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The 27th Legislature
Fourth Session

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Issue 32a

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 27th Legislature
 Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 10, 2011

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. In our mind's eye let us see the awesome grandeur of the Rockies, the denseness of our forests, the fertility of our farmland, the splendour of our rivers, the richness of our resources, the energy of our people. Then let us rededicate ourselves as wise stewards of such bounty on behalf of all Albertans. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm pleased to introduce to all members today 76 students who are here as participants in Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day program. The participants arrived yesterday for a tour of the Legislature, a presentation on the role of an MLA, and dinner at the Royal Canadian Legion, after which they prepared for a debate and then spent the night in a local hotel with their chaperones. This morning they debated a resolution in the Assembly Chamber, visited their members' offices, attended a session in the Chamber with myself, and had lunch with their members. Following Oral Question Period they will take part in an activity related to the electoral process. The ultimate aim of the program's activities is to further develop the interest and understanding of our parliamentary system among Alberta youth. The Royal Canadian Legion Alberta-NWT Command is sincerely commended for their support and cosponsorship of this program.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery today is vice-president, youth chair, Legion Alberta-NWT Command Ms Bobbi McCoy. Accompanying as student chaperones are Legion leaders Tim McCoy, Rod and Joyce Stewart, Ted and Donna Latimer, Karen Bruens, John Ferguson, Sharon Fedak, and our 76 shadow colleagues, who are seated in the members' and public galleries today. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a person that we know quite well, the recently re-elected Member of Parliament for St. Albert, seated in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Brent Rathgeber. Brent, of course, as you know, is the former MLA for Edmonton-Calder. He lives there; so do I, proving once again that it's all in Calder. On May 2 Brent was re-elected as a Member of Parliament, receiving 63.5 per cent of the popular vote in the riding of Edmonton-St. Albert, nearly 22,000 votes more than his nearest competitor. I'd like to both welcome Brent here today and wish him well as he begins his second term as a Member of Parliament and give him the traditional warm greetings of the Assembly. Brent, please stand up.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a very esteemed honour for me to rise today and introduce the former Member for Calgary-Montrose, Rick Orman. Rick served as minister of career development and employment, Minister of En-

ergy, and minister of labour in his time here in the Alberta Legislature. Since leaving the Alberta Legislature, Rick has had a very active and rewarding career in Calgary's business community, specifically the oil and gas industry, being involved with companies such as Daylight Energy as well as NOR Energy. Rick is somebody who I have known for many, many years. In fact, I still remember that the very first political sweatshirt I ever wore, many years ago, was that of Rick Orman.

An Hon. Member: Does it still fit?

Mr. Bhullar: It still fits. Mr. Speaker, it does.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask Rick to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly the 2011 Manning awards nominees for northern Alberta. Creativity knows no professional, geographic, or cultural boundaries. People of any age or walk of life or professional community generate ideas that can change the world. Since 1982 Manning awards have been awarded in our province. With us today are Mr. Sol Rolvingher, a Queen's Counsel from Edmonton; Ryan Clarke; Tanya Bach; Randy Marsden; Gautam Rao; Brad Murray; and Dr. Joseph Mitchell. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

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

Ms Blakeman: Oh, Mr. Speaker, thank you so much. I have such an honour today, and that is to introduce the family of one of our very special pages. Her family is sitting in your gallery. I would like to ask Lloyd Clarke, who is Regan Coyne's grandfather, to please stand. Joining him are Sharon Clarke, Regan's mother; and Craena Coyne, her aunt, who is also her godmother. I want to say thank you so much for giving us such a wonderfully organized, hard-working, pleasant, warm, and smart young woman with a great laugh. She's treated us very well. Thank you so much for letting us have the experience of working with her. Please join me in welcoming Regan Coyne's family.

Mr. Speaker, I have a second introduction. It is a special day for me because today I get to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ms Stéphanie O'Brien. Now, Stéphanie is from Quebec City. She is quite a world traveller, having been to France, Paraguay, Peru, and Ireland. And as I joked, but not really, she's now joining the twilight zone of the Liberal caucus staff. She is going to be our Quebec exchange student for the summer. We are very grateful to have her help, and we're hoping she has a wonderful experience in Alberta. Stéphanie, would you please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you so much.

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise again. This time I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly several very special guests seated in your gallery. With us today are Al Schram, fire chief for the town of Edson and first vice-president of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association; also Peter Krich, fire chief for the city of Camrose and second vice-president for the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association;

Patti Boone, a firefighter with Yellowhead county's Wildwood hall; Jim Olson, a firefighter for the town of Edson; and Bill Purdy, executive director of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association and deputy fire chief for the Wabamun fire department. Mr. Purdy knows these halls well as he served as MLA for the constituency of Stony Plain from 1971 to 1986, which I know you very well remember.

These five guests represent over 10,000 Albertans who serve as part-time firefighters in the province. They are with us here today for the introduction of Bill 20 a bit later on our legislative agenda. With them is Bob Jones, district 1 director of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, whose members are the employers of many volunteer firefighters throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, we also have with us today a representative from Alberta Municipal Affairs. I would like to introduce Spence Sample, deputy fire commissioner and director of public safety initiatives for the Alberta Emergency Management Agency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through to this Assembly a constituent of mine, Megan Jakeway. Megan is here today to celebrate last week's announcement of the midwifery degree at the Mount Royal University in Calgary and is currently applying to that program. Megan is here today with her husband, Bruce, and her two children, Esther and Gabriel. I'd ask that they rise to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a wonderful group of women who represent midwives across Alberta. Last week the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and I had the pleasure of visiting Mount Royal University for the announcement of Alberta's first bachelor of midwifery degree. I understand there is already a wait-list for that program, which is wonderful news. Last Thursday was also the International Day of the Midwife, which recognizes the value and important role that midwives play in the health of women and newborns around the world.

I'd like to introduce to you some of the wonderful women involved in midwifery: Monica Eggink and her son Louis, Jackie Michaels, Amanda McEachern, Claire MacDonald, Heather Beaudoin, Pamela Aloisio, Barbara Scriver, Marie Tutt, Joanna Greenhalgh, and Heidi Coughlin. If they would please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Webber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two exceptional young women, Crystal Kirton and Kimberly Bellerose. Earlier this week they started their positions under the new Aboriginal Relations internship program. It's an initiative that we are piloting with Employment and Immigration and Finance and Enterprise. Ladies and gentlemen, Crystal and Kimberly were the successful candidates among over 100 applicants. They both have great resumés, and we are very excited to have them. Also in the members' gallery are their supervisors, Carolyn Fewkes, Ellen Tian, and Paul Wyminga. The goal of the

Aboriginal Relations internship program is to help aboriginal youth develop their professional skills and leadership capacity. I'd ask that they all please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

I have one more introduction if you don't mind. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you two women who drove up this morning from my Calgary-Foothills constituency. The first is my very hard working constituency assistant, Lou Winthers. Lou has been working for me for a number of years now, and I'm thankful for her commitment to keep my office running so smoothly. She is a registered nurse and a board member with my association and is also a past executive director of Hospice Calgary and Meals on Wheels, just to mention a few. With her is Ms Donna Gee, who is also a board member of my association. She is a practising lawyer and a registered nurse as well. She is also president of a local community association in Calgary. I would ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you today two young friends of mine, Jeff and Arlene Carlson. They are a very busy young couple. They farm in the Trochu-Olds area. They also have a business in Innisfail. As well, Arlene teaches, and Jeff has his law degree. I guess that all helps to feed the farming addiction. Jeff assures me, though, that their seeding operation is in full swing today and that they're able to keep the crew busy, so they've had time to come up and experience the excitement of question period today. They're seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly five outstanding leaders in the Child and Adolescent Services Association. CASA is the lead organization working with my ministry, Health and Wellness, and Justice and Attorney General on the infant/preschool trauma pilot project, which is a direct result of our children's mental health plan. It is so good to have you all here. I would ask that our guests please rise as I introduce them and remain standing. We have Gwen Harris, chair; Nicole Van Kuppeveld, executive director; Germaine Dechant, chief executive officer; Jaret Farris, executive member; and Dr. Carole Anne Hapchyn, psychiatrist and therapist. Please join me in thanking these outstanding individuals for the good work they do. Thank you for being here.

