dollars this government has paid to silence doctors it pushed out of the province, how can the Premier honestly say that a public inquiry would cost too much? What's the truth worth, Mr. Premier?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, once again – and the health minister can add to the answer – just because there's a public inquiry does not mean that the disclosure documents will be opened. Those disclosure documents can only be opened by the co-operation between the two parties that entered into the disclosure document, which would be the employer and the employee.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, given that the AMA members believe that "a public inquiry offers the best opportunity to change the culture within Alberta's health care system," when will the Premier admit that the experts are right and that your attempts to hide the problems are fatally flawed?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I need to jump in here because there are a number of things that the AMA has also said that are important. They've talked about the AIP, which puts in process a very good vehicle by which they can address issues that are on the minds of physicians. They talked about creating opportunities to innovate. They talked about creating opportunities to develop more clinical networks that would enhance the delivery of care and the involvement of specialists. That's exactly what we're doing. The process that is there allows them to come forward with yet more suggestions for advocacy or, if they wish, to air some differences from the past.

**The Speaker:** Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those who forget history are destined to repeat it. This government was warned by internal and external sources about the crisis in our health care system over the past decade and then some and chose not to fix the problem but, instead, to intimidate and silence those who spoke up, the health

care workers, using well-rewarded, loyal lapdogs to do it. To the Premier: given that this affidavit of records right here and on your desk and the e-mails I've tabled and will continue to table are proof that you, your caucus, your health CEOs and the college were aware of these concerns, why did you not act and still refuse to act?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, there's nothing stopping any doctor who has a nondisclosure agreement from speaking with the Health Quality Council. In fact, that hon. member has one himself, and I see he's advocating for physicians right in the most public assembly in the province of Alberta, right here.

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

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: how can any health care worker in Alberta have any confidence in this sham review that you spoke so highly of, the Health Quality Council's terms of reference, which turned out to be wrong initially and then had to be changed after I talked to Dr. John Cowell, given that Dr. Cowell's cheque is paid by the minister?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, I don't know what discussion the hon. member had with one of the members of the Health Quality Council, but the Health Quality Council has an excellent record. They did their own terms of reference. They have some of the best legal advisers in the province of Alberta to make sure that the process is fair, is transparent. They're going to give us an initial report in three months. They're going to follow up with an interim report in six and the complete report in nine months.

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

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: how can you say that there is any independence given that the new president of the College of Physicians and Surgeons is a paid AHS senior executive employee? A classmate of the chief of staff was brought in by the former Minister of Health and Wellness and his EA, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. How can you say that there's any independence given that she's an employee of AHS?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, just a few seconds ago – in fact, it must be hot off the press because it's pretty warm from going through the copier. I have some documents here that were entered in the Court of Queen's Bench some time ago. Again, a statement of claim is not a statement of fact. That is the big, big difference. A statement of claim is a claim that some individual is making towards the employer. What happened in terms of the statement of fact is a lot different.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Ciaran McNamee's list of records outlines potentially relevant correspondence between him and several individuals over a 10-year period, that he could produce if a public inquiry were to be held. Within this list are government officials and doctors such as Sheila Weatherill, Dr. Ken Gardener, Dr. Trevor Theman, and Dr. Tim Winton. Because the Premier refuses to call a public inquiry, we might never know what's inside these documents. Wouldn't the Premier agree that accessing these documents would help get to the bottom of the issue of physician intimidation?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, it's a very simple matter. The doctor can approach the Health Quality Council and say: look; I'm will-

ing to open up the disclosure document if my former employer agrees. Why doesn't he ask Alberta Health Services? What if Alberta Health Services says, "Yeah, let's open up the document and then have all Albertans see what's inside"?

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Health Quality Council has neither the power to subpoena nor the ability to compel testimony of persons subject to nondisclosure agreements, like Dr. McNamee, how does the Premier plan on finding out what's inside these documents? No legal protection.

**Mr. Stelmach:** It's very simple. The doctor can approach the Health Quality Council and make a statement. "I am willing to open up the disclosure document." Then he can call Alberta Health Services. "Are you willing to open up the document and bring the whole document over to the Health Quality Council and get this over with once and for all?" There is no guarantee that going to a public health inquiry, the disclosure document will be opened. It can't. It's legally not possible.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Premier, will you guarantee that Alberta Health Services will participate in such an inquiry?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Alberta Health Services are the employer. They are the employer. They have to reach an agreement with the doctor. They are the ones that signed the disclosure document, not the government of Alberta.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that the health minister is actually quite the dancer, but last week he tried his luck at being a stand-up comedian. In explaining why the government continues to refuse a public inquiry, he recited the Alberta Evidence Act word for word. Apparently, this was very funny as all his colleagues behind him were hooting and hollering with laughter. To the Premier: do you still think that ignoring the need for this public inquiry into physicians' intimidation is funny now that the Alberta Medical Association has called for it?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the Health Quality Council is in the process of opening up the review. This review will be very intense. Following their own terms of reference, they will bring people forward that they feel should be making and delivering evidence before the Health Quality Council. They are going to do a good job. They have good legal advice. According to what I've heard from physicians, they just want to get this on so that this matter can be settled once and for all.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that Friday's letter from the AMA was an unprecedented show of courage from Alberta doctors, whose only concern is the well-being of their patients, does he not realize that by refusing this public inquiry, he is trivializing the concerns of Alberta doctors and their patients?

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, in fact what the letter of last Friday also indicated was that the AMA is willing to participate and willing to co-operate in part B, which deals with physician advocacy and allegations of intimidation. They also stated in that letter that they have already submitted very good suggestions on how to improve the review process. Clearly, the AMA understands



both sides of this coin, and I think they're working hard to show that with good faith and good leadership in that regard.

2:00

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Mr. Minister, they want both. They want the Health Quality Council, and they want a public inquiry.

Given that under this Premier's watch public confidence in the health care system has eroded, will he finally call this public inquiry so we can start to reduce so much of the damage that his government is responsible for in this current health care system?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, let me just read you the clip here because, clearly, they're not getting it over there. It's dated April 15, 2011. It's The President's Letter from the AMA, which I will table shortly. Here's what they say on page 2:

If, however, the HQCA review remains the only formal venue where physician intimidation is examined then the AMA will cooperate. We have offered suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the review, e.g., remove barriers posed by non-disclosure clauses; release physicians from any contractual obligations or provisions under agreements that could silence or deter them . . .

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. When Alberta's doctors say that it's time to clear the air with a full public inquiry into doctor intimidation, the Tories accuse them of playing politics. Mr. Speaker, it's more intimidation. This government is more interested in covering its posterior than improving our health care system. Why won't the Premier recognize that there is a serious lack of confidence by health professionals in the health system today that can only be corrected by a full public inquiry?

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you. You know, Mr. Speaker, let me make this very clear. If there are some doctors out there – five, 10, 20 years ago – who felt angry, who felt some anxieties, who may have even felt alienated, I'm truly sorry about that. But I can assure you that under the current policy no such allegations are being made at the moment that I'm aware of because there's a new spirit of co-operation. There's a new agreement. We issued a joint news release with the Alberta Medical Association just a few days ago. And, yes, I have heard a few grumblings, but I have yet to see any formal complaints in that regard.

**Mr. Mason:** Given that this minister's assurances are worth almost nothing, Mr. Speaker, and given that doctors are saying that a full public inquiry is the only way to change the culture of intimidation within Alberta Health Services and given that the accusations of intimidation continue to pile up, will the Premier finally take these charges seriously, call a judicial inquiry, and restore doctors' confidence in the system?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I would wager to say that the vast, vast majority of doctors have great confidence in this system. I would venture to say that the doctors appreciate that we are the first government in all of Canada to give them a five-year guaranteed funding plan, a five-year health action plan, and the performance measures to back it up. I would wager to say, however, there may have been a few, years ago, that had some trouble, perhaps, going from a clinical role to a management role, and that is an area for discussion.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, given that this minister can just say black is white and expect people to believe it and given that the

AMA has said, as we've told this government for months, that the Health Quality Council does not have the proper powers to look into this, why won't the Premier admit that he's misleading Albertans by pretending the council's investigation will actually get to the bottom of anything?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the Health Quality Council membership is one that has an excellent record, tremendous integrity. These are physicians that have not only worked in the system, but they have years and years of experience. Again, coupled with the fact that they have two of the best legal minds that'll be supporting them in an advisory fashion, this is the way to go. They're starting the process. The first report will be, like I said, in three months, the second one in six months, and they want to bring closure to this in nine months.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would like to provide just a little caution with the last comment, something along the lines of: why won't he admit that he is misleading? That is really on the edge, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Public Confidence in the Health Care System

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Auditor General released what the *Calgary Herald* has called "the latest scary snapshot of Alberta's health-care system." In his report the Auditor General said that in 280 past recommendations the government has ignored, 53 were directed to Alberta Health and Wellness. To the minister: when does the minister intend to implement recommendations first made seven years ago to improve accountability of Alberta Health Services to the minister by ensuring performance expectations are set, reviewed, and followed up?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful for this question because it'll allow me to set the record straight. There were about 27 or 28 recommendations for Alberta Health and Wellness, almost an equal number or thereabouts for Alberta Health Services. In fact, the vast majority of those recommendations have been implemented. We're just waiting for the Auditor General now to review the implementations. So they were acted on, they were accepted, and they are in place today. Now we just need that final audit by the Auditor General himself.

**Dr. Swann:** Fifty-three recommendations, Mr. Speaker, ignored for seven years, and he's hoping we'll buy that.

When will the minister implement the recommendation made five years ago and start explaining and quantifying key factors affecting health care costs in the ministry?

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the other part of this is that a lot of the recommendations simply cannot be implemented in a day or a week or a month. They take some time. When you're looking at recommendations to compare health costs with health outputs, for example, that is an enormous task. It takes a few years to see if there is a difference being made. I can assure this member, based on what I've heard and seen and read so far, it is improving, and it's working well.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, I was having difficulty hearing the response given just a minute ago. I'd ask you to please be attentive.

The hon. leader.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given such blatant and long-standing disregard for the recommendations of the Auditor General, how does the minister intend to restore confidence in the public health system?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things that we're doing, and I want to clarify that I have the highest of regard and respect for the Auditor General. As I've said, to my knowledge the recommendations were accepted. Many have already been implemented. There are a few that are taking longer to implement, but the confidence question is all about the five-year health action plan. It's all about the new agreement in principle we have with the Alberta Medical Association. It's about involving them and us in a review of primary care. It's about reaching out to Albertans for issues that are important to them such as improving cancer care access, such as reducing wait times for emergency rooms. I could go on.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

### Education Funding

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend I had the pleasure of attending an open exchange with the education stakeholders at the School Councils Connection 2011. Actually, the Minister of Education did as well. At this event we both heard concerns about teachers and essential sports staff being laid off because of this year's Education budget. I've also heard from the minister himself at recent public events that this may be a time we should actually be hiring teachers and not laying them off given that we will be having . . .

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a wonderful weekend for education. We had approximately 120 students from around the province of Alberta at a Speak Out Alberta conference with a hundred chaperones, which were teachers and parents and others. Student engagement: students talking about what kind of learning creates the environment which makes them want to get up and go to school. On the other side of the city we had parents from parent councils across the province at the association of parents' councils annual general meeting, talking about what makes good engagement for parents and how parents can be involved in the education system. It was a wonderful weekend for education, talking about how we go forward, how we look at the future with a positive manner.

**The Speaker:** Well, I'm very happy that everybody is happy, but let's deal with questions on policy, not how we feel.  
The hon. member.

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the current Education budget appears to be the definition of penny-wise and pound-foolish because school boards will have to lay off teachers at a time they should be hiring them, can the minister rectify this current shortfall?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, school boards have to deal with the budgets, obviously, and it is in a time of fiscal restraint, so what they should be doing, in my view, is looking at everything they do to determine what they're doing that adds value, what things could be cut out. It will be very difficult, and in fact there will be some difficulty. If the number of retirements is not as high

as otherwise predicted, indeed there may be a tough time in terms of new teachers. Over the longer period of time we will need more teachers. Over the next 10 years we expect a hundred thousand more students in the education system.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Given that admission don't you think that it's just unwise for us to be creating a budget that forces school boards to be letting teachers go when you have essentially said that we're going to need them next year and the year after that?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, I'd be delighted to get into the details with respect to that in the estimates tomorrow in Committee of Supply. Let me just say this. Creating budgets and the allocation of scarce resources is always the most difficult job in government. Whether you're in a school board or whether you're at the provincial level, there are always choices to be made. Would I prefer to have more resources in education? Always. There's always something more that you can do. There's always something better that can be done. There are always more projects that can be engaged in. The fact of the matter is that governments have to be fiscally responsible.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### 2:10 Response to Auditor General's Report

**Mr. Vandermeer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday the Auditor General released his April 2011 report. While this is a smaller report than the October report, it still contains important recommendations and items that need to be addressed. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this recent report added 11 new recommendations to a growing list of recommendations for government to respond to. To the hon. President of the Treasury Board: how and when is the government responding to the Auditor General's office report released last week?

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

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member: we respond to the Auditor General's report on an annual basis. More importantly, though, we work with his recommendations on an ongoing basis. We take all of the recommendations of the Auditor General very seriously as presented in his report. He also has ways to categorize some that are more important as key recommendations, key numbered recommendations, and also recommendations that are of importance but certainly won't have the consequences if they're not implemented as soon.

**Mr. Vandermeer:** In that regard, how does the government ensure that the recommendations are taken seriously and that efforts are made to act on these recommendations sooner rather than later?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, because the actions of our government prove it. We have very, very consistently responded to critical, or numbered, recommendations from the Auditor General. If we have been slack, it's in going back into many of the unnumbered recommendations and actually having the time or the resources to audit to show that they have been completed and need to be moved off the books. Quite honestly, we're more interested in continuing to go forward rather than just clearing the shelves of old recommendations.

**Mr. Vandermeer:** Again to the President of the Treasury Board: why are there 280 outstanding recommendations from previous years' reports?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, the recommendations from previous years cover a very broad spectrum. They include the universities and the colleges, and they include Crown corporations that are at arm's length, and it is sometimes difficult to encourage them to work as hard as they can. We're all facing a limited number of resources. We have agreed at the Audit Committee with the Auditor General that we would collectively work – with him, the government, and the other agencies – to try and remove the backlog of old recommendations.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

#### Royal Alberta Museum Construction

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In reporting its fourth-quarter finances to shareholders, Bird Construction of Toronto announced on Friday that the Alberta government has terminated its contract to build the earlier version of the Royal Alberta Museum. As usual, the contract is not public nor readily available through freedom of information as it involves a third party, so taxpayers have no idea what the deal was. To the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit: will the government have to pay out any kind of penalty for terminating this contract?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that contract was handled by the Minister of Infrastructure under his department. I'm not at this particular time aware of any penalties or any dollars that have to be paid out as a result of that decision.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Then back to the same minister: is the government going to guarantee preferential treatment in the bidding process as compensation to Bird Construction for cancelling the earlier contract?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can categorically say no. There won't be any preferential treatment. As the minister indicated before, we're going to open up this contract to those Alberta companies and those companies world-wide because we want the very best possible new museum at its new location, and we're not going to tie our hands otherwise.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, thank you. Could I get clarification as to whether the government is cancelling this previous contract with Bird Construction or not? I don't know what a verbal termination is. Can the minister or perhaps the Treasury Board clarify that for me?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, virtually all the contracts, when you're dealing with items as specific as the museum or things that may be out of the ordinary, have clauses in them that are specific to that. We did anticipate that we may move the museum, so we did have in the contract opportunities to stop. There will be some costs for design work that was done and some progress that was made on the museum. There's no question that that will be paid out. It has not been a total loss as some of it has resulted in improvements to the building of the current museum.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

#### Mountain Pine Beetle Control

**Mr. Lund:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many years we've been battling the pine beetle, with great success, I might add. We've known for a long time that the primary host species of pine was the lodgepole pine, but now through good research done by the University of Alberta, we've learned that, in fact, when push comes to shove, the beetle will move into Jack pine, another major species of pine in the province. My question is to the Sustainable Resource Development minister. What impact will this have on the health of the forest industry?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what we know now, something that we had suspected, actually, for quite some time, is that the mountain pine beetle can actually find a very good host in Jack pine trees, and as we go forward, there could be others as well. What this does is that it opens up a whole new set of host trees for mountain pine beetles and most certainly in the province of Alberta. But more seriously than that, I think that this opportunity now has to be looked at by some of our partners in other provinces – Saskatchewan, Manitoba – and perhaps the federal government because this is the last . . .

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

**Mr. Lund:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was interested in knowing what, if any, changes will be made in our attack on the beetle.

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that what we've done right now has been quite successful, and I believe that we'll continue the program that we have, with some single and small-stand tree removal and burning and then harvest management to get rid of infected trees and looking at harvest management in the next host trees as we move forward. We've moved our plan into effect in the central-northern part of the province, where the last wave of beetles moved in. We'll continue to work on . . .

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

**Mr. Lund:** Thank you. My final supplementary to the same minister: has there been any discussion with the other provinces – Saskatchewan, Manitoba – and, in fact, east of that and with the federal government as to what the plan might be?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there have been ongoing discussions, and in fact as some of the folks in the House would know, the federal government actually came in and partnered with us for a couple of years on some of the programs that we did. Considering the seriousness of the situation that we have now, where the Jack pine forests across northern Canada could very well be in peril, we believe that the federal government will come forward and assist.