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

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly constituents of mine, Mrs. Tascheleia Marangoni, her daughter Isabella Marangoni, and their guests, Lana Atkinson and Jane Carr. They work with the postpartum depression awareness project and are here today to hear my member's statement on postpartum depression. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Mr. Allred: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly

a constituent of mine and one of Alberta's young, aspiring political minds. Aisling Pollard-Kientzel is very interested in the political process here in Alberta as can be gleaned by her recent involvement in Brent Rathgeber's Conservative federal election campaign, her run for municipal council in St. Albert, and, of course, her attendance here today. I would ask Aisling to please stand, and I would ask all members to join with me in giving Aisling the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you today to all members of the Assembly Austin Mardon. Austin will be well known to many members of this House. He is an academic, an author, a researcher, and most importantly, the work for which is he known best, a strong advocate for the disabled community in Alberta, particularly those suffering from mental illness. Austin holds a doctorate in geography and many awards of distinction, including companion member of the Order of Canada. He is currently a member of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities and a board member of the Alberta College of Social Workers. Dr. Mardon has many accomplishments, as I have said. Many of us have relied and will continue to rely on his advice on issues that affect the disability community in this province. He is very deserving of our recognition and respect. I would ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions today. First of all, I am pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature two students who are currently studying midwifery in Edmonton through distance education at the Midwives College of Utah. For some time now the Midwifery Health Disciplines Committee has been unclear about granting registration to graduates of the Midwives College of Utah. Given that there are currently 11 MCU students in Alberta and Mount Royal will not graduate a midwife for another four and a half years, the situation needs to be resolved in favour of students and the goal of increasing the midwives. I would now like to welcome the students, who are seated in the public gallery, I believe, to the Legislature. I would ask that Tracy Kennedy and Carly Beaulieu rise as I read their names to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. Thank you.

I'm also pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature two members of my constituency, Kelly Carter and her daughter Erin Carter. Kelly and Erin are here today to raise public awareness about the real impacts of this government's decision to cut education funding for special-needs students. Erin's community living skills class has been eliminated, and she will be forced to attend school in a larger classroom with children up to four years younger than her. I would now like to welcome Kelly and Erin, who are seated in the public gallery, to the Legislature, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: I still have two more on my list of introductions. We'll proceed, and then we'll go immediately to question period.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very bright constituent of mine. Mark Koeppen has his master's degree in communications and technology from the University of Alberta,

and he's here today to help me capture photos and video clips of all the excitement of the MLA for a Day program that you brought in. He is seated in the public gallery, and I would ask him to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a constituent of mine, Mr. Oscar Fech, who lives in Kingsland. Oscar ran for mayor of Calgary in 2004 and came in second and frequently reminds us that it's all about the accountability in this Chamber. Let us take his words, and please give him the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Nondisclosure Agreements with Physicians

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, over the last three months we've been asking this government how many lawsuits filed by doctors have been settled, how much money was paid out, and what the circumstances in the nondisclosure agreements were. Government always has the same response: Alberta Health Services have the answers. Well, I spoke with a senior official from Alberta Health Services, who told me that neither he nor other officials could discuss these lawsuits because they were sealed with nondisclosure agreements. To the minister: will the minister now admit that Alberta Health Services cannot discuss the agreements covered by nondisclosures?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health Services functions like an independent corporation, and they can do whatever they want to do or whatever they feel is necessary to do. I think we've made it abundantly clear in this House because they keep asking the same questions over and over and over, so of course the answers are going to be the same. It's the same question; you get the same answer. Nondisclosure agreements typically would require both parties to agree before they are opened. That's my understanding.

Dr. Swann: Well, given that because of nondisclosure agreements neither Alberta Health Services nor the government nor the doctors can talk about these settlements, how can the Health Quality Council possibly get the whole truth about this government's culture of fear and intimidation?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, this government has no such culture whatsoever. I can't account for what this hon. member went through in his private life before becoming elected, but if he wants to make his severance package available to everybody, let's have a look at it. That would be a good start.

Dr. Swann: Duck and dive. Duck and dive, Mr. Minister.

Given that Albertans deserve to know about their health dollars, how their health professionals have been muzzled and intimidated, and given that the only way to discuss the details sealed in these settlements is through a public inquiry, will the health minister do the right thing? Stop dancing around the issue. Call a public inquiry.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, we have a very good process in place with the Health Quality Council, which this member along

with numerous others just a few months back were championing as being a wonderful place for an investigation or an inquiry or a review to be done. So that's exactly what we did. We asked the Health Quality Council of Alberta to come in, and they've got some incredible people there who are doing a great job, I'm told, helping to find out if there's any truth to the allegations that were given. Whoever wants to is welcome to appear before them.

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

Patient Advocacy by Health Professionals

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Facing mounting internal pressure from health care professionals, Alberta Health Services has implemented an internal patient advocacy committee in efforts to improve a doctor's ability to advocate for his patients. Dr. Lloyd Maybaum is a member of that committee, and he pointed out, quote: it doesn't address any of the past history. Only an inquiry can get to the bottom of what has happened. End quote. Again to the minister. To learn from past mistakes, we must first investigate the mistakes. Does the minister not agree with Dr. Maybaum that it's in all Albertans' interests to get to the bottom of these issues of intimidation and mismanagement?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, all I can say again to this hon. member is that we have the Health Quality Council of Alberta doing this work right now, and if things were really that bad, I don't think you would have seen the satisfaction ratings that we just saw in December. Eighty-three per cent of Albertans said that they had excellent care in our health system in the hospitals.

Dr. Swann: And less than 25 per cent of professionals have any confidence in this government's ability to manage the health care system.

How can doctors expect to see any change from an internal health services committee when the committee is powerless to address external intimidation coming from this government?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what intimidation this hon. member is referring to. What I can tell you is that we have a very open process. In fact, the recent restructuring by Alberta Health Services would tell you that there's going to be a lot more local decision-making and that that includes much more physician engagement, physician input, physician involvement. That's what we're trying to do, get more people integrated to help out with this excellent health system to make it yet better.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, 30,000 health professionals in this province have said that the only way to get to the bottom of this culture is a public inquiry. Why don't you do the right thing and honour your commitment to health in this province? Call a public inquiry.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, we are doing the right thing. We're providing 37.3 million medical services per year. Thirty-seven point three million services per year. We're providing 59 million lab tests – 59 million lab tests – per year; 165,000 MRIs per year, and we've just added another 9,000. We're doing 250,000 surgeries per year, and we've just added another 5,000. So, please, hon. member, suck it up. Admit that we're doing a lot of things very, very well.

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

Plains Midstream Canada Pipeline Leak

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In 2005 the former Premier said that the government's response to the Wabamun spill was poor because no one could have thought we would have a disaster. Now the Minister of Environment is stating that there's no need to take advantage of information on environmental performance of companies working in Alberta, information that could alert us to keep a closer watch on some companies with poor records elsewhere. To the Minister of Environment: why wouldn't the government want to have all possible information on a company desiring to do business in Alberta, especially on their environmental performance?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, I made the statement yesterday – and I stand by it today – that we have a rigorous regulatory regime in this province. We expect all companies that operate in this province to stand up to the rigour that we would put them under. Frankly, while it might be interesting to the opposition to see what their environmental record is elsewhere, it doesn't compare because we don't know what the regulatory regime is elsewhere.

Ms Blakeman: Oh, Mr. Speaker, back to the same minister: how can the minister claim that a company's environmental record elsewhere is not interesting or is irrelevant when the company has just spilled 28,000 barrels of oil into a wetland here, and that company was recently fined over \$3 million by the U.S. government as a result of 10 leaks over the past several years?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I might suggest that the question might be better directed to the minister responsible for the ERCB because they are the regulatory authority that is responsible, but the fact of the matter is that we have a rigid regulatory regime in this province that requires ongoing inspection and maintenance of pipelines, and I think our record reflects that we have a very enviable record when it comes to ensuring that we do not have incidents such as the one that we had last week.

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, back to the same minister: given that this government will not learn from the experiences of others, will it at the very least implement the recommendations from this government's own review of our environmental and emergency response capacity following the last of our own environmental disasters at the Wabamun spill?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, let's look at the facts. The Wabamun spill that she refers to was admittedly not reacted to as quickly as it could have been or should have been. As a result, there was an entirely new division that was instituted in Alberta Environment, the ASERT program. That program stepped up to the plate, did the job. In this particular case it's because we had the capability to get onto the incident immediately that we were able to contain it within a small area, and we are now rapidly cleaning the mess up.

Government Policies

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, in the recent federal election we saw two-thirds of Albertans vote for free market, fiscally responsible, small "c" conservatives. This PC government has been anything but conservative. They have governed these past four years to the left of any NDP or Liberal government in the country. Now the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy is proposing tax increases to pay for this government's reckless spending while funnelling our royalties into several government-run slush funds and programs. To the Premier or whomever: why doesn't his gov-

ernment just make it official and appoint the leader of the NDP behind me as their finance minister going forward?

2:00

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the government has received the report tabled by the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy, and we will individually examine those areas that pertain to our ministries and give a full response. I think the exciting thing is that they're looking 30, 50, and 100 years into the future for ways that we can set a template and chart a different course. It is not yet government policy, but our Premier has committed to bringing it forward to the caucus in due course.

Mr. Anderson: Well, to the Environment minister, then. Given that the Premier's council report also calls for increased carbon pricing and given that while I was in the PC caucus the Environment minister and this Premier were actively supporting the idea of signing on to a national cap and trade system that would mandate that Alberta businesses purchase billions in carbon credits from outside of Alberta, that's causing billions more in wealth to be transferred out of this province, is the government planning on jacking up the carbon tax they already slapped on industry, entering into a cap and trade deal, or both?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, this government has been very consistent. We were the first Legislature in Canada to institute legislation to deal with and regulate CO₂ emissions. We've indicated all along that we see it as being an opportunity to demonstrate to other jurisdictions how a system can work in the absence of cap and trade and how investment in technology is the way that we should be going, and I see no reason why we wouldn't continue in that direction.

Mr. Anderson: It's not what I heard when I was in caucus, Minister.

Given this government's persistent attack on property rights, its continuous centralization of health and everything else it can think of, its capitulation to green extremism, its hiking of taxes and fees on industry, its refusal to protect the rights of free speech, its deplorable record of intimidation of health workers, its disregard for democracy . . .

The Speaker: Okay. Hon. member. [interjection] Hon member. [interjection] Hon. member, please, if that isn't a preamble, I don't know what it is, but the hon. minister may respond if she chooses. [interjection] No. We're finished. [interjection] I'm finished with you. [interjection] Sit down. [interjection] Sit down. [interjection] Sit down.

Mr. Anderson: Point of order.

The Speaker: We'll deal with the point of order at the end of the question period. [interjection] Sit down, please. [interjection] Sit down, please. If somebody wants to respond, they can. If not, we're moving on.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Critical Electricity Transmission Infrastructure

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I would only consider the job under a New Democratic government, not under a Tory one.

Yesterday the Minister of Energy suggested that consumers will pay a dollar per month for every billion dollars spent on the transmission megaproject planned by this government. That's based on the most optimistic assumptions possible. So at a mini-

mum the most frugal electricity consumer will still pay an extra \$156 per year. To the minister: does he not understand the impact that an additional \$156 per year will have on the household budgets of Alberta families or on seniors on fixed incomes?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I did say was correct. The projections are that for every billion dollars of construction it would be approximately one dollar per month on the bill. If you take \$3 billion to \$5 billion of construction and multiply that by 12, I don't think you'd come up with the number that the member is referring to.

Mr. Mason: Well, given that the minister admitted yesterday that \$13 billion is more likely the total number and given that the minister's figures are the best-case scenario and that the actual costs are likely going to be much higher and given that billions of dollars of costs have already been approved without public scrutiny, will the minister agree to subject all transmission projects to a full public hearing so that they can prove that they're needed and in the public interest?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, in fact, one of those particular hearings is under way right now, and there will be hearings into the other lines in due course.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that \$1.6 billion in extra costs are about to be loaded onto unsuspecting electricity consumers without any proof that these costs are reasonable or even necessary, why won't the minister allow a public examination of these costs before allowing them to be passed on to consumers?

Mr. Liepert: That's exactly the purpose of the hearings that I just talked about, Mr. Speaker.

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

Government Policies

(continued)

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is designed by the future MLAs from Edmonton-Meadowlark, Kathleen Robertson and Joyce Chiang. We have the best, hardest working staff on the planet. Once you get into care, it's great care. The trouble is accessing care. In the U.K. this was a major problem. They invested massively in home care, primary care, with the strongest performance and accountability measures on the planet. To the minister of health. You gave the largest investment in history to acute care with the weakest performance measures in the nation, that we are not even meeting. My question is: can you please explain to the future MLAs why you made the decision that has led to cutbacks in their education and the number of teachers they have in their schools?

Mr. Zwodzesky: I think he's asking a question to the Minister of Education, so I'd be happy to take that question under advisement.

Insofar as medical education is concerned we've actually increased those seats over the last few years. We have 180-some seats in Calgary and about 180 or so seats here in Edmonton so that people who want to pursue a medical career, specifically a doctor's career, will have a place to be trained right here in our province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we've invested in creating more doctors – and that's a good decision. The problem is that they're all specialists. The type of doctors we need are family doctors. To the minister of advanced education. Across the nation only 30 per cent of the doctors are becoming family doctors. We need 60 per cent. What are you doing, working with the minister of health? In which way are you going to create more family and geriatric doctors in this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to try to answer this. The good news is that last year of the graduating class in Alberta 80 per cent of the doctors chose family medicine. I think that's a tribute to our young people and that they see the value in treating families across our province. Truly good news, and we look forward to more people choosing family medicine and rural medicine.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Eighty per cent is an incorrect number; it's actually 40 per cent. To the seniors' minister. Acute care cannot function if home care is not resourced and if you do not take long-term care patients out of acute care. You're only removing 200 patients. What are your performance and accountability measures to remove long-term care patients out of acute care?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, we have some of the highest accommodation standards in the world. We inspect every facility that is in continuing care at least once a year, and if we have a complaint, we do a random inspection on top of that, so we do have some of the highest standards possible. We are building 10,000 more units, since 1999, to be able to facilitate care for our seniors.