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

#### Nondisclosure Agreements with Physicians

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Will the minister follow the path cleared just a few minutes ago today in question period by the Premier and

allow Alberta Health Services to open its nondisclosure agreements with doctors McNamee, Fanning, Winton, and others?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that any non-disclosure agreement that's signed is between two parties, and if they both agree, then so be it. I can't comment on exactly what they may or may not want to do. The Premier made a clear statement as to what they might want to do, and that'll be up to them to decide.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this particular Minister of Health and Wellness constantly intervenes in the detailed operations of Alberta Health Services and given that he actually boasts about being able to pick up his cellphone and talk to anybody in the whole organization there, why won't he intervene to enact the Premier's invitation?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, the allegations that I'm aware of, that were tabled in this House, pertain to a former health authority or authorities. I don't recall exactly what. If those people wish to come forward – we're dealing with individuals against individuals, potentially. It could be individuals against an employer. I'm not sure exactly what they are because no evidence has yet been provided.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that we're dealing with individuals against this government, is the minister of health confirming, then, that he does not support the Premier's invitation that Alberta Health Services open up its nondisclosure agreement with doctors who feel shut up and kicked out by AHS and its predecessors? Is he actually disagreeing with his own Premier?

2:20

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Not at all, Mr. Speaker. What I'm trying to do is provide clarity for this member, who appears to be off on some wild goose chase again. For those people who wish to come forward or if they don't, it's up to them to come forward, but it's not up to us to direct them because we weren't the employer. The previous health authorities were, or the current Alberta Health Services might have been. If they want to come forward, then they should come forward.

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

#### Abandoned Wells

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issues surrounding an abandoned well in the town of Calmar have highlighted the need for changes to regulations to ensure the development accommodates abandoned wells, and there seems to be some confusion on the timelines of this. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs indicate when government will formally require through regulation municipalities to check for these wells before issuing development permits?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. I want to stress to the member that the province is acting to ensure that similar situations do not happen again. We intend to amend the subdivision and development regulation, and we will require developers and municipalities to identify abandoned wells before a subdivision is approved to ensure that any new developments near such wells occur outside the setbacks that are to be established by the ERCB.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I ask the minister about the timeline. When will this timeline happen, and will it be different than the setback timeline?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, cabinet will be considering the proposed regulatory amendments later on this spring. I want this House to know that my department issued advisories to municipalities as far back as 1996 to do their due diligence in these situations. Municipalities presently don't need to wait until the proposed changes are formally in place to require developers to check for abandoned wells.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, to the same minister. Thank you for clarifying that that will happen this spring. Can the minister commit also to sending out a reminder to all municipalities to check with the ERCB before this development happens so that we don't have the same issues happening until your regulations are in place?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've already noted, the guidelines were provided to all municipalities in '96 and then again in 2001 and again just recently, in 2010, for identifying and incorporating abandoned wells into developments. That information on abandoned wells is currently available through the ERCB, and at the same time Municipal Affairs, Energy, and the ERCB are working to ensure that that information on abandoned wells is more easily accessible to municipalities, to developers, and to the public through the website.

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

#### Lower Athabasca Regional Plan

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of weeks ago this government released its draft lower Athabasca regional plan for stakeholder feedback. This plan included the proposed extinguishment of roughly two dozen oil and gas leases, which represent a great deal of value to the companies involved as well as lost economic value to the region and royalties to the province, yet I did not see in this report any estimates from the government regarding these costs. To the SRD minister: has his ministry done an analysis of what it will cost Alberta taxpayers to compensate these leaseholders for the extinguishment of their leases?

**Mr. Knight:** You know, Mr. Speaker, again, I've answered this question, I think, three times now, and I'll do it again, as many times, I suppose, as is necessary so that the individual opposite could understand. What we have here is a situation where we've had a tremendous amount of consultation with the energy industry, by the way, with all of the companies that are involved that these folks speak about, and in fact what we have now is a draft plan for consultation. There is no way that anybody on God's green Earth could tell you what that might cost at the end of the day, when the plan is finalized.

**Mr. Anderson:** Okay. Minister, given that you have put out a regional planning document for feedback that may cost stakeholder companies millions or even billions, may cost taxpayers millions or even billions, and you haven't provided any estimate

of what the costs are to these businesses or to the taxpayer, not even an estimate, how can you expect relevant feedback without these cost estimates? Or is it that you already know that it's bad news for taxpayers and the affected businesses and you just don't want to let them know about it?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the situation here gets really, really simple. Does the member opposite have any idea what it might cost Alberta taxpayers if one – one – of the petitions now in the federal courts was successful and stopped all of the development in northern Alberta until we have a caribou recovery plan? Does he understand what that might cost?

**Mr. Anderson:** That's a stellar, stellar argument.

A final question to the same minister: will you undertake to make these estimates available to all Albertans so that we can all understand how much the taxpayer is going to pay industry for not developing these particular oil sands properties and also so that these companies' investors have an idea, just an idea, of how this plan will affect their investment decisions moving forward?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you this, clear to all Albertans. This would not be the first time that there's been repatriation of subsurface disposition in the province of Alberta. Some of the very same companies that are involved in conversations with us today around the lower Athabasca plan have in fact negotiated – negotiated – repatriation of subsurface disposition previously. I think that we will be able to get through this in a way that all Albertans understand, well, except for a few folks. Most certainly, the industry understands.

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

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Medical Association has joined the call for an independent public inquiry into the issue of doctor intimidation in Alberta's health care system. The minister's response as reported by the CBC was to suggest that this is a self-interested ploy to advance its current contract negotiations with the province. To the minister: was the minister suggesting that the Alberta Medical Association, which represents virtually all of Alberta's physicians and medical students, is not genuinely interested in the issues that have prompted the call for a public inquiry?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, what an absurd question. Of course they're genuinely interested. Why do you think we had the meeting and have had several meetings prior and are committed to doing even more meetings going forward? To improve the relationship. If there were some strains there, let's fix that and work together for better health outcomes for Albertans. That's what they've said verbally, and that's what they've said in their letters and in the joint news release that we put out not long ago.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that only a public inquiry will restore trust and given that one of the issues for the inquiry is the harm done to the reputation of individuals who dared to raise concerns about the health system, isn't this latest slur on the profession just more of the same?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I don't think that there were any slurs or other misappropriations, frankly, on either side. People have opinions. Some of those are medical opinions. Sometimes you have to get two medical opinions. You know what? There are occasions when those two medical opinions may not coincide. There may be occasions when medical administrators may not agree. There are occasions when we disagree amongst ourselves. That's what open processes are all about.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister is also quoted by the CBC as saying that a public inquiry would be too expensive, can the minister explain why it's okay to spend on secret settlements but not on getting the truth out in the open?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I said no such thing. He should perhaps check his sources. What I did say was that I don't see how I could possibly advocate spending \$20 million or \$30 million or \$40 million to wait two to four years for a review and for answers when for a million dollars we're going to have some action right now. We're going to have reports after three months, six months, and a final report with recommendations and actions that we'll actually be able to implement because the people leading the review are credible, knowledgeable medical individuals combined with others.

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

#### **Canada-European Union Trade Negotiations**

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada and the European Union are currently negotiating a comprehensive economic trade agreement. Therefore, my questions are to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. How is Alberta ensuring that its interests are represented, and how do we know that we won't be stuck with an Ottawa-European first place free trade deal, with Alberta taking second place?

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

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the first time in one of these types of negotiations that Alberta has been involved. It has very much been a leader in the process of gaining that seat at the table and working with other provinces so that we can carve out and focus on special areas where we are more competent than others. There have been seven rounds of negotiations thus far, and we hope to have these Canada-EU negotiations concluded by the end of the year.

2:30

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. It appears that the EU wants greater access to Alberta government procurement opportunities. On first glance it might look like good news, but on second glance won't this take jobs away from Albertans?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, our negotiators have the commitment and will abide by the commitment not to see any jobs or sovereignty lost through this process. Our attempt is to assist in growing the pie, making markets more accessible, making it opportune for more agricultural markets, and so on. So it would

grow the pie of more jobs rather than control or limit the existing jobs that Albertans would have.

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the same minister. Could she please elaborate on the EU's fuel quality directive, whether or not it's part of CETA and whether or not this actually negatively affects Albertans?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, that's a very good question. The fuel quality directive in its initial form was to carve out the opportunity for any oil from oil sands development to be a part of fuels that would be used in transportation by the EU. We believe it is a carbon fuel policy, a tax on carbon fuels, the FQD, which we believe could mitigate if we weren't careful, so we have been providing strong opposition to any such FQD to be in place.

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

#### Effectiveness of Seniors' Lodge Program

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Released last week, the Auditor General's report lists four past recommendations long ignored by the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Two of these relate to a program intended to preserve what Alberta seniors value most, their independence. To the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: when does the minister intend to implement the recommendation made six years ago and improve the measures that Seniors and Community Supports uses to access the effectiveness of the seniors' lodge program?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to note that we were in front of Public Accounts last week, and this question was raised. I'd like to let the House know that we have been acting on the recommendations of the Auditor General and that in 2005-2006 we conducted the annual surveys. For five years in a row we had an 89 per cent satisfaction rate. At this time we are consulting with stakeholders so that we're able to find the measures that we need to implement to ensure that we can measure the satisfaction at this time.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. To the same minister: when will the minister implement another recommendation, again made six years ago, and improve the processes for identifying the increasing care needs of the seniors in lodges?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, we are implementing those recommendations right now. The Auditor General hasn't had time to catch up with us.

**Ms Pastoor:** Has your ministry ever used the Alberta Health Quality Council to check on the standards in housing, and are all the reports public; in other words, the information and the deliberations and how they actually came to why these recommendations would be made?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, in 2010 we implemented new legislation called the Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act, and since that time our supportive living facilities have been complying with those standards. I think that the hon. member will

find that the Auditor General will recognize that we have implemented his recommendations.

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

#### Unpaid Wages for Temporary Foreign Workers

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the summer of 2007 an employment standards investigation concluded that 132 Chinese workers who worked at the CNRL Horizon's oil sands project had not been paid. My question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Now that three and a half years have passed, have these workers been compensated for their work in our province?

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been determined that CNRL has indeed paid the contractor; however, it hasn't been determined that the subcontractors have paid the workers. We have been assured by Chinese authorities that the workers have been paid upon their arrival in China. I have paid a personal visit, a protocol visit, to the Chinese consulate to discuss this matter. I requested that the payments to the workers be documented. To date I have not received any such documents substantiating the payment to the workers.

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

**Mr. Quest:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just wondering how long this government intends on waiting for this documentation to prove that these Chinese workers were actually paid?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, that's a good question, Mr. Speaker. I have to tell you that I'm personally frustrated with this matter, and I have to be frank in saying that I don't anticipate that these documents will be arriving. However, I'm hoping to be proven wrong. CNRL has made available \$3.17 million, held in trust by this government. We have now returned the dollars. However, we will have access to those dollars until the year 2017. Once we receive documentation that either the workers have or haven't been paid, we will do what we can within our limited jurisdiction to make sure that these monies are delivered.

**Mr. Quest:** Again to the Minister of Employment and Immigration: what mechanisms do you have in place now that were not in place when this happened in 2007?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it was a learning experience, to say the least. Since then we have opened up temporary foreign worker offices in Edmonton and in Calgary. We're now publishing information relevant to workers' rights in a number of languages, including Cantonese and Mandarin. We have put in place processes through which we now control, in a sense audit, employers who hire temporary foreign workers. This was an isolated incident where a large number of workers came in at once and left at once. That has not happened since. But we are paying closer attention to employers who hire TFWs in large numbers.

#### Nondisclosure Agreements with Physicians

*(continued)*

**Dr. Taft:** Mr. Speaker, my questions again are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given that Alberta Health Services operates under the same act that its predecessors, the regional health authorities, operated under and given that this act names the Minister

of Health and Wellness as its responsible minister, will this minister quit dodging responsibility and have AHS open all the nondisclosure agreements, as his own Premier suggested?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, once again, nondisclosure agreements are legally binding agreements made between two parties. If those two parties agree to open up and disclose what is otherwise sealed forever, then they're certainly most welcome to do that. I would hope that if they're asked to, they would do exactly as the Premier suggested.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, Mr. Speaker, section 8 of the act that this minister is responsible for says that the minister may give directions to a health authority for the purpose of providing priorities and guidelines for it to follow in the exercise of its powers and coordinating the work of the health authority with the programs, policies, and work of the government. Will the minister use his legislative authority to have AHS open its nondisclosure agreements with intimidated doctors?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things that I can do, direct, and ask to be done. But something that I cannot do and direct to be done is something that is a contractual, legal undertaking between two parties. That is between those two parties; they have to agree. I'm not going to step in and tell people how to interpret the law or to break the law. Heaven forbid.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this minister is the minister responsible, supposedly, for one of the parties involved in this, why is this minister breaking rank with his own Premier and continuing and reinforcing this shameful cover-up?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, there is no such cover-up going on whatsoever. There is a full, independent process going on. Let's just be reminded of who's leading that review. The chair of the Health Quality Council, Dr. Lorne Tyrrell. Now, here is a credible individual. He's a former dean of medicine at the University of Alberta, a world-respected leader who discovered an oral therapy for hepatitis B, a highly revered medical man. Dr. John Cowell is an equally highly respected man, a former physician in emergency rooms, and a former family practitioner.

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

#### **XL Foods Meat Processing Plant Closure**

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of Canada's largest beef processors, Alberta-based XL Foods, is ceasing its production in a Calgary plant. This closure will leave hundreds of Albertans without work, and many of them are my constituents. To the Minister of Employment and Immigration: what can the government do for the hundreds of workers and their families that are now left in a vulnerable, worrisome position?

2:40

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, it's a devastating situation for some 500 families where individuals have lost employment. I have to tell you that my department has been in contact with both the employer and the union in this regard. We have held three what we call workplace adjustment sessions with the workers. Six more are scheduled. We will be working with all the affected workers in assisting them with employment search skills and with contacting potential employers through our offices throughout the province.

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

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same hon. minister. Some of the employees at the closing plant came from the temporary foreign workers program. What do you have in place to help these guest workers?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct. Some 94, I believe, of the 500 workers affected were temporary foreign workers. They are now being put in contact with our temporary foreign worker advisory offices, primarily in Calgary. Those offices will be providing them with similar assistance as we would to other workers relative to potentially working further with other employers in Alberta. I have to highlight that now our offices are able to provide services to temporary foreign workers in more than 170 languages, so we have the competency to work with those workers.

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

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. XL Foods explained that the closure is due to an insufficient number of mature cattle in Alberta. My question is: why is this number so low? Is our beef industry in danger?

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

**Mr. Hayden:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, a number of factors came together to cause problems, BSE being the most obvious of them, which caused us to have reduced access to a number of markets. These factors, of course, resulted in the western Canadian beef herd shrinking. There is good news, though. Prices have rebounded dramatically, and the industry is strengthening. It takes a number of years for it to recover, unfortunately. It's a business decision. We have the capacity in the province to manage the number of head that we have right now, and until such time as there are more animals, there won't be a necessity for that extra processing.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes Oral Question Period for today. Nineteen members were recognized, 114 questions and responses.

In a few seconds from now we will continue with Members' Statements.

#### **Members' Statements**

*(continued)*

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

#### **Patient Advocacy by Physicians**

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. Last Friday the Alberta Medical Association joined the Official Opposition's call for a full independent judicial public inquiry into allegations of bullying and intimidation of health care professionals by this government. The health minister's pathetic response was to suggest that the sincere concerns of doctors are merely a negotiation ploy for the next master agreement. This minister who is supposed to defend public health care has instead insulted the integrity of our front-line health care professionals. On top of that, the minister had the gall to suggest that we can't afford a public inquiry.

From what hat did the minister pull his estimates? Why is the minister complaining about the cost when the government was only too happy to spend over \$22 million on extra pensions for top

health officials, including a lifetime pension of over \$22,000 a month for the former head of the Calgary region? Another \$22 million in severance cheques was cut to other officials without any public discussion. But there's not enough money for a public inquiry for truth and justice. Maybe we could reduce Alberta Health Services' \$66 million annual travel budget and use the savings to fund a public inquiry for truth and justice.

Since this Premier took power, our health budget has climbed from over \$9 billion to \$15 billion. Where has the money gone? It certainly hasn't gone to improve service.

We have extra millions for private consultants, increased IT, and legal fees, but there is no public money to fund a public inquiry for truth and justice. Shame. Taxpayers and health care professionals deserve to know the truth about allegations of physician intimidation. Lives are at stake. If the health minister wants to balk at the cost, perhaps he should stop spending millions of dollars on hand-picked elites and invest in a public inquiry for truth and justice.

Thank you.

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

#### Scotiabank Pro-Am Hockey Tournament

**Mr. Vandermeer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand here today to congratulate the hockey players who helped raise \$1.2 million this year for the fight against Alzheimer's during the Scotiabank Pro-Am hockey tournament that took place on April 8, 9, and 10, 2011, in Leduc, Alberta. This second annual event provided needed funding for caretaking and research in the battle against Alzheimer's. Specifically, proceeds from the event go towards Help Stick It to Alzheimer's in support of the Gordie and Colleen Howe fund.

Mr. Speaker, the Edmonton tournament included 25 teams, which is up from last year's 18. The hockey teams included NHL alumni, allowing hockey fans of all skill levels to team up with their heroes such as Paul Coffey, Marty McSorley, Dave Lumley, and Bryan Trottier, just to name a few.

It's important to mention that our own health minister was a referee at the all-star event. We also had an MLA all-star team sponsored by Greg Christenson, chair of the Alberta committee to end Alzheimer's. Our coach was Nick Lees from the *Edmonton Journal*, and MLA players were the Minister of Aboriginal Relations, the Member for Calgary-Hays, and myself. Mark Napier was our team draft pick.

I would like to thank Scotiabank for being the title sponsor of Canada's largest annual fundraiser for Alzheimer's, and many thanks to the volunteers and the players who helped raise money and donated their time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Speak Out Student Conference

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand before you today and recognize a collaboration of government and Alberta students to enhance our province's education system through Speak Out, Alberta's student engagement initiative. The inspiration for the Speak Out initiative came from the February 2008 throne speech, when the government announced it would engage Alberta students to provide a fresh and youthful perspective on learning.