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

Daycare Accreditation

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2007 this government removed the 80-children cap on the maximum number of children that may be accommodated in a child care facility in this province. Now we learn that Education Learning Universe, or Edleun, the only publicly traded child care corporation in Canada, is about to construct a 2,300 square foot care house in Chestermere that will accommodate a whopping 247 children. To the minister of children: did the minister backtrack last month on the decision to make accreditation of daycares mandatory simply to facilitate this kind of warehousing of our children?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct. Three years ago there was a policy put in place where the cap of 80 spaces per facility was removed. That decision was made by staff, I understand, at the time based on what the child care association, members of the child care community – parents who had asked for flexibility in choice in child care found that that cap was a barrier to the development of new spaces.

I want you to know, though, as I said previously – I know you've mentioned accreditation here today . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Given the displacement of 12,000 children that the bankruptcy of Australian child care giant ABC Learning led to in 2008, can the minister assure Alberta parents that their children will not experience similar upheaval should Edleun's profits happen to ebb next quarter?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do have nonprofit child care, and we have child care for profit. The member has mentioned a for-profit child care organization that did not succeed with their business. I go back to this. The for-profit and not-for-profit organizations follow the same rules. They're licensed, they're regulated, and parents can be assured that that's in place.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Instead of the PHD process for managing children – and that stands for piled higher and deeper – will the minister undertake to reintroduce the cap on the number of children that may be accommodated in this province's daycare facilities?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can also tell you that 2 out of 3 of our child care organizations that have over 80 spaces in child care, which is only about 1 to 2 per cent of all the child care spaces, are actually not-for-profit organizations. They're not-for-profit. I can also tell you that I won't be reviewing this cap at this time, but I will follow very closely what is occurring in the Chestermere community.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Some Hon. Members: Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane has the floor.

Midwifery Services

Ms Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from some constituents and others who say that they need help finding a midwife to assist with the delivery of their babies. Expectant mothers with low-risk pregnancies are looking for this option in ever-increasing numbers. My first question today is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. With a growing demand for midwifery services in this province, what are you doing to bring more midwives into our system?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the minister of advanced education just indicated, we were in Calgary last week to actually bring into place a four-year baccalaureate program for midwifery. That will include at least 10 spaces in this first year, as I recall, and I think at least one in every 10 spaces starting this year and thereafter will be dedicated specifically to aboriginal health. So there's quite a lot of excitement and activity about that, and I want to again welcome the people who are here on that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Tarchuk: Thank you. My second question is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. Given the demand for midwives, can you tell us why it has taken such a long time to get a midwifery degree in place in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is an excellent question, and I know there are a lot of midwives in the audience and students that would ask exactly that same question. It has taken a while. It has been over 20 years since we first approved the use of midwives in Alberta and funded it. Mount Royal has come to the table and has developed a program, worked with my department to make sure the program meets the needs of midwifery students, and then in partnership with Alberta Health we've been able to come up with the clinical piece so that together we can provide a baccalaureate four-year degree in midwifery that'll meet the demands of that profession.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Tarchuk: Thank you. My last question is to the same minister. How soon can we expect to see the grads begin to take pressure off our growing waiting list?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We heard a little bit about it during the introductions. It will take until 2015 to see the new graduates coming out. The good news is that the very first class of students will enter this September. We will have a full cohort of midwifery students at Mount Royal University, and those students will graduate in 2015. They'll add to the group of midwives that we have in this province, and after that we'll see new ones every year.

Thank you.

Teacher Retention

Mr. Hehr: Well, Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government has been obsessed about centralizing control of Alberta's public institutions, including hospitals, schools, universities, and colleges, but it's a clumsy approach because the left hand often doesn't know what the right hand is doing. Even as record numbers of new teachers are graduating under the department of advanced education, the Education minister is forcing hundreds of layoffs. To the minister of advanced education: can the minister explain why this government is cutting job opportunities for new teachers when Alberta is going to need more teachers, not less, to meet the oncoming demand?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we know that it has been an extremely tough budget year, especially in education. We have seen some challenges across the province, but we continue to educate teachers. We also, because of the economic times, had a lot of teachers that were able to retire this year that simply didn't. They've stayed in the workplace, so this has removed some of the potential for new jobs. We're hoping to continue to train our new teachers and that there will be positions for them in the future.

Mr. Hehr: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that we've seen this cycle of huge layoffs of nurses and teachers, followed by cuts to the institutions, followed then by shortfalls of nurses and teachers, when will this government learn that simply cutting these things at the ebbs and flows of the marketplace is not going to work for actually having sustainable, predictable teachers in the classrooms?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not only are we not cutting education positions, but we're actually working very closely with regional colleges, and some of the funding that we provided this year was to allow them to go out and create new degree opportunities. I know that in visiting with those colleges, one of the degrees that they most want to deliver locally is education degrees for new teachers for their communities. Teachers that train in Red Deer will work in Red Deer or in Medicine Hat or Grande Prairie. We like to see this happening. We're going to continue to work with our local institutions to train teachers.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to correct the minister. We are cutting opportunities for these teachers to work in this province. Yesterday the Minister of Education offered this advice to Alberta's teachers: wait until next year. Can the minister of advanced education, whose department paid to educate these graduates, offer them any better advice?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're already starting to see some openings. Unfortunately, some teachers will be working within the subbing system this year, but over the course of the year we hope to continue to integrate our new teachers into the system and create opportunities for young teachers as they come out. Our young teachers are very energetic and well trained, and we want to work them into the system as quickly as we can.

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

Children at Risk

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my understanding that at any time in the Edmonton area Children and Youth Services staff are involved with approximately 1,000 children under school age who may have suffered abuse or neglect. As an MLA I've had occasion to hear of several tragic cases often after a child has been permanently removed from a home or when an offender who has allegedly abused a child is before the courts. A number of my constituents have asked how we are assisting these children and how we are managing their emotional needs at a young age, before mental illness becomes an ongoing issue. To the Minister of Children and Youth Services: what is your ministry doing to address this?

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, the member is so right. Abuse and neglect can be devastating for our children. Earlier today I had the honour of introducing five outstanding leaders from the Child and Adolescent Services Association who are leading a very important initiative here in Edmonton, which will provide the assessment and the intervention services in partnership with health professionals and with our law enforcement personnel and my staff. That's a \$400,000 new pilot project for our vulnerable infants and children.

Mr. Horne: Well, that does sound promising, Mr. Speaker, but given that early identification is key, how will the ministry identify the children who are most at risk, and what specific support will they be offered?

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, this is an important question. Children will be referred to this new program by caseworkers from my ministry. There will be a multidisciplinary team that will assess

their mental health, their physical and their developmental needs, and they will help ensure that appropriate treatment is offered as quickly as possible. But just as importantly, training will be provided to the biological parents and to parents that are looking after children in care, and this will help support the development of healthy relationships for the child.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Horne: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, to the same minister. Given that there are so many children in the system today who are in need of emotional and mental health supports, would the minister elaborate on what performance measures will be considered, and if the program proves successful, will you offer it on a province-wide basis?

Mrs. Fritz: I also told you earlier that this new pilot project is a direct result of the children's mental health plan, and the good news is that it really will make a tremendous difference. It will remove barriers, as I said, with the co-ordination of services. It will make a difference for an estimated 75 children who have been traumatized by abuse and neglect this year. Through the co-ordination of supports we anticipate better outcomes for our vulnerable children. Yes, we will expand this model as we know it will be successful.

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

Bladder and Uterine Prolapse Surgery

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm a nurse, and this topic was my job and doesn't embarrass me, but maybe there will be a few in the House that will squirm. Maybe that's why thousands of Alberta women are living in needless discomfort. Childbirth, heaving lifting, and, yes, lack of exercise can cause bladder and uterine prolapse of the sagging internal organs into a woman's birth canal. The condition causes incontinence, repeated bladder infections, and often severe pain. To the minister of health: why are women in this province waiting for as long as two years to receive the surgical procedures needed to correct the most serious cases of bladder and uterine prolapse?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, obviously there are some medical decisions that would have to be made to help those women in need. If you have some individuals that need that help, you can refer them to Alberta Health Services, or if you like, you can refer them to my office, and I'll refer them over. These are medical decisions that are beyond my control.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Will the minister undertake to add these procedures to the Health and Wellness online wait times registry so that women might track the wait time for them, which is two years?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, we just added 5,000 more surgical procedures of various types into the permanent category, so we can take a look and see if this particular procedure she is referring to is one of those. Regarding the second request, I'd be happy to take a look and see what might be possible to help those women out.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you again. Where in the ministry's five-year action plan is this common women's health issue addressed?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, it's addressed in a number of places albeit perhaps not in those exact words. For example, one of the primary things that we're trying to do is increase access and reduce wait times. I've talked about that numerous times. We've talked a lot about it during estimates. I would refer the hon. member, because there's not enough time to do it right here right now, to estimates, where some of these issues were covered. If you have more, hon. member, I'd be happy to sit down and chat with you to help out.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Labour Supply

Mr. Benito: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand the Ministry of Employment and Immigration has a number of services dedicated to helping Albertans find employment and employers to find workers. In the near future we're likely to find ourselves in a situation where our province faces a labour crunch and more must be done. My first question is to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. In order to be prepared for the next economic boom, what is your ministry's plan to quell the expected shortfall, which could be as many as 77,000 workers?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, it's a timely question. The plan involves both the industries, the employers of Alberta, and the government of Alberta. Our number one responsibility is to Albertans and Canadians first, making sure that we tap into the workforce of those who are chronically either unemployed or underemployed by way of providing them with educational programs and making sure that they have the skills that are required by our economy. Ultimately once the local labour force is tapped out, obviously we will be looking at labour from outside of Alberta and outside of Canada.

Mr. Benito: Also to the same minister: what specific strategies has your ministry outlined in order to support or encourage older workers to remain on the job?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, that choice will always be in the hands of Albertans, whether they choose to work after their retirement age or post retirement age. It would never be the strategy of this government to force anybody to do so. Options must remain. Many individuals that I have met choose to work past the age of 65, and we want to make sure that neither provincial nor federal policies, particularly on taxation, are punitive and that they allow for that choice to be made.

Mr. Benito: My second supplemental is to the same minister. What is your ministry doing to incorporate aboriginals in the workforce, especially when dealing with concerns of labour shortages?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, the issue of the engagement of our aboriginal community in our workforce is actually quite complex. From the perspective of my ministry and this government we have released a new report that was done in consultation with the aboriginal community, known as Connecting the Dots. Frankly, I think there's a lot of work that needs to be done from many different perspectives, not only that of this ministry. I think that now, at

a time where there will be a shortage of workers, it is incumbent upon us to be as helpful as we can.

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

Highway 63

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The MLA for a Day student from Westwood high school joined me today. She drove down highway 63 yesterday with her mom, and of course they were appalled with the condition of highway 63, an important economic link in the province. To the Minister of Transportation: can you give an explanation to the student and to her mom on the poor condition of highway 63?

Mr. Ouellette: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we're talking about a region that is very, very important to this province. We've got \$190 million in the budget to spend on improvements and to carry on with the construction that's been going on on highway 63. We're going to be doing twinning. We're twinning right now. We're working towards twinning south of Wandering River, north of Wandering River. We're carrying on with the interchanges within the town, and we're moving as fast . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, given that the student and her mom wanted to know why they haven't seen a drop of pavement on highway 63 in the last year and a half, can the minister please explain?

Mr. Ouellette: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know the exact dates, but I think a year and a half might be a little far out. We have done some paving on highway 63. We've scheduled some new paving. That's supposed to be coming up this year, weather permitting. We're going to carry on. We're spending \$127 million on the bridge there. It's something like \$600 million in the last two years.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, given that we haven't seen any pavement in Fort McMurray in the last year, can the minister assure this Assembly and residents in the gallery, moms and dads who travel highway 63 like me and my three-year-old son, who will be turning four tomorrow, that you will commit to paving parts and twinning highway 63 this year?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, we'll move as fast as we can with all the conditions that are put on us there. When we can get our permits from the federal government to move ahead in certain areas, we move ahead, and we're going to do it as fast as we possibly can.

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

Tourism Marketing

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Official numbers estimate tourism in Alberta to be a \$6 billion industry. The economic crisis, the recent tragic events in Japan, and the current strength of the Canadian dollar have made hotel prices go down and international tourists scarce. To the minister of tourism: given that the hotel prices have been increasing world-wide but steadily decreasing in Alberta, why hasn't the minister been able to stop this downfall and its negative impact on employment and on our economy?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

Mrs. Ady: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, tourism is a wonderful industry, and it's a very resilient industry. There have been pressures lately, we know, in the economy, and that has caused some difficulties in pricing of hotels. But that's a free-market piece. I think we'll see those prices go up. I have no control over what the rooms are and what they charge in a hotel.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why hasn't the minister, as have many other Canadian provinces, invested in developing the tourism marketing and original publicity campaigns to stimulate our declining tourism industry?

Mrs. Ady: That's a great question, Mr. Speaker. Actually, we're working very hard at that and have been from, you know, the beginning of time. We have a new campaign that's about to be unleashed this fall, and I would say to all hon. members: watch for it. We think it's going to be one of the best out there in the nation. We're going to continue to do the good work. We put almost \$50 million a year into advertising this province across the world.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the minister answered part of my question.

To the minister again: why has the minister not been acting on this issue and not been inclined to prevent groups who wish to hurt the industry with negative advertisement campaigns from doing so?

Mrs. Ady: Well, Mr. Speaker, actually, when we looked at the numbers for last year, we found that those campaigns did not have a negative effect on tourism. It stayed as robust as we thought it would. You know, even though you're going to go out there and say my name everywhere, it actually helped us. It didn't hurt us; the economy did. We did find that Albertans actually picked up and increased the amount that they travelled in the province, and we think that that's going to also help us this year.

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

Housing for Immigrant Seniors

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some immigrant seniors who came under sponsorship are facing undue hardship, including lack of access to subsidized housing supports, when the sponsors fail to support them adequately. Our Housing Act states that all permanent residents of Canada are eligible for subsidized housing given they meet income requirements. My questions are to the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs. Clarify the relationship between the federal government's policy for immigrant seniors sponsorship agreements and the procedure within his ministry for permanent residents and citizens who are immigrants.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our province does continue to welcome many people from outside the country. In fact, over the next couple of years our statistics do show that even more people from international origin are going to be coming here.

Now, moving to the member's question, if we look further, often people who come to this province are sponsored by a particular community organization or an individual. Those people do

not qualify for our assistance. But if they fall out of this particular housing and particular sponsorship, then they can . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Ms Woo-Paw: My supplemental to the same minister: will the process for resolving differences between your ministry and the housing management boards be reviewed to improve the response to these issues that cross different levels of government?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we look forward, we do have many private-sector management bodies throughout the entire province. If a dispute does arise, we do deal with it on an individual, case-by-case basis. These management bodies are very important to our local governance model and do create a great degree of efficiency and local input throughout the entire province. Problems do arise, but we do deal with it on a one-by-one basis.

Ms Woo-Paw: To the same minister: how do you respond to the perception that the right hand doesn't seem to know what the left hand is doing in relation to the work of your ministry and the housing management bodies?

Mr. Denis: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the second time I've heard that phrase today, and of course I do prefer the right hand.