Asking for students' input and taking action on their ideas is moving us toward creating more actively engaged citizens and a

stronger education system in our province, Mr. Speaker. As testament to that, this past weekend 200 students and 100 parents and chaperones from across Alberta participated in Speak Out's annual student conference here in Edmonton. For the first time ever students and Alberta Education experts worked together in a series of workshops covering a variety of topics such as teaching quality, healthy schools, and designing school facilities for the future. At the same time parents and chaperones benefited from a series of information sessions about current education initiatives.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Education for his public engagement and all of his special work in involving Albertans. Setting the Direction, Inspiring Education, and Speak Out are tremendous engagement initiatives that he should be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's youth have a keen understanding of what's important in their learning, and they have a desire to be involved in the improvement of their education experience. They're telling us how education programs can be offered in a way that is supportive, flexible, and consistent with their needs, and as a result Alberta is leading the nation in best practices of student engagement.

I commend Alberta students, ministry staff, parents, chaperones, our minister, and the Speak Out team for their commitment to the collaboration to strengthen the delivery of education in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Land Stewardship Legislation

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today and speak about some of the positive support for Bill 10 that I have heard from a number of Albertans. Many Albertans recognize the need for long-term planning, and Bill 10 will ensure that the process for regional planning is transparent. Albertans understand that we need to carefully manage our natural resources in order to provide for future generations and in order to enhance our reputation as an environmentally responsible jurisdiction.

Importantly, legal experts at both the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary have stated that Bill 10 is generous when it comes to protecting property rights. Indeed, some of these experts have said that the legislation goes further than Canadian common law does in protecting and compensating landowners and that Alberta needs this kind of legislation. Ranchers and lawyers in southern Alberta have also emphasized the fact that the intent of Bill 10 is clear and that it protects property rights.

Mr. Speaker, it's good to know that renowned, nonpartisan legal experts support Bill 10. I look forward to more support for it from those who know the issues best.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

2:50

#### Lower Athabasca Regional Plan

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today and speak about some of the reaction to the lower Athabasca regional plan from the experts at investment firms and equity research departments. Of course, investment firms and banks have large holdings in many oil companies with a significant presence in our province, so they closely monitor regulatory developments and the impact of such developments on stock prices.

Some individuals have expressed concern about the effect that the lower Athabasca regional plan will have on companies with a presence in the oil sands. However, firms such as Edward Jones, Canaccord Genuity, and the Royal Bank of Canada have said that



the impact on oil sands companies will be very modest. Stock prices of many companies that operate in northern Alberta increased after investors had a chance to react to the impact LARP will have on the oil sands leases. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the LARP, that was released earlier this month, was only a draft plan. Our government will consider changes that are suggested by stakeholders in the affected region.

The lower Athabasca regional plan is important to balance conservation and economic development goals, and it is good to see that the unbiased experts at prestigious investment houses agree on the merits of our plan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

### Use of Handguns on the Trapline

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am a trapper's daughter and proud of it. When my father went on his trapping trips, every now and then I was allowed to go and learn about that lifestyle. It was glorious, and, yes, I was even able to trap a few animals, learn to skin, scrape, and hang the furs for eventual sale. My father carried his gun as life can get scary on that old trapline and sometimes we needed it to accomplish the final deed on the animal.

In those long ago years no one cared when and where you took your rifle or your .22 with you. However, the use of handguns or pistols involved in trapping has always been illegal. A co-constituent of mine and of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr. Gene Walters, was an individual who was incessant in his lobby efforts to be able to use handguns while trapping. Gene Walters was a trapper for more than 70 years of his life and in those times wished and worked with me and the minister and whoever would listen for the ability for trappers to use handguns or pistols. He made impassioned pleas to every minister responsible for trapping and never quit.

To the Minister of SRD: thank you for your vision. To Mr. Walters and all my trappers: your work and your wishes have finally been realized because there has been a recent change to the schedule of the Alberta Wildlife Act, allowing the use of handguns or pistols involved in trapping. With this change in the Alberta Wildlife Act, professional trappers can now utilize legally-owned handguns to dispatch wildlife caught on traplines. Of course, Mr. Speaker, any trapper wishing to carry handguns must meet federal government requirements applicable to handguns.

The benefits of this change, however, extend to both the trapper and the animal because now trappers can dispatch their catch in a more efficient and humane manner while increasing the safety and productivity of trappers. This is the argument my trappers, especially Mr. Walters, have always made. It is indeed unfortunate that such a change in the act did not come into fruition during Mr. Walters' trapping career.

Gene, thank you.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I will move that pursuant to Standing Order 30 the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, that the Alberta Medical Association on April 15, 2011, added its voice to the demands for a public inquiry into the health care system, mak-

ing an inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act necessary to maintain public confidence.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling a response to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on a question raised in Committee of Supply with regard to Treasury Board.

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

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a report by the United Way of Calgary entitled Towards Resiliency for Vulnerable Youth. This report documents research into the experiences of vulnerable youth in the transition into adulthood, including the challenges and opportunities they face. Here are the number of copies of the report required by the Assembly.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition I have three tablings. The first is a copy of the letter from the president of the AMA to its members, that has been referred to a number of times already today.

The second is a copy of a letter from the Rocky Mountain Civil Liberties Association, which supports a public inquiry.

The third, again on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition, is the CIHI, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, document from March 2011, entitled Wait Times in Canada: A Comparison by Province, 2011. Again, that has been referenced a number of times in question period.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the requisite five copies of letters from citizens in Lethbridge. They are concerned for the youth who may not receive the help that they need to be able to turn their lives around because of the devastating 40 per cent funding cut to 5th on 5th youth programs. They are Jodie Black, Bryce Nugent, Terry Hanna, Keira Irwin, Elisabeth Fujima, Wayne Brown, Paddy Cashen, S. Cashen, Brenda Ikuta, M. Nakashima, A. Bjarnason, Dave Lillemo, B. Brunsdon, and Daryl Herbers.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Within the next month and a half Sustainable Resource Development has given permission to Spray Lake logging to begin the clear-cutting of one-third, cumulatively, of the Castle-Crown, and the following individuals are very concerned: Isobel Mailloux, Maja Nuyt, Terry Rauscher, Peter Dettling, Linda Barbeau, Mark Barker, Andrew Stiles, Jared McAdam, Randy Tomiuk, Joseph Vipond, Laura Peters, Joy Halvorson, Mike Taylor, Monica and Karoly Ban Matei, Ken and Joan Newman, Gabriel McCay, Nancy Issenman, Joanna Barnes, Tiffany Moore, Connie Smith, Lorraine Campbell, Dave Smith, Bronwyn Elko, Chandra Kraus, and Judy Goodman.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of the affidavit of records for Dr. Ciaran McNamee. It's a

50-page document with about 500 and some-odd meetings and letters with many who understood about the cancer issue that I raised.

The second is a series of e-mails between 2007 and 2008, just prior to the election, some of these e-mails to Capital health authority leaders and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, warning of the impending poor patient outcomes in the emergency departments prior to the 322 cases that were collected during the election.

Then I have another tabling from Network Health, Inc., listing the key executives in this private surgical facility, one of which is the CEO of the Health Quality Council of Alberta.

I have a tabling from the *Edmonton Journal*, November 14, 1997, an article by Rick Pedersen, saying: WCB letting injured workers opt to be treated in private facilities in the HRC group.

I have a tabling of an *Edmonton Journal* article dated May 8, 1998: Barrett wants cooling off period for public health officials.

I have another tabling from the *Edmonton Journal*, July 22, 1998. "Retirement deal for ex-WCB chief criticized; An 'obscene' package, critics say: but Cowell also praised for improving WCB finances, performance."

I have another article from the *Edmonton Journal*, dated July 23, 1998, by Charles Rusnell: "Minister defends retirement deal for ex-WCB boss."

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, I must advise that under Daily Routine, Standing Order 7(7): "At 3 p.m. the items in the ordinary daily routine will be deemed to be concluded and the Speaker shall notify the Assembly." So, Clerk, I guess we'll have to deal with you tomorrow.

### 3:00 Request for Emergency Debate

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, you have an application under Standing Order 30. Proceed, please, briefly.

#### Patient Advocacy by Physicians

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 30 I move:

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, that the Alberta Medical Association on April 15, 2011, added its voice to demands for a public inquiry into the health care system making an inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act necessary to maintain public confidence.

Mr. Speaker, late on Friday afternoon Albertans were surprised, I think, in some cases to hear that the Alberta Medical Association, representing 10,000 doctors, took the position that the only way to recover confidence in the health care system in Alberta would be a public inquiry. The AMA has changed its position from its previous stand, where an inquiry by the Health Quality Council would be adequate, and that is the position this government has used to shore up its efforts to avoid a proper public inquiry.

It is a concern that the first response of the health minister to this news was to suggest that it was nothing more than a labour union negotiating tactic, a comment, I think, that clearly shows that the continuing agenda of intimidation is alive and is more reason to get on urgently with a public inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, each time another story of problems with the health care system emerges, the government has claimed it is not representative and that there is not an emergency. But the urgency

is created by the volume of concern as much as by any particular incident, a volume that is overwhelming now given the Alberta Medical Association position.

The AMA call on Friday now represents the body speaking on behalf of the province's doctors telling the rest of us that, in their view, this is the only satisfactory way to address these concerns. Mr. Speaker, what can be more urgent than the organization which represents physicians and surgeons who provide health care to all of us speaking out and saying that this is needed in order to restore confidence in our health care system? If those with reason to know can only trust such an action, then it is urgent to deal with this issue immediately.

The AMA letter is a very dramatic action by a normally very cautious body, and it should be of deep concern to all Albertans. It creates an entirely new context for the issues many of us have been raising for some time, and it is a call for this House to stop its ordinary business and have proper debate on this issue immediately.

Mr. Speaker, the health minister's comments that a public inquiry takes too long or costs too much money are absurd. The only way to get the correct answer is to do things the correct way, and everyone except this government that doesn't want its dirty laundry hung out for all to see believes a public inquiry is needed. There is an urgent need for us to set aside our normal day's work to debate this today.

*Beauchesne's* 390 states that "urgency"

does not apply to the matter itself, but means 'urgency of debate', when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough.

Hence, given that there is no other opportunity to debate the need for a public inquiry resulting from the current crisis in health care, it is important that we address it today.

In *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 695 it says that an emergency debate was approved on

the sudden and unexpected revelation of events which [had] taken place in the past, in that they might precipitate a course of conduct which, if allowed to continue unchecked, would certainly classify itself as an emergency and a matter of urgent consideration.

Mr. Speaker, for decades the government has been interfering in the health system politically and has created chaos in the health care system, and now health care professionals feel that it needs to be investigated. For example, Calgary health board region member Mairi Matheson has said that an inquiry would reveal, quote, some shocking numbers. There have been untimely deaths in large numbers, end quote, as an outcome of the closure of acute-care hospital beds. This is very serious.

The Health Quality Council review is insufficient. It reports to the minister of health. Given the potential for further cover-up and the appearance of systematic interference the Health Quality Council is clearly an inappropriate forum for investigating these potential cover-ups and intimidation. That's why we need an independent judicial and public inquiry as authorized by the Public Inquiries Act with the power to issue subpoenas. The government and its delegates should not be given the power to investigate themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that sufficient proof does exist. For example, Dr. McNamee's court case: in the wake of his lawsuit additional doctors are coming forward to say that they, too, were intimidated. Not only does proof exist that the government did silence its critics, but there's now sufficient evidence to indicate that this is not an isolated incident but part of a broader pattern of intimidation.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we clear the air. Dr. Paul Parks, head of the emergency section of the AMA, has said that the

health care system is becoming, quote, toxic and that a public inquiry may be the only way to allay public fears. An inquiry held under the Public Inquiries Act is the only way to restore public faith in the health system. Clearly, this legislation exists for this reason. Albertans deserve to know the truth. They deserve clarity, and this debate will create the opportunity for such to occur.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the rules of the House indicate that the Speaker may invite the member to briefly state his argument, and they also allow such debate as he considers relevant to the question of urgency. As this is private members' day today and the importance of private members is paramount, in my view, I will recognize two additional speakers briefly. You must speak to the urgency of the matter, the urgency of the question.

The hon. Government House Leader or the hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to speak to the urgency, but I also want to speak to whether, in fact, the motion is in order. On March 14, I believe, this House did adjourn to debate a standing order, and the root of it was that the government silenced critics of the health care system, thereby undermining confidence in the public health and contributing to the crisis in Alberta's health care system.

If we look at Standing Order 30(7),

a motion under this Standing Order is subject to the following conditions:

- (d) the motion must not revive discussion on a matter that has been discussed in the same session pursuant to this Standing Order.

Clearly, the root of what the hon. member is bringing forward today is exactly the same as what was discussed in the standing order on March 14 and that this House adjourned to discuss. I mean, the fact that the Medical Association or any other union comes forward with a letter supporting a particular position that somebody has been taking does not detract from the fact that what they're talking about is, in essence, public confidence in the health care system as a result of purported issues that have been raised by various people in the medical profession. The root of this is exactly the same as what we debated on March 14. Nothing has changed with respect to that particular matter.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that, in fact, on March 22 you recognized that particular fact when the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere brought forward a Standing Order 30 which, although it was in different words, was a motion which dealt with exactly the same subject. This motion is not in order. It's ultra vires of the standing orders under Standing Order 30(7)(d).

Also, Mr. Speaker, it is not a genuine emergency. If you followed the discussion in the House, as I know you have, through question period over a number of days and even the tablings from Edmonton-Meadowlark today, you're talking about things that were purported to happen back in a previous decade and in some cases over two decades ago. Nothing that has been raised talks about a crisis in health care today. This is not a flu epidemic, and "Are we ready for the flu epidemic?" or "Are the ambulances running around the city with no place to stop?" Those were previous emergency debates in the House. Those were genuine emergencies that Albertans wanted to know their leaders were taking the time to talk about.

The subject matter that is important to Albertans has been referred to the Health Quality Council. The issues that they're talking about that supposedly need a public inquiry are matters that relate to purported historical situations in the health system

and the historical impugning of the integrity or the bullying of doctors. It has nothing to do with what's urgent today for Albertans, nothing to do with the actions which we care about in this government in terms of health care for Albertans: how Albertans can access their health care system with confidence, which we have moved very strongly with to have the Health Quality Council, with an independent board of directors, being able to set its own terms of reference and who have gone out to support their position with two pre-eminent solicitors in this province to support them, handling exactly what Albertans are concerned about, which is their access to health care today.

Mr. Speaker, the motion is ultra vires of standing orders. It's not in order. Secondly, if it was in order, it's not urgent. No urgency has been demonstrated.

3:10

**The Speaker:** Okay. Thank you very much. Under that brief definition, that was approximately three minutes.

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would argue that there has been an escalation of this situation in such that it... [interjection] The Minister of Energy may petition the Speaker to speak if he so wishes.

In my three minutes what I wish to say to the Speaker is that there has been an escalation in the issue around the need for a public inquiry around what this government has done to a series of health care professionals. They, in turn, have claimed that they have been silenced. The government maintains they did not silence them. That's what the issue has been here. It has escalated in that the government has changed its position.

What makes this urgent, Mr. Speaker? What makes it urgent is that we now have seven days, and we're in the seventh day before we take a constituency break, or if I'm to believe the rumours, which, of course, I never do, that might be the end of the spring session completely, and that would be the end of our opportunity to get to the bottom of this issue. That puts a great deal of urgency on this issue. I'm not in charge of that; government is. But they can put an end to this whenever they choose.

We have had the Premier talk about the Evidence Act protecting members, but if you talk to labour lawyers, they are very clear that the Evidence Act does not protect anyone that tries to come forward with information, particularly from nondisclosure agreements. The AMA itself published a series of documents that indicate that physicians subject to nondisclosure agreements will be at risk unless restrictions are lifted. Therefore we have a situation increasingly where health care professionals, specifically doctors, specifically doctors working out of the AMA, have made it very clear that they are increasingly uncomfortable with the position that this government puts them in.

What do we face from that? I don't have the resources to do the business risk analysis, but I would say that the chances of doctors withdrawing services increase by the day, particularly when you have the AMA itself – which, by the way, is not a union, and the Government House Leader is being deliberately mischievous when he says it is. I think we reach the point where the AMA, in fact, could be withdrawing services because their members are so unhappy with the lack of movement and clarity that they are able to get.

How does this affect the public? How is this urgent for the public? Well, if you don't have a doctor, Mr. Speaker, you're not going to be able to get much health care out of it. People are increasingly questioning this government's veracity around the provision of health care, whether they have in fact muzzled doctors. We've seen a number of examples that are not subject to

nondisclosure agreements which have come before the House with documented material that indicates that it is actually a pattern of this government that they first question the individual's mental health, then they circulate that to their family, friends, and co-workers, and they go on from there to challenge their licence with the AMA.

It is urgent to the public in Alberta and to our health care professionals in Alberta. That is why we bring it forward, especially when we look at this being private members' day. There's no other opportunity for that, so I don't do this lightly, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, thank you very much. I have been looking at this matter since I received this notification from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood this morning in my office at 11:20. The requirement for providing the two hours' notice has certainly been met. I am prepared to deal with this matter, having heard the three submissions we've had in here and consulting the authorities with respect to this as well.

As all members are aware, the relevant parliamentary authorities on this subject are pages 689 to 696 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and second edition of *Beauchesne's*, paragraphs 387 to 390. The motion reads as follows:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, that the Alberta Medical Association on April 15, 2011, added its voice to demands for a public inquiry into the health care system, making an inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act necessary to maintain public confidence.

Hon. members, this is not the first time we've had a Standing Order 30 application on this subject. In fact, this is the third time the Assembly has considered a motion of this nature. A debate went ahead on Monday, March 14, 2011, based on the motion moved by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. On Tuesday, March 22, 2011, the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere also made the Standing Order 30 application, and the subject did not proceed on the basis that the matter had already been discussed. Standing Order 30(7)(d) is clear. "The motion must not revive discussion on a matter that has been discussed in the same session" under Standing Order 30.

Simply because a different member or a new party has provided input into a matter that has already been debated does not make the matter new, nor does it make it urgent. Accordingly, the chair does not find the request for leave in order under the Assembly's rules, and the question will not be put.