There are 14,000 self-contained seniors' housing units in this province, and it can be a challenge sometimes to stay on top of it all. But it is important to always keep the dialogue going as to what may be happening at a particular end of the province, and that's what we will endeavour to do going into the future as well.

University of Alberta South Campus Development

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, the U of A is telling neighbouring communities that it wants to revamp its long-range development plan by this summer. This is a huge plan with billion dollar implications, covering hundreds of acres in central Edmonton, directly affecting tens of thousands of people. Revising the plan in such a short time could preclude due process. Since the minister of advanced education has the final approval of this plan, will he ensure that it follows recognized and accredited planning processes such as those followed by Alberta municipalities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's true that I have met with the University of Alberta, and they are working on their new long-range development plan. It is a critical document. All developments on university sites must conform with their long-range development plans. The change of the 2013 Expo plans did create the opportunity for that property to look for some other options. So, yes, to answer the member, I have asked the University of Alberta to revisit that plan, to meet with the neighbours, and to follow good planning processes as they move forward.

Dr. Taft: Well, given that the U of A is planning south campus residences for 15,000 students, equal to the combined population of all the neighbourhoods around south campus and given that the GO centre plus the proposed arenas and field house plus many other developments will generate major traffic concerns in an already congested area, will the minister require the university to

conduct a full, publicly disclosed traffic management plan as part of its LRDP?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In meetings with the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and the Member for Edmonton-Riverview and some of the neighbours we did hear that issues around both parking and transportation are going to be critical through the area not just for the people who live there and the new 15,000 but also for people commuting in. So it's going to be critical that the University of Alberta in partnership with the municipality develop a proper transportation plan that will meet the needs of not just this site but the neighbouring communities and those commuting through the property.

Dr. Taft: Well, given the wonderful opportunity that the south campus and Campus Saint-Jean lands provide and given that a top 20 university needs a top 20 campus and given that universities are meant to welcome peer reviews of their work, will the minister make sure the upcoming university LRDP is opened to international peer review before he approves it to help make the plan a global leader?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. It's my understanding that there has been a plan developed at least to give some feedback and input on how a green site could be created there and how the development can be done in an environmentally friendly way and, in fact, as a world leader for development in environmentally appropriate ways. The university has got some of the finest people working on that, and I'm hoping that they will build those ideas into their future long-range development plan so that we can see a green site on the south campus.

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

Anthony Henday Drive Interchanges

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of Alberta Transportation's ongoing efforts to improve traffic flow along Stony Plain Road, the Yellowhead, and the Anthony Henday, a series of events have transpired that resulted in the elimination of two of four accesses to the Westview Village and Acheson industrial parks. My questions are to the Minister of Transportation. Now that we've basically doubled the traffic on Winterburn Road, when will the 199th Street and 109th Avenue accesses be reopened?

Mr. Ouellette: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're investing \$168 million in the Stony Plain Road-Anthony Henday Drive interchange. The 109th Avenue access was temporarily closed last summer. We had hoped that it would open in late fall, but due to poor soil conditions and weather conditions we were unable to do that. We should have it open by early June. The permanent closure, though, of the 199th Street access is part of the construction of the interchange and will not be reopening as it's no longer safe for motorists.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Given that Winterburn Road south of the Yellowhead Trail crosses the CN main line, which is the busiest rail

line in Alberta, why did planners decide to shut down our alternative accesses without taking into account the dangers involved in that crossing?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, it was not our plan to have both accesses closed at the same time. The poor soil conditions that happened: we had some extra work to do, and we have done that now. Industry and community residents want this access open as quickly as possible, and so do I. That's why we're reopening the 109th Avenue access as a priority, and as soon as the asphalt plant is up and running, we'll be paving the access. We're looking to try and get it open in early . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member, please.

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good news, indeed. Given that my constituents will make very good use of the interchanges at Stony Plain Road and the Anthony Henday, what can we do in the long term to improve access to Acheson and Westview?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, we're going to reopen the 109th Avenue access once it's paved, and we're going to do that as quickly as we possibly can this spring. It's a top priority for us, and we'll proceed as quickly as possible and help relieve the congestion for motorists on Winterburn Road. We always do our very best to manage our construction projects as efficiently and as safely as possible. That's because we want to make sure that everyone gets home to their families every day.

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

Water Allocation

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's pet project, Shaping Alberta's Future, includes recommendations for our water system, including the creation of an Alberta water agency that will deal with water allocation and private industry building water infrastructure. This is another way for the government to continue to allow an antiquated Wild West system to determine who gets water. To the Minister of Environment: why would the government create another administrative authority behind which it can hide and continue to pull the strings, this time with our most important resource, water?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, we have had a process under way to engage Albertans in a discussion about water and water allocation. The report that the member refers to is a report that is not a government report. It is a report that was commissioned by the government for independent long-term thoughts that could help the government and Albertans to think about the future. The specifics in that report may or may not someday form government policy.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Back to the same minister. Why is the government encouraging private entities to build water infrastructure, which could be candidates for the new shaping the future fund? By my reading of that, the private sector once again can be eligible for subsidy to build infrastructure that they then own.

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, it's not unusual in the least for private entities to participate in some form of water management struc-

tures. The EPCORs of this world are heavily involved, TransAlta is heavily involved in this province, as are municipalities in various forms: public, private, and government entities. So I don't think that this is anything that the member or any Albertan should be concerned about. This is just looking at opportunities that may arise in the future.

Ms Blakeman: Uh-uh. Albertans don't like that.

Back to the same minister. Why does the government propose again and again and again to set up a system for the future, which insists on protecting individuals based on the past and lets them sell water just because they happen to be on the land first?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. Albertans cannot and will never be able to sell water. Water is the property of the Crown. There are opportunities for individuals and companies to process water in one form or another, and it goes on all of the time. The Albertans that live in the city of Edmonton buy their water from a private company called EPCOR. That's not in the least bit threatening, nor do I think that other kinds of discussions around water should be any more threatening.

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

2:40

Mature Worker Strategy

Mr. Vandermeer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. In late April the minister released a document called Engaging the Mature Worker: An Action Plan for Alberta. In that plan he talks about ways to encourage older workers to remain in the workforce. There is a lot of confusion out there as to what this plan is all about. Do you realistically expect seniors to remain in the workforce well into their 70s and 80s?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, nothing can be further from the truth. I do acknowledge that there are some spreading the fear that this minister is promoting freedom 85, but that is not the case. All we are doing is giving Albertans choices. By all means, any Albertan who chooses to work past the age of 65 should not be precluded from doing so and should have that opportunity to make that choice for herself or himself. The age of 65 is the new 55, and many of us choose to work longer.

Mr. Vandermeer: To the same minister: how can a government influence whether or not older workers will continue to work in the workforce?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, all we want to do is create an environment where they have at least the option of working past 65, and that would include making sure that our provincial benefits structure does not penalize people who are benefiting past the age of 65 by earning additional dollars if they choose to do so and by making sure that the taxation regime, both federally and provincially, is not punitive to a person who collects his or her pension and then chooses to work past 65. There are a number of steps that we can take to give seniors a viable option if they choose to exercise it.

Mr. Vandermeer: Is this action plan going to negatively affect younger employees trying to move up in the workforce?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, that's a good question. Looking at the fact that we are now having baby boomers retiring en masse and that our population growth is slightly above zero, we are already facing a shortage of certain skill sets and will be short some

77,000 workers over the next few years. The fact is that we actually need to capitalize on some of that experience – these are fine, experienced workers – to teach our new workers the skills. For every worker that is retiring right now, only a fraction of a worker is entering the workforce, so these workers, if they choose to continue working, would not be taking jobs away from young people.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that was 19 members who were recognized today. There were 113 questions and responses.

Join me in wishing two members of the Assembly a happy birthday today, the hon. Member for Red Deer-South and the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

In a few seconds from now we'll return to the Routine with Members' Statements, and we'll all leave as we ponder the concept of freedom 85.

Members' Statements

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

Asian Heritage Month

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize Asian Heritage Month in Alberta and across Canada. In 1998 the city of Edmonton was the first municipality in Canada to officially recognize Asian Heritage Month, with the province joining in on that recognition. I started the festival in Calgary in 2001, which in turn led to the government of Canada officially designating May as Asian Heritage Month in 2002.

Asian Heritage Month fosters appreciation for the contributions that have been and continue to be made to our country and to our province by Canadians of Asian descent since the mid-1800s. Through those contributions members of Alberta's Asian community have brought acclaim to this province and stand as role models for all Albertans, people like Canadian Football League hall of famer and former Lieutenant Governor the Hon. Norman Kwong, who was the first Chinese-Canadian to play in the Canadian Football League and Alberta's first Lieutenant Governor of Asian descent, and people like award-winning playwright and author Marty Chan, who helped raise awareness through the arts about issues faced by Asian-Canadian youth growing up in rural Alberta.

I want to encourage Albertans to take part in Asian Heritage Month by experiencing and enjoying the rich and diverse cultural heritage of our Asian communities.

Our Legislature, through the support of the Speaker's office, is offering such opportunity with a photo exhibit entitled Builders and Patriots: A History of Calgary's Chinatown. This collaborative project between the Sien Lok Society of Calgary and members of the broader Calgary community has been created by the community and for the community with a group of committed volunteers, and that just reflects the essence which has kept Chinatown alive to witness its 100th anniversary in 2010.

During Asian Heritage Month many events and activities will be taking place across the province, and I invite Albertans to join with me in the celebration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tribute to Health Professionals

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since January 4, 2010, when I crossed the floor, I have sat in this House across from the government, with which I have some very profound disagree-

ments. The government has held office for a long, long time. Over time it's lost touch with Albertans. Their big-government mentality confuses the people with the system, where the system is given credit for the people's achievements.

Let us shift our focus, Mr. Speaker, back to the successful, innovative, and capable people of this province. During the spring session there was one particular group of Albertans who have shown their bravery, their professionalism, and their dedication under unfair working conditions. I'm talking about our health care professionals. We owe these individuals so much gratitude that for me to stand here and try to express it in such a short time would be impossible. They serve in the face of hardship when their jobs are thankless, they serve in the face of unquestionable working conditions when the quality of the system is compromised, they serve in the face of fear and intimidation when these truths begin to emerge, and they endure these things for Albertans. For this they deserve all the respect we have to offer.

To say that they deserve better, Mr. Speaker, is a tremendous understatement. This government did not acknowledge them when they called for an inquiry simply to ensure that Albertans were getting the most from their health care system, and unfortunately this is why we have no reason to believe these abuses will stop at any time.

But I refuse to accept that there is no hope for our health care professionals. To them I can offer this. We in the Wildrose will continue to fight for them, and we will not stop until they finally receive the respect that they deserve from this government. Once they do, we will be one step closer to restoring Albertans' faith in our great province.

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

Highway Cleanup Program

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand today and recognize a great initiative that took place this past weekend. On Saturday, May 7, the annual highway cleanup program was out in full force as participants contributed their time and energy in order to help clean up Alberta's highways.

The program has been set up as a fundraiser event, allowing all sorts of clubs such as Scouts and 4-H to earn money for their organizations while making Alberta a better and cleaner place to live. This has been made possible by Alberta Transportation, who very generously donated money to these clubs based on the number of kilometres of highway they cleaned this weekend. Last year \$476,000 was awarded to 357 groups that took part in collecting an astounding 44,000 bags of garbage. I'd like to commend the Ministry of Transportation for taking part in such a valuable program. It's a true testament to the respect and value that we as Albertans place on our environment as well as the aesthetics of our beautiful landscapes.

Seeing these individuals out there this weekend was an effective reminder of the consequences that littering has on our province. We all need to think twice about throwing that piece of trash out of our windows or being careless with our refuse. Our highways and ditches are vital to Alberta's image as they are often a large part of the impression that our province provides to travelers as they pass through. Therefore, it's crucial that we keep them as clean and trash free as possible.

Again, I would like to ask the members of this Assembly to join me in thanking the annual highway cleanup program, Transportation Alberta, and all of the dedicated volunteers and participants who helped to keep Alberta beautiful this past weekend.

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

2:50 Rutherford Heights Retirement Residence

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I had the honour of opening a new community-based adult day program for seniors at Rutherford Heights Retirement Residence in southwest Edmonton. This program offers local residents and their families specialized care, social programs, meals, and other supports geared to the needs of the participants. It will provide much-needed support to the growing numbers of Albertans coping with the early stages of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Mr. Speaker, like other hon. members, I know from personal experience the value that these programs deliver not only to participants but also in the form of much-needed respite to the spouses, sons, daughters, and family and friends that care for them. Sadly, despite their many benefits and relatively low cost I am told these programs are scarce. I will leave the analysis as to why this is to others, but I think one factor that contributes greatly is that when it comes to continuing care, our focus today is pretty much where it was 40 years ago, centred squarely on the institution.

Mr. Speaker, this is not to say that we don't need more facility-based care for seniors who can no longer be supported at home. On the contrary, my constituents have made it very clear to me, for example, that they don't want a plan for continuing care that places arbitrary caps or quotas on long-term care beds. But what makes a program like the one I've just described unique is that it looks to how the institution can reach out and work with the community to provide innovative, personalized support to seniors and their families, who are working hard to maintain their independence.

In the final analysis, Mr. Speaker, if as members of this House we look at aging and continuing care only through the lens of beds and bedpans, I guarantee that this province, with all that we have, will never succeed in addressing the challenges before us. This is a public policy discussion worth having soon. Alberta's aging public policy framework is a very good place to start.

Thank you.

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

Postpartum Depression

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to rise today and speak about an important issue that impacts the lives of many Albertans, postpartum depression. Postpartum depression and other postpartum mood disorders affect approximately 15 per cent of mothers within the first year of giving birth. However, the majority of these mothers do not get help for a variety of reasons. Either they go undiagnosed, are unable to find help, or never come forward because of the stigma attached to postpartum depression.

It is important that Albertans acknowledge the significance of this form of depression and understand that there are resources available. The organization Postpartum Depression Awareness, or PPDA, is doing amazing work spreading this message of awareness to Albertans by providing resource-related projects to support those dealing with PPD.

One of the most impressive developments is the creation of a comprehensive website which endeavours to list all of the resources that are available in the Edmonton area relating to postpartum depression. They are trying to inform the public through their yearly awareness month and through other initiatives. The next objective of the PPDA is to implement a provincial

awareness month, which would generate significant awareness of postpartum depression.

Mr. Speaker, knowledge and resources are very powerful tools to assist those who are dealing with the challenges of PPD. I would like to commend all the efforts and initiatives that have been undertaken by my constituent Tascheleia and her colleagues to generate awareness and support for postpartum depression. I would like to urge all Albertans to support these endeavours in every way they can, and I sincerely wish PPDA every success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Education Funding

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Alberta students are the future of this province. Their creativity, energy, and intelligence, if properly nurtured, will one day drive Alberta's prosperity and growth. But this government is shortchanging Alberta students and their parents with their short-sighted approach to public education funding. The chair of the Edmonton public school board has called this government's budget the worst budget for education and school districts in years. The Catholic board chair simply states: there's nothing left to trim.