## Orders of the Day

### Motions for Returns

#### Patients Awaiting Thoracic Surgery

M11. Mr. Mason moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents, including but not limited to communications, reports, briefings, and memos, related to thoracic surgery wait lists and the number of patients who died while awaiting surgery for the fiscal years 2000-01 through 2009-10.

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, for bringing this motion for a return forward. Of course, it's no longer

necessary, so I will be rejecting it on behalf of the government of Alberta.

I just want to briefly explain why. I think the member already knows and all members here would know that this motion was put on the Order Paper or submitted or whatever on day 9, which would have made it March 8 of 2011, which is actually before the Health Quality Council of Alberta review, the independent review, was announced, which, by the way, was on March 12. These topics, Mr. Speaker, will be covered by that thorough review, so I'm not going to stand here and advocate for duplicating the effort. In fact, I think members would be reminded that the Health Quality Council of Alberta's review into the quality of care and safety of patients requiring access to emergency department care and cancer surgery and the role and process of physician advocacy is already well on the record.

There are several parts to that review that they're undertaking, Mr. Speaker, and it will cover exactly this. For example, under the first part the Health Quality Council of Alberta's independent review will determine whether the quality of care provided to and the safety of a group of 321 patients that accessed emergency department services at the University of Alberta hospital during 2008 and a group of nine patients that accessed emergency department services at the University of Alberta hospital in 2010 were significantly compromised due to extended lengths of stays, awaiting diagnosis and treatment in the emergency department. These cases were identified publicly on October 22, 2010. The cases had been collected by the emergency department physicians serving in the role of triage physicians at the UAH.

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

Finally, item 3, Mr. Speaker. Based on the findings and analysis of the investigation and the analysis of current practices, the review will make recommendations for system level improvements in access and wait times for emergency department care and cancer treatments, which is, I suspect, what the member is driving at, and I thank him for that.

3:20

I'll just wrap up quickly, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I'm quite sure that the thoracic surgery issue, everything from, basically, the throat down to the abdomen, involves something that would come under that review. Let's await that review and see if, in fact, there is some additional information there that needs to come forward. I'm quite sure there will be. The review is under way. It's going to be very thorough. It will involve, I'm sure, numerous people. Anyone can participate that can come forward. We'll ensure that they get a copy of this motion, hon. member, just so that they can perhaps look at it as well.

Finally, once that final report comes out, Mr. Speaker, it will be made public, so everyone will see it. The public actually will see it first, and then it will come to me, and it will come into this Assembly for tabling for the official records of the House. I know that the member is on record supporting at least parts of the Health Quality Council of Alberta review, and I would hope that we would understand the parallels between the motion as put forward by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood today and the commensurate process, the independent health quality review, which covers exactly the same subjects as I've just outlined.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, if I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, that precludes any other member from participating. Are there additional speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to participate in the debate over Motion for a Return 11. The hon. minister of health has asked us to place a tremendous amount of faith in the Health Quality Council, and I actually have quite a bit of faith in the limited evidence that the Health Quality Council can look at. Where I don't have faith is the fact that the Health Quality Council will not report directly to the Assembly but will report directly to the health minister, and the distance between that report being tabled in this Assembly, the time factor, and the filtration factor is of great concern to me.

Very similar is the government's proposed idea under Bill 10 of a patient ombudsman. Again, that individual reports to the minister and not to the Assembly. So what was requested in Motion for a Return 11 was the direct presentation of the information to the Assembly.

The minister has suggested that it is going to take between six and nine months for the Health Quality Council to meet on a very limited agenda dealing with the case of the 322 individuals who were seen over a period of one month in one hospital, so this is a very small sampling of a larger case. Without that information coming to this Assembly in a reasonable time frame as requested in Motion for a Return 11, we have no guarantee that we're ever going to see that information because of the potential interference by the minister of health in the presentation of the information he receives from the Health Quality Council, which has a very limited mandate and a fairly lengthy period in terms of investigating that mandate.

Mr. Speaker, by that time I'm sure we'll have had an election. We'll probably have a new health minister. The situation right now demands that this information be provided in a timely manner. Albertans are counting on it. It's not just history; it's happening every single day in our emergency departments, in our long-term care facilities, and people looking for thoracic surgery are wondering what type of service they're going to be receiving based on what has happened in previous times.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Additional speakers? The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to agree completely with my fellow colleagues in the opposition that this is a very reasonable request. You're dealing with people's lives here, and obviously we haven't had the opportunity to – well, the emergency debate was held out of order today, which is unfortunate, so we can't discuss it there.

I have a real, personal problem with this health minister refusing this information to the Assembly. I think that it's irresponsible. I think that if he had nothing to hide, or if his government had nothing to hide, more appropriately, they would have no problem whatsoever giving this information out and disclosing it to the people of Alberta through this Legislative Assembly. I feel that it is impossible right now for the public to have confidence in this system or in this government because of the secretive nature within which they work.

You know, we have a situation there with Dr. McNamee. Yeah, those are very serious allegations in the statement of claim. A statement of claim is, indeed, not in itself a statement of fact, as the Premier said today, but those are definitely some

very serious allegations. Unless we can see all the documents, particularly the ones that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark brought forward today, all those documents that were included in that – that's just one example – if we can't see those things, if the people of Alberta can't see those documents, how can we make a judgment as to whether there was, in fact, something relevant and something true that was being alleged by Dr. McNamee and others?

There is no doubt that having the Health Quality Council look into the patient care issues regarding people waiting on the wait-list, et cetera, is a good thing. It's a good start. It's something that with regard to the quality of care issue should be looked at. But that does not mean that just because they are looking at it, we should not as members of this Assembly have access to those documents that they may be looking at as well. Frankly, it just defies logic that we would, you know, as members of this Assembly be denied access to those very important documents so that we can undertake to do our own analysis of whether, in fact, there are problems in the system and whether, in fact, there are things that need to be looked at.

I don't understand the need for secrecy. What on earth could be the reason for that? If there's nothing this government has to hide, then put the documents on the table. Let us see them. Let's see these documents related to thoracic surgery wait-lists and so forth. If there's nothing there to worry about, then by all means we can all move on with things, but if there is something, it is our duty as opposition members to point those things out and let the public decide, after hearing the government's arguments and our arguments and the Liberals' arguments and the ND's arguments, whether or not there's something wrong that needs to be fixed. That's the whole essence of democracy.

Yet we sit in here, and we ask very clearly – it's so reasonable – for copies of all documents, including but not limited to communications, reports, briefings, and memos related to thoracic surgery wait times and the number of patients who died while awaiting surgery for the fiscal years '01 through '09-10. How is it justified in your eyes, Minister, to deny us that information? You might deny our conclusions that we derive from that information, and that's your right. It's the government's job to justify their actions and so forth. But as opposition members we need access to this information. This is just the latest in a long line of examples where you think that if you just deny the information continually, it won't come out, and you'll never have to be accountable for it.

You know, this Premier, Mr. Speaker, has clearly said over and over again that one of the things that he wants to be known for is accountability and transparency. Well, how is this accountable and transparent when we're being refused documents, very reasonable documents, so that we as opposition can do our job and find out for ourselves whether or not there's something that we need to bring up as opposition members in this House?

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll say that I completely agree with the member's motion. I hope that the government will see it in themselves to do the right thing here and produce these documents because they are needed for the opposition to be able to do its job on what has become a very, very serious public health issue. Just simply sweeping them under the rug and not providing them because they don't feel like it, because it could make them feel uncomfortable, or whatever the reason is is just not appropriate and should be beneath every member of the government.

Thank you.

3:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore on this point.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to stand and speak in favour of this motion also. I think that any Albertan that is listening and listening to the minister say that this isn't necessary would be offended. This is the House. This is critical information. There's no better place for a question like this or a more appropriate place for this type of question. I'm astounded that the government would say: well, we'll wait for the Health Quality Council to do this. The government is accountable to the people. The opposition's job is to ask these questions. This is very pertinent and important information.

Once again, I cannot believe the stonewalling that goes on. I was at a function this weekend, and one of the comments was that this is the most secretive government in all of Canada. This is exactly the type of reason that they're talking about, when the minister gets up and says: "Well, we're not even going to answer and reply to this motion. It's out of order, not necessary. We've got a Health Quality Council, that's going to look into these things."

Nobody debates the Health Quality Council's important role in looking at these things, but there's still an accountability factor. These numbers, the reports, the e-mails that have gone back and forth should be made public. It's just the right thing to do. This is the right place to do it. Very disappointed if this motion doesn't pass.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there additional speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak for the motion that the hon. member has brought forward in regard to

copies of all documents, including but not limited to communications, reports, briefings, and memos, related to thoracic surgery wait-lists and the number of patients who died while awaiting surgery for the fiscal years 2000-01 through 2009-10.

What I find quite amazing is the fact that the government talks about – and they're mocking – that we want to get stats from some time ago and that they thought it, in my mind, quite funny. It's been interesting to me that they've stood in front of this Legislature and talked in this question period for weeks on end about all of the good things that the Health Quality Council is going to do and what they're going to look at. Thus, the motion is on some of the things that the Health Quality Council is going to look into.

They've stood up and talked about all of the wonderful people on the Health Quality Council, and I don't think anybody can take that away from them. The people that will be on the Health Quality Council will be the same people that will probably want to look at this same documentation. It's hard for me to understand why the minister would not be prepared to table all of the documentation in the Legislature when he will be providing the same documentation, I would expect or I would hope or I would think, that the Health Quality Council will have brought before them.

You know, you sometimes wonder when we see what transpired on Friday, with the AMA doing what I consider, as long as I can remember, since I've been in this Legislature – and that's been since 1993 – an unprecedented move by coming forward in support of a public inquiry. For these particular individuals – and I've had the opportunity to meet on several occasions with the AMA over my time in this Legislature – their number one concern has always been representing the doctors and their concerns. For them to come out on Friday, late on a Friday afternoon, after meeting with the minister the previous Thursday to discuss all of the goodwill and all the good things that they're doing, is to me something that has to shake this province to its roots, quite frankly.

The 6,500 doctors that they represent obviously want to make sure that their concerns are represented. The member has brought forward a motion, quite frankly, that I think is very simple: provide the documentation that is pertinent to get to the root and get to the bottom of the matter. The government should nowhere at any time hesitate about providing this particular information because, as my colleague from Airdrie-Chestermere has said, the Premier has talked about how he is open, accountable, transparent. Well, if you are open and if you are accountable and if you are transparent, it would seem to me it would be in the best interests for him to table this documentation, have this discussion that has been in the Legislature for months, with two emergency debates that I believe we've already had. A third one was brought forward, again by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, to see this information that the member has asked for. We want it on the record that as the health critic for the Wildrose I and my caucus all support the motion that he's bringing forward.

**The Speaker:** Additional speakers, or shall I call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to close the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, if there was one action of this Legislature, one action of this government that would sum up exactly what we're dealing with on this whole question of doctor intimidation and problems with the health care system, including what happened with patients who were on waiting lists for lung cancer surgery, that was dealt with in this request, it would be this. This is exactly what it is that is at stake that the public is talking about. A simple request – a simple request – has been brought forward that the government provide us with information relating to some serious allegations that have been out there percolating for nearly six weeks now. That is to say that there was a serious problem with waiting lists for thoracic surgery that caused the unnecessary deaths of a number of patients.

The government has in its possession the documents that would bring this matter to light, and the government brazenly is refusing to turn those over to the members of this Assembly. That's all that's being asked for; that is to say, documents in the government's possession that would shed light on whether or not there was a very serious problem with waiting times that caused unnecessary deaths. The government is refusing to share it with the public or even with members of this Assembly.

Now, the minister has said that that is because the Health Quality Council is doing a review of this matter. Well, that much is true. The minister is implying that all of this information will be given to the Health Quality Council, but he hasn't said so. I don't believe that this information necessarily will be turned over because I don't trust the minister. I don't trust the government. I don't think that they want this information to become public, and that's why they're denying it to us today.

Not only that, but the Health Quality Council doesn't have the authority to require the government to provide it with this information. If the government chooses not to, the Health Quality Council is powerless to get its hands on this information, which highlights the other problem with the Health Quality Council and its role in this, that it can't get the information from the government. I don't think the government wants to give it to them, I don't think they will give it to them, and the Health Quality Council, if it asks for it, doesn't have the power to guarantee it.

Now, the minister has said that the Health Quality Council will get the information, and if they're going to give it to the Health Quality Council, then there's no reason they can't give it to us, but they're refusing to give it to members of the Assembly. This is

critical information that would back up the claims that were made originally by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. The refusal of the government to provide this information to the Assembly and to the public is exactly the problem. They cry: "Well, where's the proof? Prove it." Well, the fact is that they have the proof, and they won't let the proof out. They won't let us have a look at what actually happened, and I think that that's because there are some things there that they really, really don't want the public to know.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, in an *Edmonton Journal* article published March 16, Dr. Tony Fields, Alberta Health Services' vice-president for cancer care, stated that there are about 170 patients in Edmonton who are waiting for thoracic surgeries for lung cancer, transplants, or other conditions. Moreover, Calgary has 24 patients waiting but offers fewer types of thoracic surgery. Those who had their operations in February waited an average of 27 days from the time their surgeon decided surgery was needed to the actual operation. That does not include the wait for a referral to the specialist or the scheduling of X-rays, CT scans, or other tests.

Alberta Health Services wants the entire wait-list to be four weeks for 90 per cent of patients. In Edmonton 30 to 40 per cent of surgical lung cases are done after regular working hours or on weekends because there is not enough operating-room time for surgeons. According to a study published in the January 2011 edition of the British medical journal *The Lancet*, Albertans with lung cancer have a five-year survival rate of 15 per cent after diagnosis, the lowest of all provinces in the country and well under the Canadian average of 18.4 per cent. Those are estimates based on patients who were diagnosed from 2005 through 2007. In response to the study a prominent thoracic surgeon from Harvard said that this is irrefutable evidence by an impartial third party that Albertans suffer with cancer care.

Over the last years, culminating last month, Albertans have grown tired of this government's mismanagement of the health care system. After the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark claimed 250 people died, many from lung cancer, while on a 1,200-person waiting list for thoracic surgery between 2003 and 2006, the opposition united in calling for a full public inquiry into allegations of physician intimidation and other interference in the delivery of excellent health care.

The government has consistently failed to disclose this basic health information, even regarding basic wait-lists and times. Every year our caucus staff must file expensive freedom of information requests in order to obtain the wait-list registry, which indicates the status of wait-lists and our health care backlog. The government should be publishing this information regularly in the first place.

As recently as 2009 Conservative cuts to health care forced surgeons at the Royal Alexandra hospital to postpone cancer surgeries and endanger the health of cancer patients. Even in the face of doctors publicly condemning the cuts as stressful and dangerous, the minister of health flatly denied that patient care would be impacted. Currently at the Royal Alexandra hospital there are 16 designated in-patient beds for thoracic surgery and eight observation beds for patients who are more seriously ill and require more intensive monitoring.

Dr. Ciaran McNamee, a leading Edmonton thoracic surgeon, claims he was forced out of a position in 2000 after talking to the government about wait times. The surgeon said that he also had to counteract allegations that he needed psychiatric care. He sued the health region and two managers for \$450,000, settled out of court, and now teaches at Harvard University. In 2000 the Capital health region recruited top thoracic surgeon Dr. Tim Winton from the

University of Toronto. Dr. Winton took over as director of thoracic surgery after Dr. McNamee was pushed out of his job for speaking out for more patient resources. In turn, Dr. Winton is no longer the director of thoracic surgery and is now listed as a university course co-ordinator.

As of April 11, 2011, Dr. McNamee promised that he and other doctors would speak out if their testimony were legally protected by a formal inquiry. In a letter he said that the ongoing Health Quality Council review is flawed because it cannot shield witnesses who breach the terms of their severance agreement. Mr. Speaker, that sentiment was backed up just this last Friday by the Alberta Medical Association.

Let me be clear. The government's intention to vote against this motion is part of a cover-up. They are hiding the facts from Albertans about deaths in cancer surgery wait times. It is blatant, and it is absolutely unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. When this government votes down this motion, as they surely will, it is the final evidence, if any were needed, of this government's intention to cover up what has actually happened in our health care system and to prevent the truth from coming out.

The Health Quality Council is just another way to make sure the truth doesn't come out, but by voting down this motion, they're absolutely and clearly committing themselves to a course of secrecy and cover-up of something that is of the highest public interest and the highest public importance; that is to say, whether or not people are safe in our health care system, something this government has not been able to show is actually the case and, in fact, is working overtime to prevent a real discussion based on the facts of this question.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all hon. members to vote for the motion so that we can have the documents – the communications, reports, briefings, and memos – relating to thoracic surgery wait-lists and the number of patients who died while awaiting surgery for the fiscal years 2000-2001 and 2009-10. That's what the motion asks for. This is not information that the government should be withholding from this Assembly or from the public, not even for a second.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 11 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:46 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Anderson	Kang	Sherman
Chase	MacDonald	Swann
Forsyth	Mason	Taft
Hinman	Pastoor	Taylor

Against the motion:

Allred	Evans	Mitzel
Benito	Goudreau	Morton
Bhullar	Hayden	Olson
Brown	Horne	Ouellette
Calahasen	Jacobs	Quest
Campbell	Johnston	Renner
DeLong	Liepert	Rodney
Denis	Marz	Sarich
Doerksen	McFarland	VanderBurg
Drysdale	McQueen	Zwozdesky
Elniski		

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 31
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[Motion for a Return 11 lost]

**Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Third Reading**

**Bill 201  
Health Insurance Premiums  
(Health Card Donor Declaration)  
Amendment Act, 2011**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we now have 60 minutes available for third reading, so that will take us right through to approximately 5 o'clock.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and open third reading debate on Bill 201, the Health Insurance Premiums (Health Card Donor Declaration) Amendment Act, 2011.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin my comments today, I would like to first of all on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning thank all members from both sides of the House who have supported this bill in second reading and in Committee of the Whole debate. It is encouraging to hear such broad support. I believe that organ donation can transcend political debate and remind us all of what we work for as MLAs on a daily basis; that is, the improvement of our constituents' lives.

Implementation of Bill 201 has the potential to save the lives of numerous Albertans and improve the lives of many more. In second reading debate it was stressed that one donor can save the lives of eight people and that tissue from that donor can be used to improve the lives of 80 more.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, the problem we have is not that we don't know how to use the organs but that we simply don't have enough of them. In fact, Alberta and, for that matter, Canada as a whole have one of the lowest organ donor rates in the world. It is estimated that each year there are only 13 donors per million people. This number is simply too low. I believe that the cause of this low figure comes from how easy it is to avoid what is often considered an uncomfortable question of becoming an organ donor.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

We currently have an opt-in system where someone must go out of their way to become an organ donor. If they do nothing, their organs will not likely be donated. To be clear, this bill is not proposing that we make all Albertans organ donors. This would be wrong because it would dramatically infringe on personal choice. It is also not proposing that individuals must choose yes or no. They still have an opportunity to remain undecided. Moreover, individuals have the option also of not explicitly making a decision at all should they feel uncomfortable declaring intentions of any kind. After all, organ donation is a very personal decision. Rather, what Bill 201 aims to do is encourage people to have that discussion with their family and to make their wishes known.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bill 201 will increase organ donation rates not by forcing people to become donors but by prompting a discussion regarding the matter. Now, to be fair, this is an uncomfortable discussion, but while this conversation may not be easy, the results can be remarkably beneficial. I would say that many members here know at least one person who has been given a new lease on life after receiving an organ or a tissue transplant. These are our friends and neighbors and our family members, people

dear to us, people who, because of a donated organ, can continue to lead healthy lives.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, Bill 201 also makes sense from an economic viewpoint. After all, it is much more affordable to transplant an organ than it is to provide lengthy conventional treatment. For example, a kidney transplant over a five-year span can save our health care system over \$250,000 in conventional treatment costs. And this is just for one patient. Currently in Alberta we have anywhere from 400 to 600 people waiting to receive organs. It stands to reason that if we could provide them with organs rather than conventional treatment, we could save our health system millions of dollars. We would also be dramatically improving the quality of life for many Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, the final point I would like to touch on deals with the amendment supported by this House in Committee of the Whole. I believe that the amendment provided the change needed to truly reflect the intent of this bill. The member's intent was never to deny people health care treatment or Alberta health care cards, and my intent is not to put an unworkable burden on our health care system. Rather, Bill 201 is all about awareness. It is about raising the issue of organ donation and letting people know that we can improve our donor rates, and it is about getting people to take the time to look at the back of their Alberta health cards.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne for demonstrating this during second reading. In fact, I would encourage all members in this House and all of our guests in the galleries to take a look in their wallets right now, pull out their health cards, and look at the back. Checking a box is all that this bill asks you to do. Now, I'm not asking you to become a donor, but I am asking you to think about what your wishes are.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the amended bill we have before us is a good bill. I believe that it has the ability to save lives, the lives of many people. Most importantly, I believe that passing this bill will promote the discussion we need to truly increase organ donation rates. I would again like to thank all those who have participated in this debate so far and look forward to comments from my colleagues during third reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand up in third reading in support of Bill 201, the Health Insurance Premiums (Health Card Donor Declaration) Amendment Act, 2011. I don't think I have to say what a huge supporter I am of organ donation. I've spoken in second reading, I've spoken in committee, and I'm speaking in third reading about this bill.

What I have been critical about is the fact that I believe this is the third private member's bill that has been brought before this Legislature in regard to organ donation. I know that I brought forward a bill a decade ago. I know that the hon. Member for Calgary-West brought a private member's bill forward. Again, we're now on our third private member's bill. I guess what bothers me more than anything is that the government talks about how important it is and how much they support organ donation, yet we've seen three private members on three different occasions bring a private member's bill forward without any government support or government help. It's going around and around and around.

It's very sad when you consider, since I brought my private member's bill forward approximately 10 years ago, how many organ donations have been lost, how many people could have probably been saved if we'd had some government legislation and



had been able to educate the public. I know that my bill and I know that the Member for Calgary-West both believe that education is vital in making people aware of the situation to the point of getting them to consider signing their health card. As the member indicated previously, they should be talking to their family about the importance of them abiding by their wishes should something tragic happen to them along the line so that the family is well aware of how that particular individual feels and will proceed with the wishes of the person that had determined that they wanted to be an organ donor.

I'm not going to take a lot of time here, Mr. Speaker. We're very close to the end, I would expect, and getting this bill passed. I am going to also encourage all members to support Bill 201. As I indicated, when I spoke on my first private member's bill on organ donation – and I know I've brought this up before – one of the things I continually said when we were debating my own private member's bill was: don't take your organs to heaven; heaven knows we need them down here.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to support Bill 201.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wish to speak?

Does the hon. member wish to close?

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and close third reading debate on Bill 201 on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Manning. I would first like to begin by thanking all members from both sides of this House for participating in today's debate. I would also like to thank all those who participated in second reading and Committee of the Whole discussions.

The Member for Edmonton-Manning introduced this bill because he wanted to raise the issue of organ donation. Ultimately, he believes that this bill can help increase organ donor rates. First of all, it was introduced, I believe, because it can save people's lives. We have already discussed the low donation rates in Canada as well as how many lives and how much money can be saved by one donor, so I'll not go into that again. What I will say is that I believe that this bill is already a success. I'm confident that our debate over the last few weeks has raised this issue amongst Albertans and that it has already encouraged someone to sign the back of their card. In fact, it might have already saved a life. Mr. Speaker, passing Bill 201 would continue this discussion, and ultimately I believe that it would save several lives.

In closing, I would again like to thank all the members who participated in the debate throughout the course of the discussion on this bill, and I would like to thank all those Albertans who choose to donate organs. Further, I would like to acknowledge the effort of the Member for Edmonton-Manning in bringing this forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a third time]

**4:10      Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Second Reading**

**Bill 203  
Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act**

[Debate adjourned April 11: Mr. Chase speaking]

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We just had a very brief opportunity to have the bill introduced and for me to

share some comments. One of the concerns I have is that just simply putting out ideas without providing support for them either financially or in recognition does very little. This government is famous for mandating. A very good example was the mandating of daily phys ed in the public schools, but the government neglected to provide training for individuals to carry out the daily exercise regime. There certainly was not gym space for the daily exercise to be carried out. There was no funding for the equipment to be carried out, no recognition of weather conditions. So teachers, being creative individuals, tried their best to ensure that the children somehow managed to get 20 minutes of daily phys ed, but it was hardly a situation that was given the support it needed.

Simply saying on a day in April, "Let's get out and get healthy," as if that's going to motivate large groups of people to say, "Oh, yes, it's April whatever; let's get out and get healthy," is rather ludicrous, to say the least. What this government needs to be doing is providing opportunities. The government to its credit has provided opportunities for elite athletes. I give the government tremendous credit for helping with the Olympic centre at the University of Calgary, the rink, and for providing funding for ski jumping and the luge, et cetera, at Canada Olympic Park. But in terms of the government providing much in the way of funding to support local soccer, for example, in Calgary when the dome collapsed at the soccer centre, I don't recall the government through either Tourism, Parks and Recreation or through the ministry of the hon. Member for Calgary-North West providing funding from lottery grants to immediately pay for that roof.

So while the government is suggesting through the hon. member, who is a good example of following a physical regimen in his own personal life and encouraging his students to do so, without the actual practical means of supporting facilities such as amateur sport facilities – I mentioned the soccer dome's roof collapse. It took an awful lot of arm-twisting and begging for the government to have assisted with creating more hockey rinks. For example, I think Calgary even with the new rinks at the Olympic centre is judged to be about eight rinks short of the necessary situation.

Mr. Speaker, you're looking like you're having trouble seeing the relevance. The relevance is getting-out-and-going and being active. The relevance that I'm putting forward is that if you want people to be active, just simply setting aside a particular weekend and saying, "Go out and get active" is not going to be effective.

What would be more effective would be the government saying that sports and recreation are a priority. We realize that instead of spending millions and millions of dollars on juvenile diabetes and dealing with overweight individuals subject to heart and stroke, sort of a Participation action would be much more appropriate than just saying that at some point in April let's go out and frolic, whether it's snowing or whether it's raining or we've got dry golf courses or not.

If we're going to make an impact on the lives of Albertans, whether they're young or old, then let's do something practical. Let's make sports and recreation a pursuit that the government believes is important and then finance them through the school system. Let's support the community centres in terms of making sure that they have the appropriate rinks and fields. Let's support the minor sports associations in making sure that the coaches receive the training. In other words, Mr. Speaker, let's provide practical opportunities for individuals to be able to get out and enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, something that I've brought up on numerous occasions is the need to protect our wilderness, to set aside and protect parks areas and make sure that we have management plans. We have over 450 bits and pieces of protected areas, ecological re-

serves and parks, but of those 450-plus areas taking up almost 4 per cent of Alberta's land mass, no plan.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

**Ms Evans:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and speak in support of Bill 203, as presented by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who has provided it for our opportunity for discussion and debate in this House. I think there's perhaps nobody that I've ever met in the Legislature that was more of a valid sponsor of this particular type of bill than the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who himself has exemplified the importance of healthy living and has challenged himself to do things that some only dream about.

The reason I'm particularly pleased to support this is that for many years now I have contemplated the lack of enthusiasm that many people seem to have for taking the advantage that we have for a weekend or a day to go outdoors and celebrate the opportunities we're provided. Contrary to the previous speaker from Calgary-Varsity, I would observe that there's probably no place else on the planet that is better equipped to deal with schools, school facilities, recreation facilities, sports facilities, community participation than our Alberta. We have provided many facilities, have exemplary standards in our facilities, have built facilities and, in fact, an infrastructure here that is virtually second to none.

Why would we support a bill like this? It's very simple. To improve the health and welfare and well-being of Albertans. Structurally Albertans, when provided with this opportunity or reminded of our government's belief and importance of this type of activity, may well be prompted to go out and to take advantage of the great outdoors. Communities themselves can say that these are some of the things you might want to do, this is a facility or an activity that we're providing outdoors, and co-ordinate the sponsorship of such facilities to act, in fact, as a catalyst for the health of the local communities.

4:20

We have a beautiful province, Alberta has. Yes, we have a Family Day weekend, which has been a very successful type of co-ordinating effort to get people to think about family types of activities. You can see families themselves looking at making time for the parents, the extended family, and the children to get out and make good choices for family-styled activities. Years ago, as an example of that, even churches recognized the benefit of families that pray together, stay together. So there are examples of things that people have chosen in society to dedicate themselves to to foster an activity.

The get outdoors weekend concept would enable people celebrating our Rocky Mountains to the many diverse landscapes that we have in Alberta to really take a look at how these can be implemented or used for suitable outdoor types of weekends. The Birkebeiner in our own municipality in Strathcona county has become just a tremendous weekend of celebrating the great outdoors with cross-country skiing. Weekends dedicated to exploring the beauty and excitement would give people an opportunity to celebrate their healthy lifestyles together.

Several other jurisdictions have actually enacted similar legislation, Mr. Speaker. The public participation, for example, in British Columbia on the BC Rivers Day in 1980 gave the public there an opportunity to celebrate river heritage and raise awareness of many benefits of their waterways. BC Rivers Day also provides opportunities to profile threats to rivers and offers ways in which the public can get involved in creating solutions. Each year more

than 75,000 people participate in over a hundred BC Rivers Day events and activities across the province, making it annually a very successful venture.

Our federal government has enacted similar legislation creating Canada's Parks Day in 1990 and as a national event showcases Canada's many parks and historic sites from coast to coast, encouraging Canadians to get out every third Saturday in July and enjoy all the fun and excitement of our natural landscapes. This event draws more than 50,000 people to more than 300 events, with numbers growing every year, Canadians discovering something new about our country and its heritage. It has the potential to introduce Canadians of all ages to activities which have become lifelong passions, and this excitement for life in the great outdoors is something that Albertans have also valued.

The United States of America has embarked on a similar initiative called National Get Outdoors Day, or GO Day. This annual event, which began in 2008, takes place in June and encourages all Americans to take part in healthy outdoor fun. Teams of federal agencies often team up with nonprofit organizations to inspire people to enjoy time outdoors, to embrace the parks and forests and other public lands available in the United States. Last year GO Day focused on fighting the obesity epidemic, particularly in children, and on helping American families make healthy lifestyle choices. GO Day activities took place in 91 official sites across the country.

Similar initiatives in other places have been very successful in helping people get off the couch and go out for fresh air. We believe that although these individual choices are important things for individuals to make, government can play a role promoting enjoyment in activity. Marketed correctly, our hope is that Alberta families and individuals here would celebrate the opportunity to get outdoors, and it would help people who have struggled to get outdoors to have that option.

Mr. Speaker, the beauty of this bill is that it wouldn't acknowledge or institute any extra expense to government. Costs associated with Bill 203 lie in marketing and promotion, which could come from existing budgets of relevant ministries or agencies.

Active living can lead to longer lives, reduced stress, and improved health and, as such, Mr. Speaker, may in fact lead to decreased risk of obesity and other associated diseases such as those that have been referenced by other speakers. We believe that this can have a positive impact on the sustainability of our health system, as it stands to reason that the healthier our population becomes, the less they will need to access health services. Increased physical activity and associated health benefits will serve to improve quality of life for all who participate. By making ours a province that actively promotes outdoor physical activity, we create yet another reason for Alberta to remain the best place in Canada to live, work, and raise a family.

We believe that the benefits of this proposed legislation are far reaching, impacting us physically and economically as well as emotionally. It will encourage Albertans to lead healthier, more active lifestyles. Health improvements could ease the burden that other diseases and obesity place on our system, and we'll teach our children by example how making healthier choices now will lead to a better lifestyle for the future.

Mr. Speaker, we are blessed with one of the most beautiful backyards in the world. It's a shame that Albertans don't always take the time to get out and enjoy it. In this last six or seven months while so many people have been concerned about their well-being in a climate that offers many challenges because of the cold weather, celebrating an outdoors weekend with taking advantage of the fact that we're in a free and democratic society enables us to reflect that there are many things we can celebrate, even our

capacity to deal with adversity. It would be my hope that people do support this bill. It has many benefits for Albertans, both now and in the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this bill.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 203, the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act. I have to say that at this point in the debate in second reading I'm not sure exactly how I feel about this particular bill, so I'm going to be listening to the government and to what they have to say about this bill.

I want to get on the record that I like what the member has explained in his preamble about the significant health and lifestyle benefits associated with active living and outdoor activity. I don't know how anyone can possibly argue about that. He talks about the recognition of the importance of outdoor recreation, that it will have a lasting effect on the health and well-being of the people of Alberta. Well, that's another statement that no one can argue with and I'm sure everyone can agree with. He goes on to the government's commitment to the mental – I have a bit of a problem with that as I think the government has not done a very good job when we talk about individuals dealing with mental health, so that's a little questionable – physical, and environmental benefits of outdoor recreation and would like to encourage Albertans to get outdoors through the designation of a special weekend each year.

You know, I've gotten to know the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed over the years, and no one can question his enthusiasm, if I can use that word, to make sure that everybody is healthy. We've had many discussions in the past in regard to exercise and the many hours that we commit to this job. I even find at times, as someone who I think is pretty physically fit, that exercise to me sometimes doesn't come very easy, especially when you're sitting in the Legislature for hours on end.

The last thing I want to do when I get home is to start lifting weights because, you know, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I'm too tired to even think about lifting the weights let alone putting them into action. We have a gym in the Legislature, and I honestly, honestly can't remember the last time I was in the gym. But I do walk to work every day because that is physical exercise, and it's about the only exercise that I've managed to squeeze in in a very busy day other than walking from the Annex to the Legislature, back and forth on several occasions.

I am going to listen intently, and I'm sure I'll have some more discussions with the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, but I guess the problem that I have with this is putting this into legislation and then passing it into law. I have checked recently the number of bills that have passed through this Assembly, where either it's a government bill or for that matter a private member's bill that has been passed, but they haven't been proclaimed. I know the member had a bill in the session last year on tax credits, if I remember, and the last I checked, that bill had not been proclaimed, along with numerous bills in regard to many, many issues. Personally, my own, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Pornography Act, is one of them.

4:30

Now we have a piece of legislation that wants to proclaim a weekend, the second weekend in April, which has just passed, each year, and it's going to be known as the Alberta get outdoors weekend. Admirable, obviously. What is the cost going to be? I know the member has said that there'll be no cost. Well, I know

that in the past when we've proclaimed a certain day in the Legislature or we've proclaimed a certain weekend, there's always a cost benefit because the government feels that they have to spend some time promoting that and getting people active.

I'm struggling, and I must say that. I think it's incumbent upon Albertans to take exercise upon themselves, without government having to proclaim that on the second weekend in April we're all going to go out and do jumping jacks or walk miles on end. The member for Calgary-Acadia is doing jumping jacks in his seat. I'm sure he feels that that's about as much exercise as he can get because of the hours that he puts in, obviously, as well as you do, Mr. Speaker, sitting in your chair. I'm struggling with whether we need a weekend for this.

How do we encourage Albertans to become more healthy? The Health budget is huge. They talk about one of their priorities – unfortunately, I don't have my budget in front of me – of making Albertans more physically fit, more mentally fit, getting them more active and more responsible for their own health.

I'm just struggling that we need to have a piece of legislation, and I'm struggling even more with the costs that will be affiliated with having the second weekend in April become law. I have this visualization that all of a sudden we're spending millions of dollars and we're going to have all sorts of things happening across the province, where we're all going to be starting to maybe do jumping jacks all at the same time, doing all sorts of different things.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be brief. I'm going to listen to debate. I think private members' bills, quite frankly, are a wonderful resource for private members in this Assembly to be able to bring forward what they think is important. I can tell you that from the constituents of Calgary-Fish Creek I haven't had one call, e-mail, or letter on this. Now, I'm sure I will after stating that. I know the Member for Calgary-Lougheed has come out and said that he has support.

My role is to represent the people that have elected me, and I will continue to do that. It has served me well, as they have served me in providing me with the information and the priorities that they think are important to them. I can tell you that over the last several months their priorities have been health and education. Number 3 bounces around a bit. Can I encompass this under health? I'm not so sure.

But I will listen, and I'm pleased to be able to speak on this particular piece of legislation.

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It also gives me great pleasure to rise today and continue the debate on Bill 203, the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act, brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed. Before I begin, I would just like to say that I was impressed to see over a hundred endorsement letters from Albertans of all different demographics who support Bill 203. This tells me that the objectives of Bill 203 are important to Albertans.

The purpose of this bill is about the promotion of the great outdoors. It's also about greater participation in leisure activities, specifically those that require physical exercise. But mostly, Mr. Speaker, the overarching goal of this bill is the encouragement of a healthier lifestyle for Albertans.

Our lifestyles are evolving over history. These changes have brought us many great benefits like increasing our capacity to produce the food that we need or by facilitating the creation of all kinds of technologies that ease the necessity to do physical work for a living. Due to this long economic and technological progress we now live in a world where material wealth abounds, and that is

certainly true here in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, we produce and consume more food than ever before. We now have access to a wide range of sophisticated services catering to virtually all our needs, and many of those services are available from the comfort of our homes.

Technology has also been a driving force for change, bringing us closer together in ways unthinkable even a generation ago. Nowadays we chat with people who live halfway around the world with little more than having to lift a few fingers. Even the workplace has gone through rapid transformations over the years. For a growing number of workers labour is synonymous with office, computer, or chair and increasingly less with physical work. For some workers even continuing to work is becoming obsolete as many tasks now can be accomplished online.

When we do leave our homes, getting from A to B usually involves a car or public transit. We walk very little, even to cover short distances. Mr. Speaker, we don't even let our kids walk to school anymore. For a rising number of families gone are the days when playing with the kids involved more than looking at a computer or TV screen. In other words, if our sedentary lifestyle has long been a force for good, it is now becoming a problem. The issue is that our sedentary way of life increasingly leads to an unhealthy lifestyle. After all, why walk to work when we can drive? Why practise a sport when it can be played on a computer? Why spend time outside when so much can be accomplished without having to leave our homes?

Mr. Speaker, this is the logic that the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed intends to overturn with this bill. It is a step in the right direction. It is a step we need to take because the current situation regarding certain things – chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, various types of cancer, osteoporosis, and stroke – is worsening in Alberta as well as in the rest of Canada. These chronic diseases and injuries, often associated with unhealthy lifestyles, are the leading causes of death, illness, and disability in Alberta, not to mention the problems that stem from rising obesity rates in all age groups.

Mr. Speaker, the current picture in Alberta and Canada regarding unhealthy lifestyles is, I'm sorry to say, not very pretty. Canada now ranks third highest globally for obesity and third lowest in walking, bicycling, or public transit use. Sport participation among Canadian teenagers aged 15 to 18 declined from 77 per cent to 59 per cent between 1992 and 2005. The number of Canadians who are overweight or obese has steadily increased over the last 25 years. In fact, today nearly 25 per cent of adult Canadians, a total of 5.5 million people aged 18 or older, are obese. In addition, 36.1 per cent, or 8.6 million, are overweight, bringing the total number of adult Canadians who are overweight or obese to over 59 per cent. Of even greater concern, 18 per cent of Canadian children and adolescents aged two to 17 are overweight, and 8 per cent are obese.

These diseases and conditions are responsible for a large cost burden that is placed on our health care system. The estimated total cost in Canada of illness, disability, and death attributable to chronic diseases amounts to over \$80 billion annually. Physical inactivity alone costs the Canadian health care system at least \$2.1 billion annually in direct health care costs and an estimated annual economic burden of \$5.3 billion. Mr. Speaker, despite having some of the best parks and recreational facilities in the country, Alberta does not fare better than any other province or Canada as a whole. The 2009 Alberta survey on physical activity shows that only 58.5 per cent of adult Albertans are physically active enough to experience health benefits. In other words, fewer than 6 in 10 Albertans are physically active enough to sustain a healthy life-

style. This is clearly insufficient. Not surprisingly, these statistics vary considerably between age, education, and income groups.

According to the same survey the lower the education and income levels are, the lower the intention to take part in regular physical activity. Yet, interestingly, Mr. Speaker, Albertans who have heard of health campaigns and resources like Participaction were more likely to be sufficiently physically active as compared to Albertans who had not heard of them. There is reason to believe that a concerted effort in promoting physical activity, perhaps one sponsored by the Alberta government, may reverse the situation.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, after a hard day's work one can be tempted to lie back and relax. These bad habits over time will likely have unwanted repercussions. Something should change, and maybe change will occur upon the implementation of a catalyst like the hon. member's Bill 203. Now, there are those who will argue that choosing a healthy lifestyle is a private matter and nothing else. There is definitely some truth to this, but that's not enough. As government we are responsible for the whole of society, and we must always look at the big picture. Therefore, we must find ways to encourage people to be physically active, perhaps by experiencing the great outdoors, as proposed in this bill.

This is nothing new. Our forebears did so on a regular basis. However, this time around Albertans will not be doing it in search of prosperity. They would do it to rediscover the joys and benefits of a healthy lifestyle, and that, Mr. Speaker, is the whole purpose behind the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act. This is why I am in full support of this bill, and I encourage all my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a brief bill, but it deserves proper debate. I'm sure the sponsoring member, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, would agree.

I kind of find this an interesting bill. I'm intrigued. I certainly like the spirit behind it. I had a question, which maybe the member can answer, and it may have come up in earlier debate, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure. The question concerns clause 1 of the bill, which proposes that the second weekend in April each year be known as Alberta get outdoors weekend. This may have come up, as I say, in earlier debate, but I'm wondering why the member chose the second weekend in April. I'm sure there was a good reason for it.

I'm not sure I'd have chosen that weekend because, well, this last weekend in April wasn't such a great weekend to be outdoors. It seems to me it's a little bit of a roll of the dice. In fact, I'd have to say that as virtually a lifelong Albertan and a lifelong Canadian April is one of my least favourite months of the year to be outside because it's kind of in between.

I like the winter. I ski, and I skate and, you know, do that kind of thing. I like the summer. I even like the later spring, brief as it usually is in Alberta. But in those transition periods – March, April, November – you can't really do summer activities or winter activities. That's my personal view, but I'm wondering why the bill proposes that the second weekend of April be known as Alberta get outdoors weekend. You know, I can imagine taking my kids out camping on the second weekend of April and having not a very nice time as the snow piles up on the tent and the car gets stuck and all that. Maybe I'm just being a wuss there; I don't know.

I like the preamble, and I don't see how very many people could take issue with it. I suppose that with the third paragraph of the preamble some people might want to question the government of Alberta's commitment to the things that are claimed in there, but, you know, in the spirit of this piece of legislation I think we should give the government the benefit of the doubt.

I did listen to some of the other comments in debate from this side of the House, and the bill does lack any real meat to it. There's no way of implementing it. There's no money although, I guess, private members' bills aren't supposed to have money attached to them. But there's no organization connected to it. It feels like it's missing any way to get implemented, Mr. Speaker.

It has nice intentions, but it doesn't go any farther than that. As I've heard some people say, we all have nice intentions when it comes to getting fit and getting a little more exercise and watching our diet and all of that kind of thing, but nice intentions haven't gotten us very far on that account. I would be interested to hear the member's comments on how he imagines or foresees this Alberta get outdoors weekend being implemented. Does he imagine an Alberta get outdoors weekend organization or something like that that would stir the pot? Maybe sponsorships could come in or I don't know what.

I guess my comments boil down to a handful, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't disagree with the intentions of this bill at all. In fact, I like the intentions wholeheartedly. I had, you know, the question about: why the second weekend of April? I wish the bill had more substance to it, more of the mechanics required to actually implement the bill. I could go on at length and talk about my personal experience in the great outdoors, some happy ones and some less than happy ones, but I will spare the members that punishment.

I look forward to other debate. Thanks very much.

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

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I was just reading over this bill over the weekend, and I thought it was interesting. I really do enjoy hearing about some of the physical exploits of the Member for Calgary-Lougheed in a former life, when he was climbing Mount Everest. Twice. At the same time. No, I'm just joking. [interjection] To the bill. That's right. Obviously, it is an extremely impressive accomplishment that he was able to do that once let alone twice.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** With the Sherpas.

**Mr. Anderson:** With the Sherpas. That's right.

I actually saw a video on that new Netflix thing. It was a documentary on Everest. It was just wild. I mean, they went and followed this team up, and some people lost their life. Some people were losing hands and feet. It was one heck of a dangerous thing to do. So I do respect this member for what he's done in that regard. He's represented our province very well in that regard. He's always been very committed to physical activity and to making sure that our kids and all of us are very aware of the need for physical exercise and so forth.

I think Albertans, frankly, are known for that and are known for getting out into the outdoors. I saw a stat that I think the minister of tourism was sharing a little while ago, during the Olympics, when she mentioned that Alberta athletes accounted for a huge percentage of the amount of athletes in Vancouver. I think it was close to half if I remember right.

**An Hon. Member:** Over half.

4:50

**Mr. Anderson:** Over half. That's right. I mean, that's really quite something. If you think that we only have about 10 per cent of the population or thereabouts, to have 50 per cent of the athletes is remarkable.

Also, we have a great facility going up by Canada Olympic Park. That's only going to strengthen those numbers. So we have a lot to be proud of in Alberta. We have some fantastic facilities. We have the most beautiful mountain parks, frankly, in the world, certainly the most accessible of beautiful national parks in the world. People come from all over the world, and it's right in our backyard. Just to think that we can go out our door, and in 15, 20 minutes – well, with the new ring road half an hour and you're from Airdrie into the Kananaskis. It's a good deal. We sometimes forget how lucky we are.

I really do like the intent of this bill. I do have to say that I question somewhat the reason we would want to enshrine something like this in a piece of legislation. I don't quite see the need for that. I think that there are other ways to do that. I've got to say that I guess I'm slightly ambivalent with regard to this. I don't mind it because I like the idea, but at the same time we have so many – I think we're just making the Speaker's life far more complicated because he has to get up and recite all of those: every week, every month, all of those different days that we have to recognize. To add one more to that every April . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Naked gardening day.

**Mr. Anderson:** Exactly. Who knows?

I just think there are so many of them now that it's getting lost in the shuffle. Really, it's almost inherently meaningless because we have so many of these days that we recognize stuff. It almost becomes meaningless, which is unfortunate because it is important to get outdoors, and we don't want to undercut that.

Again, I think I'm kind of ambivalent to it. I would say, though, that I would like to on behalf of the constituency of Airdrie-Chestermere urge my constituents, I guess you could say, to certainly get outdoors and enjoy these incredible landscapes and viewpoints and recreational facilities that we have in our backyard. I know that Anita and myself and the boys got an RV the year before last. We get to the mountains six or seven times a year now. It's just kind of a thing we do almost every weekend during July and August. We'll even just sneak out there for a day on a Wednesday or a Thursday if we have an open evening sometime, just go have a campfire. It's just an amazing place to grow up and to live and to raise kids because it teaches them.

People have this conception of Albertans as not being good environmental stewards or, you know, not interested in their environment. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are very much people that respect the outdoors. We have more national parks and provincial parks together than any province or place in the country, and we really do value our environment and the great outdoors that we have.

I know I only have about another minute, I believe, before the hon. member can wrap up, so I'll sit down in about 30 seconds, once that comes, and give the floor to him. I just wanted to say that I think that although the idea behind the bill is good and it's good to even have this discussion, maybe this bill, if anything, just gives us an opportunity to explain and to speak to the thousands and thousands of people watching this Assembly right now, riveted by this discussion.

**Mr. Mason:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Anderson:** People like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and people like myself and the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek are completely committed to getting outdoors and making sure that Albertans know that.

With that, there's about five minutes to go. That's it, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other members wish to speak?

If none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed to close debate.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to sincerely thank every single member from every corner of the House who has joined in the debate today.

To answer directly, to the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek: I appreciate your efforts in the past, present, and future on this and other lines. Rest assured that this is proclaimed upon Royal Assent. It wouldn't wait for a minister's signature. So that should answer that question. The cost of promotion. I would hope it would be as close to free as possible, that we would promote it once, and then it would be in the hands of, as the good minister suggested, the municipalities, recreation and sports clubs, seniors' councils, health organizations, and other important groups who wrote in to me already and said: we're going to promote it in this way. Honestly, this is just a kick-start.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview asked: why the second weekend of April? It's a very specific answer to that. It's kind of like the Banff people. They said: "What are we going to do? It's not summer. It's not winter. It's not high season. It's not ski season. What could we possibly do in the first weekend of November?" Now they have the finest film and book festival in the world, and that place is just flowing. It's one of those shoulder seasons. Sir, it is indeed a weekend, not a weekday, because as you know in this province a Friday night, a Saturday, a Saturday night, and a Sunday can have very different weather. I noticed a couple of weekends ago, when this was proposed for, that we had snow on Friday and that it was glorious and 13 on Sunday. A person could choose: am I going to do winter events because ski resorts are open, or is the golf course open? By the way, normal highs for this time of year are actually in the teens. Hopefully, that answers that question as well.

We know this is about improving the lives of Albertans and spending time outside. It doesn't necessarily have to be exercising; it can just be appreciating the beauty of our environment.

You know, I've got a big long speech, but I just want to address the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere. You were asking about the legislation. This is not the final answer – I know that – in terms of helping people to be more active. It's a part of the solution; it's not the end answer. Hopefully, this is just the beginning, and family groups and communities take it from here, and we enjoy our pristine natural environment with internal tourism.

Additionally to that, we'll be at the front in Canada. We'll be at the front of the pack with this. We have Arts Days weekend. We have Family Day. They're very successful. But we don't have anything like this and, certainly, not at this time of the year.

With the time remaining, sir, I trust that we might be able to move this into Committee of the Whole if we call the question. I move to end debate until next time, so I'll just call for the question on second reading of 203 at this point in time, please.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a second time]

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, given the hour I would like to seek unanimous consent for the Assembly to call it 5 o'clock and allow us to move into consideration of private members' motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Motions Other than Government Motions

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

### Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009

504. Mr. Anderson moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to introduce legislation to repeal the amendments made to legislation by the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, to ensure that proposed transmission line projects are subject to an objective needs assessment hearing by the Alberta Utilities Commission, are openly and transparently tendered, and that affected landowners are compensated fairly, with recourse to the courts.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak to Motion 504, which urges the government to repeal the amendments made to legislation by the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, commonly known as Bill 50.

Mr. Speaker, the reliable generation and transmission of electricity across our province is obviously critical to our future growth and prosperity. However, supporting growth does not necessitate trampling on the property rights of landowners, gouging ratepayers on their electricity bills, and building unnecessary, ugly skyscraper-sized power lines across our pristine Alberta landscape when there are much better and less intrusive alternatives.

Let us be very clear about what Bill 50 did in 2009. Bill 50 authorized the building of roughly \$16 billion of new transmission line projects across our province. It deemed these projects critical transmission infrastructure, thereby removing the need for an objective, open, and transparent needs assessment hearing before the Alberta Utilities Commission. Why is this relevant? Simply put, in virtually every industrialized nation where ratepayers are required to pay directly for transmission on their electricity bills, there is, first, the requirement of an objective arm's-length needs assessment review to determine if the new transmission is needed, and if so, how much? This is or, more appropriately, was the case in Alberta up until the passage of Bill 50.

5:00

I have heard the current and former Energy ministers as well as the Premier repeatedly justify this bypassing of an independent needs assessment process by saying that the needs assessment process had already taken place and was therefore no longer needed. Mr. Speaker, this is not true. Why on earth would you pass a bill to avoid having to go through the needs assessment process if you had already legitimately gone through the needs assessment process? This argument insults the intelligence of Albertans. It is a falsehood, plain and simple.

I've also heard the current Energy minister and the Premier talk about the need for this new transmission so that the lights can be kept on in Calgary. Again, this is utter nonsense. Here's the math. Peak power usage for the city of Calgary is 1,600 megawatts. Obviously, Calgary needs to access more than 1,600 megawatts in order to safely keep the lights on at all times. So how much power does Calgary have access to? Well, current transmission capacity between coal-fired plants in central Alberta and Calgary is roughly 2,000 megawatts. That in itself is enough to power Calgary, with room for growth, but that's not all the power Calgary has access to.

Enmax has already built the Calgary Energy Centre by Balzac as well as the newly built plant in Crossfield. They will also be bringing an additional 1,000 megawatts of natural gas fired electricity online, onto the grid by, at the very latest, 2015, including a new 800-megawatt generator in my constituency by Shepard.

Added up, Calgary, with a peak demand of 1,600 megawatts, has access to over 2,400 megawatts of power today and will have access to roughly 3,400 megawatts by 2015, more than double what is currently required to keep the lights on. I'm sure Calgary intends to grow a lot by 2015, but does it intend to double in size by then? Obviously not.

Now, the Energy minister during the budget debate claimed that the Shepard project was on hold, as far as he knew. He said that he didn't know if it had the go-ahead or the necessary approvals. Well, that's interesting. I have in my hand right here the approval for the go-ahead on this project by the AUC and this one from the government. Guess whose signature is on it? Oh, my; it's the current Energy minister's signature. Perhaps he should have known about this given the import to this entire Bill 50 debate. The fact is that the equipment and materials for the project have been brought in next door to the site, awaiting only some final paperwork from the city of Calgary to go ahead; again, 800 additional megawatts of electricity being built right now.

The lights will stay on in Calgary without the new megasize transmission lines, period. The arguments put forward by the Energy minister and the Premier are false and are meant to generate fear amongst the public that these new, expensive megalines are needed or else. It's a shameful display by this minister to continue this line of spin on Calgarians, including those of his very own constituents in Calgary-West.

This is where things get really murky. After the passage of Bill 50 these multibillion-dollar transmission contracts were handed to AltaLink and ATCO, two consistently large donors and sponsors of the PC Party as per the Elections Alberta website, without any kind of open bidding process and a guaranteed 9 per cent rate of return on lines that we the ratepayers of Alberta will be paying for on our bills. What a sweetheart deal for AltaLink and ATCO.

It gets worse. In fact, one of AltaLink's senior VPs, literally within weeks of Bill 50 passing, was appointed to be VP of the PC Party. Now, to be clear, I'm not alleging any wrongdoing on the part of either AltaLink or ATCO or the VP I just referred to. I simply don't know. This government's secrecy, as we've seen today, is legendary. However, given these indisputable relationships I think my questions and concerns in this regard are legitimate ones. If this government was concerned about the well-being of Alberta ratepayers, why would they simply hand these massive contracts to these companies without competitive bidding? How can we all be sure we aren't getting gouged as ratepayers?

This brings me to another major problem with this bill. As is now general knowledge, the price of natural gas electricity generation plants has dropped dramatically over the past several years due to new technologies and natural gas plays that will almost certainly result in low natural gas prices for the foreseeable future. As has been pointed out by several electricity producers, it is now entirely possible that locally generated electricity from natural gas power plants could reduce or eliminate the need for a large amount of these new and grossly expensive transmission lines carrying coal-generated electricity from central Alberta.

Now, I'm not an expert on whether the need for redundancy and other factors still make the proposed transmission lines necessary. However, neither is the brain trust around the former and current cabinet table. This is precisely why provincial politicians shouldn't be making such decisions and why an impartial needs assessment hearing should be completed before potentially spending billions of dollars on needless transmission lines that Albertans are going to pay for as ratepayers.

Furthermore, it begs the question: could it be that the needs assessment process was intentionally skipped precisely because this government knew that the new transmission lines might not

pass muster under current market conditions? Were they worried that there would be no juicy transmission contracts to pass out at the end of the day? You really have to wonder. If not, why not allow the independent process to take its course?

That leads to yet another uncomfortable question. Why would a government that is willing to burn \$2 billion on the altar of carbon capture and storage for the purpose of decreasing Alberta's emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> so willingly forge ahead with a transmission line built between Edmonton and Calgary that will essentially enshrine CO<sub>2</sub> intensive coal-generated electricity producers for a generation instead of promoting the local generation of electricity from natural gas, which is significantly less CO<sub>2</sub> intensive than coal? Is the government favouring coal-generated electricity producers over others? If so, why? It doesn't make sense. If the stated goal of this government is to decrease its so-called carbon footprint, what are, then, the motives of this government, and who is lobbying them? Who is sponsoring their events? Who is donating to their campaigns? I would ask our enterprising media to take a deeper look, especially at the Alberta elections donor page. It just doesn't otherwise add up.

Before Bill 50 was passed, several experts and stakeholders came out with reports and letters pleading with the government to not pass Bill 50. One of these was from IPCCAA, which represents industrial users consuming roughly 35 per cent of electricity in the province. They have by far the most to lose if the lights, in fact, do go out. What did they say? They said that Bill 50 will triple their energy costs and force many of their businesses to move.

The University of Calgary School of Public Policy also came out with a report, as did the government's very own Utilities Consumer Advocate. Each of these reports and many others clearly identified the many problems with Bill 50. They said that the size of the bill was overly excessive. They pointed out the lack of transparency and the lack of competitive bidding. They decried the government's unprecedented decision to skip the needs assessment process. Yet the government ignored it all. It was simply too inconvenient a truth. Too many promises had been made to those with deep political connections.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 50 is a reckless, job-killing piece of legislation with the odour of corruption that Albertans do not deserve. I implore every free-thinking member of this House, particularly those MLAs in the government, to take off the partisan blinders they are now wearing, re-examine this bill, do your research, and find the courage to stand up and help pass this motion to repeal Bill 50. Albertans across this province are demanding that we as their representatives do this. It is time to repeal this bill, to do the right thing, to represent those who voted for us at that ballot box and not some corporate or special interests or friends of PC Party.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Liepert:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll get up and make a few comments today. I won't try to even come close to rebutting all of the falsehoods that are commonplace in this particular member's constant criticism of Bill 50. What I will do is try to set the record straight on Bill 50 and strongly encourage this House to defeat this ill-thought-out motion.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 50 is really quite simple. It ensures the timely approval of critical transmission projects that we need to support our economy and keep the lights on. We said that we needed to get going and start the process to build four projects, subject to extensive consultation and full public hearings, to determine the siting of the lines, cost allocations, and other issues that may come before the Alberta Utilities Commission.

## 5:10

The Alberta Utilities Commission, or the AUC, is an independent, quasi-judicial body that will have the final say after a fair, open, and transparent process to consider transmission routes. In fact, a public hearing on the application for the heartland project is currently under way, and applications to the commission have been made for the two north-south lines.

Nothing about this process has changed or circumvents Albertans' property rights. Bill 50 also in no way changed access to compensation for landowners that will have this infrastructure located on their land. In fact, it has significantly improved the landowner compensation rights, and I was surprised to hear that the member didn't recognize that in his opening remarks. Compensation in this province is very fair and typically includes easement acquisition, payments for the transmission line right-of-way, annual structure payments, and supplementary compensation.

Protection of landowner rights and fair compensation are not the only issues that have been misinterpreted in the debate on Bill 50. The suggestion that the four projects covered by Bill 50 will cost \$16 billion is incorrect and, frankly, just part of the fearmongering that has gone on. The total cost of the four projects covered by Bill 50 is in the range of \$5 billion. The \$16 billion is the total long-term projection of what the system needs in upgrades over the next 20 years, Mr. Speaker. No one's bill is going to double or triple as a result of the transmission build.

It's also false that private companies are proposing new transmission lines. They don't and by law cannot. As a fully regulated service transmission companies are directed to build lines by the Independent System Operator, based on their geographic service area. All costs are subject to scrutiny and approval by the Utilities Commission.

Mr. Speaker, smearing corporate and personal reputations for personal gain is wrong. I would say that smearing reputations of corporations that are also contributors to this member's party is also wrong. But that's what's happening here.

I also want to clarify this idea that the need for these four projects has not been assessed objectively. All of the planning to identify the need for these four projects was completed by the Alberta Electric System Operator, or AESO. AESO is an independent agency with the mandate, resources, technical expertise, and the skills to identify projects that are required, none of which, I believe, the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere can claim. AESO is required to operate in the public interest and in accordance with international reliability criteria. Aging transmission infrastructure is a challenge across North America, leading to a declining system reliability. Alberta has been one of the fastest-growing jurisdictions in North America, and our transmission system has been working at or near its limits for extended periods of time, increasing the risk of widespread power outages and unreliable service. The level of congestion on Alberta's electric grid is expected to increase until additional transmission is built.

Looking ahead, we're going to need to connect 11,500 megawatts of new generation to the grid over the next 20 years because of our growing economy. These forecasts are done by AESO, drawing on the expertise of the Energy Resources Conservation Board, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Conference Board of Canada, and the National Energy Board. In planning for the four Bill 50 projects, AESO carried out hundreds of consultations and meetings to obtain input from Albertans. We heard from organizations such as the Alberta Chamber of Commerce, representing some 22,000 businesses, recommending action to ensure timely regulatory approvals and reinforcement of the power grid. We heard from companies that want to develop wind resources

in southern Alberta and have investment plans stalled as a result of a lack of transmission infrastructure. Companies with projects throughout rural southern Alberta are ready to invest.

Power generation from all sources across the province – gas, coal, wind, biomass, and cogeneration – require the support of a robust transmission system. Ultimately, the decision to invest in any type of generation lies in the hands of independent investors. They need to be confident that sufficient transmission is in place to deliver their product before investing the billions of dollars that are required. Generation sources will not be developed without a robust, efficient, and uncongested transmission system. Transmission, critical to encouraging new generation, must be able to move the most competitively priced electricity to market. Just last week we were reminded of this by an analyst with FirstEnergy, who said that market participants and regulators must get new generation and transmission capacity added to the grid sooner than later to avoid future shortages and price spikes. That's exactly what we're doing with Bill 50.

Bill 50 was brought before this House and underwent the debate process just like every other piece of legislation that's introduced. It's interesting to note that the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere is proposing this motion now to reverse Bill 50. All members of the House had the opportunity to express their opinions during debate on Bill 50, but this member didn't speak on the bill, the amendments, or register a position during any of the four votes.

Today, when we have projects before the Alberta Utilities Commission, he wants to go back to the drawing board. So let's be clear what this means. This member wants to rip up contracts, Mr. Speaker, with companies that have spent tens of millions of dollars on these projects. Ironical that it's coming from this member, ripping up contracts. He wants to create uncertainty for the hundreds of companies involved and the approximately \$5 billion of annual transactions in the electricity business. This would be bad news for an Alberta economy that is just emerging from a long economic winter caused by a global recession.

The good news in Alberta today, Mr. Speaker, is that our economy is growing again, and it would be incredibly short sighted to delay the most urgently needed transmission projects in this province, dismissing the need for transmission. Passing this motion would be irresponsible. It would have negative consequences for Alberta. Strengthening the power grid is necessary to prepare Alberta for sustained growth in all sectors of our economy. The government of Alberta has the responsibility to ensure that Alberta has a safe, reliable, and efficient electricity system.

In summary, I want to emphasize that Bill 50 is a responsible piece of legislation that will help provide a reliable supply of electricity for Albertans for decades. Investment in transmission today will have long-term benefits for all Albertans. Now is not the time to turn our back on economic growth. As a result, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all members to defeat this short-sighted motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. Unlike the accusations tossed across at my hon. colleague from Airdrie-Chestermere, the Liberal position has been clear from the very beginning, that this piece of legislation is a major giveaway to power companies. We've made that point, but I'll re-emphasize that point.

Historically it goes back to Murray Smith. He's the one who first suggested that Alberta taxpayers alone, as opposed to the 50-50 split between transmission owners and the public, through the



deregulation of electricity should be unilaterally on the hook for billions of dollars. Thanks to Mr. Put On a Sweater, Murray Smith, Albertans lost approximately \$8 billion worth of utilities that, up until Mr. Smith went down to Washington, we owned.

Mr. Smith's vision caused a number of utility companies to not participate in the bid because for years preceding deregulation they had no sense of what type of profit they could expect from the transmission lines. We had two bids, and nobody was particularly interested until the prices were so ridiculously low that groups like AltaLink and ATCO, to their stockholders' wellbeing, saw an opportunity to get into the game in a much larger case.

Whether the hon. Energy minister is talking about the \$5 billion that will be forced to be spent by taxpayers for a questionable project at this time or whether he's talking about the \$16 billion that cumulatively will be spent again by taxpayers while industry and shareholders of industry record the profits remains to be seen.

Since Bill 50 was first brought forward in 2009, our reality in terms of our mineral resources has changed tremendously. Prior to 2009 we were concerned about the possibility of natural gas being depleted, and we weren't aware of all the shale gas that has been discovered since. What has happened, basically, going back in history, is that coal-fired generators and the companies owning those coal-fired generators have been holding Alberta hostage, and the government has been part of that hostage-taking.

5:20

The idea that when natural gas is a cleaner fuel, provides a more consistent energy, we should go up north and have lines all the way down south to Calgary to carry the most atmospheric problem causing, CO<sub>2</sub> emission producing type of electricity brought down and energy lost along the way makes no sense economically. The government has failed to effectively argue the case that these transmission lines to transmit polluting energy from the north are actually necessary.

[The Speaker in the chair]

At the first set of hearings they had, they enlisted spies to interrupt the process. Now instead of spies they have intimidation tactics in terms of a whole series of briefcase-carrying lawyers with billable hours charging rather large fees to both the government and industry, backed by armed sheriffs. If you're not intimidated by the suits, you're certainly potentially intimidated by the sheriffs. Why are the sheriffs there? Because an 80-year-old grandmother started poking her finger into the chest of one of the individuals who was involved in the spy circumstance and the hiding of the information.

Now we have our sheriffs, who we need to be patrolling the highways or serving in the court system, where their protection is required, babysitting government officials. What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that in this babysitting process people have either given up because they don't believe the government is going to listen to what they have to say, or they're intimidated. All kinds of chairs have been set up at these hearings, and very few people have been attending. They know it's a waste of time. They don't believe that their voices will be heard.

Now, the government has changed the names of the various organizations providing the approvals. We had the Energy and Utilities Board, and now we have the Alberta Utilities Commission. We have the AESO, which the Minister of Energy is suggesting is a totally independent body operating strictly in terms of the public interest. Well, how it's in the public interest to initially have lost the \$8 billion that deregulation caused or the \$5 billion that the government is gifting to transmission companies – it's not the transmission companies that are at fault for seeing a

business opportunity; it's the government's fault for subsidizing these organizations on the backs of the taxpayers.

The Energy minister talked about the need to get wind power online. Well, for 10 years this government put caps on wind power and basically killed investment in wind power or alternative sources of energy for a lengthy time period. You don't need to have transmission lines running from Wabamun to bring energy from southern Alberta online. If you're talking about effective transmission lines, get it right. Bring the wind power from the south to provide extra energy when at some coal-fired generator's whim they decide to up the price of electricity by pulling one of their power units off. In the case recently they pulled two coal-fired generators off, and now we're taking expensive energy from B.C.

The answer is simple. Given the low price and the large availability of natural gas and shale gas, when those two commodities start to dwindle, the ability to gasify coal as opposed to pumping it up the chimney would make tremendous sense both from an environmental standpoint and an economic standpoint. There is absolutely no sense in terms of bringing coal-fired, emission-spouting electricity from up north all the way down south. It does not make sense.

Mr. Speaker, I am not necessarily in favour of taking Bill 50 and just tearing it up completely. There is the possibility that had the government allowed a number of amendments that were put forward at the time to be considered, then we could work with it.

Another problem, Mr. Speaker, is the historic problem. We have an individual here who I give tremendous credit to, the MLA for Foothills-Rocky View, who came up with the importance of the land-use framework. My sincere wish is that the individual had the opportunity to be the sustainable resources minister long enough to actually have the land-use framework come into effect. If the land-use framework had set the rules for where transmission lines would be placed in line with all the other considerations of the land-use framework instead of shoving Bill 50 through and eventually getting to the land-use framework, a lot of this argument would not be occurring as it is today.

I thank the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere for trying to erase some earlier mistakes. Whether that member saw the light now . . . [Mr. Chase's speaking time expired]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

We have a list of six speakers in this order: the hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, then the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

St. Albert.

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and join debate on Motion 504, which urges the government to repeal the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009. I would like to begin by thanking the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere for giving us this opportunity to set the record straight about Bill 50 and what it means for Alberta property owners.

The truth is that this legislation reflects the long-term vision of our hon. Premier by ensuring that future generations of Albertans have access to reliable electricity transmission infrastructure. The Alberta Electric System Operator, or AESO, has determined through extensive study and planning that if we do not upgrade our existing transmission infrastructure, we will not be able to meet our province's electricity demands in the future.

Just a comment about AESO, Mr. Speaker. AESO is composed of a battery of world-class experts in the field of electricity transmission. They have the expertise to evaluate our present capacity and to project the needs of Albertans into the future based on sound economic data.

To be clear, this is not an issue of generation but, rather, our ability to ensure that the power that is generated is delivered to Albertans' homes and businesses when it is needed. In fact, due to inefficiencies in our aging transmission system \$220 million worth of electricity was lost in the form of heat from transmission lines in 2008 alone. This is enough electricity to power more than 350,000 homes for a year. As a result of these inefficiencies, more electricity must be generated, resulting in additional cost to consumers and an additional environmental impact.

In order to mitigate line losses and ensure reliable access to power in the future, the Alberta Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, was passed to allow the government of Alberta to authorize the transmission system upgrades that have been identified as critical by AESO.

As the government we are responsible for keeping the lights on in Alberta, just as we are responsible for making sure that other critical public infrastructure is put in place such as roads, hospitals, and schools. This responsibility does not nor has it ever given government the ability to violate the property rights of Albertans.

5:30

Mr. Speaker, Bill 50 does not change this province's commitment to fair and open public hearings when it comes to determining the location of transmission infrastructure and does not circumvent Alberta property owners' rights to fair compensation for having this infrastructure located on their land. In fact, the Alberta Utilities Commission, an independent and impartial agency, will continue to determine where transmission infrastructure is located and will continue to listen to landowners' concerns.

In terms of compensation the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, made no changes to the ways in which landowners are compensated for the use of their properties. Should landowners not be able to come to mutually agreeable terms with the utility company, the Surface Rights Board will set the price as has always been the case. Compensation typically includes the acquisition of an easement, payments for the transmission line right-of-way, annual structure payments, and supplementary compensation. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, all of the protection mechanisms that were in place before this legislation was passed remain in place today.

The purpose of the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, is simply to ensure that critical electricity transmission infrastructure, that is necessary to keep the lights on in Alberta, is built in a timely manner. It provides for an addition in our transmission capacity that will accommodate long-term growth in our province while minimizing the land-use impacts.

I've heard many on the other side of this House argue that lower capacity transmission lines would be a better option as they also may have the ability to accommodate forecasted electricity demands. However, Mr. Speaker, should the forecasts change over time, this would force us into a situation where we have to continually build additional transmission infrastructure in order to meet the demand. This would result in even greater land impacts than the high-capacity 500-kV lines proposed now and potentially greater costs as well. The Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, ensures that we will only need to build these new transmission lines once and that they will accommodate growth in Alberta for the next 40 years. In other words, while we don't need the majority of this new transmission capacity right now, we will certainly grow into it in the near future.

Some critics would have us believe that Bill 50 is nothing more than a way for government to circumvent landowner rights in Alberta in order to hand out large contracts to friends and supporters. A closer look at the legislation reveals that this couldn't be further from the truth. After all, Bill 50 does not impact property

rights; it simply speeds up the process for building critical transmission infrastructure. Alberta landowners retain the rights they have always had.

Mr. Speaker, this government has shown remarkable vision in its long-term electricity transmission plan and, as a result, will ensure that our children and grandchildren are well prepared to handle future growth in Alberta. Therefore, I do not believe that a repeal of the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, is in the best interests of Albertans. As such, I cannot support this motion, and I urge all of my hon. colleagues to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs and the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm going to rise to support Motion 504. When I heard the hon. Minister of Energy speak, I didn't hear him addressing the key points in the motion, and I want to do that for a moment. The first change that this motion anticipates or suggests is to ensure that the transmission line projects are subject to an objective needs assessment hearing by the Alberta Utilities Commission.

Now, this is one of the things that Bill 50 removed. It removed some important aspects that existed relative to the approval of new power projects, including transmission infrastructure. First of all, it removed the requirement that these projects be in the public interest. That's very important.

Secondly, it removed the requirement that there be a public hearing for this designated infrastructure, which allows other people – it might be a competing company; it might be a consumers group or a ratepayers association or just an interested citizen – to intervene and challenge the need for the project and challenge the cost estimates that are being used in order to justify it.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the way the infrastructure is built is that the money is borrowed, and then the repayment of that borrowed money is added to all of our power bills. So we have a direct interest in these projects. All citizens do. Whether it's large industry or just a homeowner, whether it's a municipality or a private-sector company, all of us will have to pay for this infrastructure, so we have an interest in ensuring that it's, first of all, necessary, in the public interest, and that it is built in the most cost-effective way possible.

Bill 50 removed all of those checks and balances and said that the cabinet itself, the government itself, could designate projects, which were exempt from this regulatory process altogether. It begs the question, Mr. Speaker: why did they feel that it was necessary to do that? If, as the minister is trying to tell the Assembly, these projects are in the public interest and they're absolutely necessary for growth, to get our economy back on track and so on, then why have they exempted the project from scrutiny? I would submit to you that it is because these projects are not in the public interest; they're not being built at the lowest necessary cost. I believe that these projects are designed to allow private power companies to build large-scale generating projects almost anywhere in the province, whether it be coal-fired or nuclear-powered generation, in order to sell their electricity for a profit, whether in the province or outside the province.

Now, the government is taking great pains to deny that these lines are designed for the export of power on a profit basis outside the province and, particularly, denied that American markets are involved. I don't believe them, and I don't think most Albertans believe them.

I used to get a charge out of former – and that's not intended as a pun. Sorry. But I used to sometimes enjoy former Premier Ralph

Klein because, you know, at the oddest moments he would just blurt out the truth. One day we were in the House debating a billion-dollar power line to the United States that was proposed at that time, and he talked about how we could build lots of coal-fired plants and sell the power to the United States, that the United States needed the electricity, there was a big market for it, and that's what they were going to do. Well, the reaction, I think, surprised him because people didn't want to have a bunch of coal-fired power plants feeding the American market.

But here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. This entire infrastructure that's proposed is not just to simply upgrade existing capacity and to ensure that we have reliable electricity transmission; it is designed so that the electrical power industry can build surplus generation and sell it for a profit. Nothing wrong with that except that they should be paying for the lines. If they are using these transmission lines to get their power to some other market so that they can make money, then it is not in the interests of the consumers of Alberta, and if that's the case, then we shouldn't have to pay for it.

5:40

Now, the minister has said: well, it's not really \$16 billion; it's really \$5 billion. When I met with AESO, they said that the total package that's now being proposed is \$8 billion and another \$8 billion to come down the line. Even using \$5 billion, the total value of all of the transmission infrastructure in this province today is only \$2 billion. So if the minister says that we're going to add another \$5 billion, then that has a very large impact on the electricity bills of Albertans. That's why industrial associations, that are very sensitive about electricity prices, have expressed so much concern.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is rooted in the whole misguided electricity deregulation direction of this province. They have deregulated transmission. That means that you don't have to justify the transmission as being required for the public good. If you think you can make money by building a big generating system, you can, but then the transmission is not deregulated, and it's paid for by electricity consumers because of a policy change brought in originally by Murray Smith when he was the Energy minister.

This is what's fundamentally wrong with this entire approach. They are going to spend billions of dollars – and we can quibble about how many – to massively overbuild a transmission system in this province so that it can serve the interests of power companies who want to build generation to sell the power for a profit, yet we are being asked to pay for it. That's wrong, Mr. Speaker.

It's fine if you want to build these transmission towers and all of that and if you can justify that to the people who live near them and justify the environmental concerns. That's fine. Let the power companies pay for them. But don't ask us to pay for this and to have significant increases in our power bills in order to do so. That's just wrong. That's not a government that is acting in the interests of the citizens of the province. That is a government that is complicit with the power industry in gouging the people of this province to pay for for-profit transmission lines. That's the logic, in my view, of electricity deregulation.

We are the only party in this Legislature that has consistently opposed deregulation as a misguided attempt. I'm getting a look, I know, from the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity. But when we were in Vegreville for the big meeting, that the Premier didn't come to, we had Danielle Smith, the leader of Wildrose Alliance, and we had the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, from Calgary-Mountain View, and myself on the stage, and we had a little discussion about power deregulation. The other two leaders supported deregulation publicly – and that's on the public record – and we were consistent that deregulation is the source of the prob-

lem and is a serious error on the part of government, that has already cost Albertans billions and billions of dollars.

You just have to go back to the old balancing pool and the selling off of the different generating assets that took place in the beginning and the spikes in power rates that we all saw. It's a disastrous experiment, and it is now being compounded by a government that is willing to force us ratepayers to fund their friends in private industry. That is what's unacceptable about it.

I think that this motion is very, very appropriate because it would ensure, if the government followed the direction, that the transmission lines are subject to an objective . . . [Mr. Mason's speaking time expired]

**The Speaker:** Unfortunately, I can advise that we're now going to be moving on to the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's been a rather civil debate this afternoon, and I appreciate that while some of the members opposite may passionately speak in favour of this motion, obviously, many of us are opposed to this motion, and I ask that we continue this civility.

While I want to thank the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere for putting forth this motion, I have to disagree with a lot of things that he has to say. I likely will not use my full time here, but I just want to address a few points. His claim that the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, otherwise known as Bill 50 from a couple of years ago, needs to be repealed: I would have to disagree with that. I actually think that the construction of critical transmission infrastructure, or CTI, is important for a province's economic growth. When I was a parliamentary assistant for Energy, I learned very quickly that it isn't good enough that we have an electric system that is only up 99 per cent of the time. It has to be very, very razor close to 100 per cent of the time. I hear stories from people in developing countries of when the power actually goes off and the deleterious effects that that has on the particular economy.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, there's been a lot of misinformation about Bill 50. I want to take this time to just speak about two topics here. I want to clarify the scope of Bill 50, and secondly, I want to explain why the construction of lines is important for our province's economic future.

With respect to the scope of Bill 50 it's important to note that Bill 50 applies to only a limited number of projects, four in particular. The total cost of these projects is estimated to be \$3.3 billion. While there are other power line projects that are going to have to be completed in the near future, these projects are not designated as CTIs and, therefore, are not affected in any way or means whatsoever by the scope of Bill 50.

Furthermore, it is important to understand why large-scale construction of transmission infrastructure is necessary. Now, of course, transmission lines are often located on private property, so the creation of large-scale transmission infrastructure at one point in time is important to ensure that a patchwork of infrastructure is not being created.

Of course, a patchwork of transmission lines has a couple of disadvantages over a well-planned large-scale project. From an efficiency standpoint large projects cost less because of the economies of scale, meaning that large projects are more efficient than small ones due to the high fixed costs associated with the construction of electrical transmission infrastructure. From a property rights perspective, Mr. Speaker, a patchwork of transmission infrastructure projects means that a haphazard collection would make up our electrical transmission system, hardly something that

we look to as ideal. Ultimately, this would take up more property space than a small number of large-scale projects.

Mr. Speaker, I think that these considerations are important ones to consider before we dismiss Bill 50 simply because of the cost associated with it or because of ideological or political lines.

In addition to discussing the scope of Bill 50, I also want to briefly explain the importance of ensuring that the critical transmission infrastructure is, in fact, built. Of course, AESO, the independent body that determines transmission need, makes careful projections about future demand for electricity in Alberta, also known as load forecasting. I also want to mention that we're not just planning for the electricity needs of today. We're also not necessarily planning for the population needs of tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, because, as we know, electricity use can increase beyond population growth over time.

Before Bill 50 was passed, this body completed an extensive report which included without limitation a detailed and robust load forecast for this province. The projected increase in demand for power in Alberta as determined by the experts at AESO in their report is close to 3.1 per cent over the next two decades, which requires a rather staggering 11,500 megawatts of additional generation. Of course, a modern transmission system is needed to get power from the generating stations to homes, to businesses, to industry across this province without extensive line loss. Although some opponents of Bill 50 have argued that transmission lines are not needed because the demand for electricity can be satisfied with natural gas power plants, with respect I find this view rather short sighted, and I'll address this briefly as well.

One, although the price of natural gas is low now – and the last time I checked, it was just a little below \$4 – there's no guarantee that natural gas prices will continue to be low in the future. In fact, any first-year statistics class will tell you that the further you go into the future, the higher your margin of error. I imagine that if you go back to five, 10 years ago, when you had much higher natural gas prices, if you had told them that the shale gas plays would have such an impact and you'd be below four bucks today, they may have laughed at you. Well, we may laugh at projections today five, 10 years in the future, so we need to make that appropriate preparation. While local natural gas generation plants are popular now due to low prices, we have to be cognizant of the fact that increases in natural gas prices would significantly alter the feasibility of natural gas generation, especially since some natural gas plants are only used during times of high demand.

I also want to address that the feasibility of local natural gas plants, to me, is put in doubt. Who's one of their biggest proponents? Mr. Speaker, it's Enmax. Who would benefit most from them? The Crown-operated utility owned by the city of Calgary, that has the highest local access fees in the province. Of course, now, that's another debate, that the Member for Calgary-North Hill has been involved with.

Another reason we must be concerned about our transmission infrastructure now is because it takes longer to build transmission infrastructure than it does to improve the generating stations. This is because of the fact that power lines are located, again, on private property, and it takes time to ensure that landowners are properly compensated for any impact that power lines have on their property.

Now, of course, Bill 50 still ensures that the Alberta Utilities Commission has the final say with respect to where transmission lines are located. Indeed, starting in the future, the Alberta Utilities Commission will visit municipalities such as Spruce Grove, Morinville, Fort Saskatchewan, and other places to meet with landowners who have expressed concern about heartland transmission facility applications. These meetings emphasize the

AUC's commitment to ensuring that landowners have an opportunity to bring forward any and all concerns that they may have about the project.

5:50

Mr. Speaker, in summary, I want to emphasize that Bill 50, the Electric Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, is indeed a necessary piece of legislation that will help provide a reliable supply of electricity for Albertans over the next several decades. While debates about policies are often focused on the short term, the debate about Bill 50 should not be focused on the next two to five or even 10 years. Rather, the debate about this bill should be on the long-term importance of transmission infrastructure, which is necessary for the well-being of future generations of Albertans.

I do want to address two final issues. The Member for Airdrie-Chestermere has brought up the issue that AltaLink donated to the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta. Well, anybody who goes to [elections.ab.ca](http://elections.ab.ca) can also find that AltaLink also donated to the Wildrose Alliance Party.

Secondly, the Member for Calgary-Varsity has made some rather maligning statements about the legal profession. I will not take those to heart, but at the same time I will restrain myself from making comments about his profession like he has about mine.

Thank you.

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

I must advise all members that at 5:54 I shall rise and call on the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere to conclude the debate.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I see that my time is going to be very short, so I'll try and jump over the highlights. I guess I'd like to start off by saying how disappointing it is that the debate isn't about the motion, which talks about an objective needs assessment hearing, which is critical. It's about open and transparently tendered power lines and whether there's going to really be true and fair compensation for the landowners.

I guess I'll have to summarize at this point. The department of economics at the University of Calgary, the department of electrical engineers, put out a very interesting paper back in October 2009. At the end of it it says that they question the urgency after being brought forth so long ago. Now it's two years later, and still the Minister of Energy says that this is urgent. I'd like to know the government's definition of urgent, whether that's two months, three months or three years or five years. Urgency has long passed on this.

The school of economics just says, you know, that we need to have a regulatory hearing that has a greater ability to draw on expertise. The process also requires a regulator through written decision – this is through a written decision – to provide and document the rationale for each decision. There is no rationale for this decision. It raises doubts. It says that if we need to improve our regulatory reform, do that, but don't abandon the regulatory process.

We have to ask – and it was brought into question again in the report – about the DC lines. It's not economically viable to be putting in DC lines for a short, 300-kilometre run. It should be 600 kilometres minimum in order to kick in and truly be effective in that area.

The real question, Mr. Speaker, and the real problem of all this is the parameters which the government has put around this to say: "This is why we need it. These are the parameters that justify this." Those parameters are wrong. They don't take into account the competitiveness of where generation is put in, and they've taken on the parameter of zero congestion. They continue to bring up this line loss, which everybody knows and understands, but you need to look at it in that the percentage of actual electricity

transmitted and paid for is nowhere near the numbers that they are perpetuating and saying, that we're losing, you know, millions and millions of dollars through line loss. It just isn't so.

Again, the member mentioned that, you know, it's this government's responsibility to keep the lights on.

**The Speaker:** I hate to interrupt the hon. member, but standing orders suggest that we should now call on the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere to conclude the debate.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's not a lot of time here in the last five minutes, but I would just like to clarify a few things. I don't think anyone in this House – I don't know; I'm just going to speak for the Wildrose. We're certainly not opposed to building new transmission in Alberta that's needed to keep the lights on. We're not opposed to that. What we're opposed to is the overbuild of unnecessary transmission and then having ratepayers in Alberta have to foot the bill for unnecessary lines and expenses. That's what we're against.

We had a process in place. We had the Alberta Utilities Commission, an independent arbiter, hear all sides and all stakeholders in the situation, and they put out a needs assessment finding of whether the new transmission proposals are needed. That is so critical. When you take out that independent needs assessment process, you make this a political issue, and it is a political issue that will absolutely lose dozens of PC Party MLAs their seats, especially in rural Alberta, in the next election just on this issue. It will happen. You can take it to the bank if you do not repeal this bill. It's a bad bill. It's a bill that allows you to spend billions of dollars on the backs of Alberta ratepayers without going through the objective needs assessment process.

There's no need for it. If you're so sure that it's needed and of all the facts that were being thrown around on all sides today, fine. Okay. Even if you believe that, should you not, then, be very comfortable or confident that if there's an independent needs assessment process before the AUC, they will find that what you are saying is true or that they would find that a certain amount of it's true, that we need a certain amount built, et cetera? Then we build the lines. Absolutely. Albertans will get behind that. We all want electricity. We need electricity. But when you take the AUC, the independent, objective arbiter, out of the equation here, you make it a completely political decision – completely political – and people see it.

There's no reason why we should be sitting here. I mean, aside from the tender – yes, they should have been tendered openly, and there are a whole bunch of things wrong with Bill 50 – just take home one thing, that if you're so confident in what you feel is needed for our electrical grid here, then let's go before the experts. Let's have people from industry and landowners and all stakeholders – government officials, the AESO, everybody – come before the AUC and make their case. If it so happens that we do need more electricity, let's build it. Then it'll be on people's power bills, and that's okay because it's needed. But right now how can we honestly in this House say that we need the degree of electricity build that is being proposed in Bill 50? It's just nonsensical. If it isn't nonsensical, if I'm totally wrong, great. Let's go to the AUC. Let's have a needs assessment process that's open and accountable.

I'll end quickly with one thing that was said here by IPCCAA, which represents industrial, 35 per cent of the power users in Alberta. They say that this plan will make Alberta less competitive. It will push companies to leave. These lines will cost billions. We're going to spend billions of dollars, and there's no return on this investment. We're going to be pushing jobs out of this province. I know you think this is going to help promote growth. It won't. It will drive up power prices unnecessarily. We'll be un-

competitive. Jobs will leave, companies will leave, and all because we didn't allow an independent needs assessment process to take place, as was clearly called for by the U of C School of Public Policy and IPCCAA and the consumers for competitive transmission – and there are literally dozens more – all calling for an independent needs assessment process.

Mr. Speaker, I just hope that people in this Assembly will do the right thing, that they'll repeal this bill. Let's go back to the drawing board. Let's put it before the AUC and, on behalf of the people we represent, make sure that we're giving our consumers, our voters the best possible electricity rates that we possibly can, and the only way to do that, in my view, is to bring it before the AUC.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we have before the Assembly a vote with respect to the support or lack of support for . . .

**Dr. Taft:** A procedural point for just a second, Mr. Speaker. My hunch is there might be a standing vote.

**The Speaker:** We don't know that.

**Dr. Taft:** I don't know that, but in case there is, would it be possible to get unanimous consent to shorten the bells? I'd just put that to you, Mr. Speaker.

6:00

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I think that would be a very dangerous request. There are many, many members that are located in buildings other than this one. One minute would not give them time to come here, and they would have had no notice of that whatsoever. That would make this group the one who would make decisions on behalf of other members who aren't here. It would seem to me that – no, I don't want to bring that question to the attention of the Assembly simply because of the democratic principle.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 504 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:01 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Anderson	Hinman	Pastoor
Chase	Mason	Taft

Against the motion:

Allred	Doerksen	McFarland
Amery	Drysdale	McQueen
Benito	Goudreau	Mitzel
Berger	Hayden	Olson
Bhullar	Jacobs	Renner
Calahasen	Johnston	Sarich
DeLong	Liepert	VanderBurg
Denis	Marz	

Totals:	For – 6	Against – 23
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 504 lost]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the House will now stand adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m. However, the policy field committee will meet for consideration of the main estimates of Municipal Affairs at 6:30 p.m., and the meeting will be video streamed.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:13 p.m. to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]



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