Now parents are out of pocket hundreds of dollars a year in extra costs such as busing fees, and in return the children will have to make do with fewer teachers and larger class sizes. Parents in my constituency have contacted our office to explain how they have no choice but to resort to fundraising so their children can enjoy basic classroom necessities and important teaching aids such as library books, technological resources, and field trips.

Alberta Education's funding manual for school authorities notes that funding allocation changes for this year will expand class sizes, eliminate teaching English as a second language, and may eliminate or severely reduce funding for special-needs children. We don't know for sure because the document merely states that such funding is "under review."

The Minister of Education has dumped all the responsibility for his flawed budget onto school boards, who must now decide, in his words, what doesn't need to be done. I guess that includes having enough teachers to effectively provide sufficient personal attention to each and every student or helping children with special needs or providing English- or French-language instruction in an increasingly globalized world.

Public education is the single most important investment any government manages. This Progressive Conservative government has dropped the ball, and the students and their parents are once again paying the price.

Thank you.

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Foothills-Rocky View.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present 2,077 signatures from concerned and committed parents in Calgary. These Alberta parents are petitioning in support of choice for their children's education through charter schools. Their request includes a fair and equitable process to establish charter schools through direct application and also the ability for charter schools to be granted earned permanence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition. I've looked into the eyes of young men and women with a five-year education degree from the U of L and two years' experience, and it wasn't a pretty sight as they will now lose their jobs. I'm presenting a petition signed by a hundred people urging the government to provide funding to "address the needs of every student, every day, no exceptions."

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Government House Leader I'm pleased to propose the following motion:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2011 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

Is that the motion that you're looking for?

The Speaker: That's not the information I have, that that was what you would be giving oral notice of a motion of today.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 20

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2011

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 20, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2011.

This bill, if passed, will allow volunteer and casual firefighters, categorized as part-time firefighters, to access the benefits of receiving compensation for a list of presumptive cancers without shouldering the burden of proof. Mr. Speaker, these same benefits currently extend to Alberta's full-time firefighters. I along with Albertans hold our province's firefighters in high regard. The bottom line is that part-time or volunteer firefighters can be exposed to the same hazards at a fire scene as a full-time firefighter would.

Bill 20 is reflective of the government's ongoing commitment to the brave men and women who put their lives on the line so that we can enjoy ours.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this, and I ask all members of this Assembly to support Bill 20.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of 38 separate reports from long-term care workers collected by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees indicating specific problems on shifts that were short-staffed. These reports indicate that residents were left in bed, that baths were not given, and that bells were not answered in a timely manner. This is in addition to hundreds of similar reports that the NDP opposition has tabled over the last two years and indicates that the government cannot argue that it is unaware of the situation.

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. members, I must advise that under 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."

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent from the members assembled to continue with the daily Routine past the 3 p.m. time.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Let's continue, then, with tablings. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The copy of the letter and my cheque, as I had promised on April 2, 2007, where I give half of my pay raise in support of AISH being indexed, as are our MLA salaries: I've sent it to the Medicine Hat food bank this month.

I also have tablings from Gwen Bodie, Sandra Leckie, Dave Birrell, John Clarke, and John Verlaeck, who are extremely disappointed with this government and very upset with the clear-cutting that will be happening in the Castle River area.

I have five copies of a letter from Megan Cummins expressing her deep dismay regarding the education cuts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Weadick, Minister of Advanced Education and Technology, response to Written Question 20, asked for by Dr. Taft on May 9, 2011, and on behalf of Mr. Allred, the hon. Member for St. Albert, a document dated September 30, 2010, entitled Court Case Management (CCM) Program Phase 1, Closeout Report, prepared by the Provincial Court of Alberta.

The Speaker: Hon. members, during the question period an hon. member rose in the House and said that he wanted to raise a point of order at the conclusion of the question period. There will be no such point of order even considered by the chair with respect to this matter as there are no points of order against the rulings of the chair.

The subject matter in question was the elimination of one question by the chair in terms of preserving decorum in the House and dealing with preambles in the House. The situation with preambles is very, very clear. It's been agreed to by all members in the all-party agreement, that was given on several occasions, that "preambles to supplemental questions are not allowed . . . A preamble [does] not exceed one carefully drawn sentence . . . A supplementary question should need no preamble." Included in the past documentation is a document signed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere adhering to this, in fact advancing it.

What was said today when there was an interjection. The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere said, "It's not what I heard when I was in caucus, Minister," period, and then went on for about five more sentences before the chair said: no, no, no. "If that isn't a preamble, I don't know what it is," said the chair.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Speaker, I raise a point of order.

The Speaker: There are no points of order against . . .

Mr. Boutilier: I raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Would you sit down, please? Would you sit down? Would you sit down? [interjection] Sit down. I'm standing up. Sit down. [interjection] Sit down.

Mr. Boutilier: I'm still raising a point of order.

The Speaker: When I stand up, you sit down, okay? Okay? If I recognize you, I will. If I don't see you, I won't.

I will preserve decorum in this House, and that's one of the responsibilities of the chair of the House. I've indicated this matter. I've dealt with this matter with respect to preambles. There are no points of order against decisions with respect to what the chair has given in terms of rulings in this House.

Now, Mr. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, what is your point of order?

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I raised a point of order under 13(2) pertaining to that a member may request of the Speaker "reasons for any decision on the request of a Member." What I observed in the exchange this afternoon is the fact that the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere had started his comments by saying "given," which is a parliamentary procedure that has been widely accepted in this House.

The Speaker: No, no. Sorry. Please sit down. There are no points of order under 13(2). That's not a point of order. It's a request that can be made by any member at any time for an explanation by the Speaker. The Speaker shall give the explanation.

Just in the last few seconds the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo said: it's my understanding that the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere started with the word "given." He did not. I have the Blues in front of me. Sorry. It says very clearly, very clearly in the Blues that there is no "given" with respect to the time the interjection came from the chair.

Furthermore, it's very, very clear what was said. The chair by way of explanation interjected with respect to the usage of a preamble on a third question. There was also a preamble on the second question. It was let go. But very clearly, everybody has agreed, including the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere – including the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere – who has signed a document with his name on it, with respect to not using preambles. This is not a question. We're not wasting the time of the House dealing with this anymore. It's been dealt with.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Adjournment of Spring Session

16. Mr. Zwozdesky moved on behalf of Mr. Hancock:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2011 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rose prematurely with a motion that I needed to make, and since I read it incorrectly and at the incorrect time, I'd like to now read the correct motion at

the correct time. My apologies to you and to the House for that error on my part.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this motion is not debatable. I'll call the question.

[Government Motion 16 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 19

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2011

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Justice I would like to move second reading of Bill 19, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2011.

Mr. Speaker, as I think all members of this Assembly know, miscellaneous statutes typically reflect provisions that are very straightforward, noncontentious – many would call them house-keeping in most cases – and it's for that reason that they usually receive the support of this House. I would encourage all members to please give their support to Bill 19 and its provisions at second.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a second time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek the unanimous consent of the House to proceed with the second reading at this time of Bill 20, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2011, as brought forward by the hon. minister of immigration and citizenship.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we're going to need unanimous consent to the question being asked, to move to this next stage of the bill on the same day.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Bill 20

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2011

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this amendment act. Before us today is Bill 20, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2011. If passed, this act will extend the same WCB coverage for presumptive cancers, that is currently offered to some 3,500 full-time firefighters in Alberta, to the 10,000 individuals who serve as volunteer and casual firefighters in this province.

Mr. Speaker, when the alarm sounds or the phone rings, these part-time firefighters drop what they're doing and voluntarily – and I underscore: voluntarily – go into harm's way to protect their families, their neighbours, and their communities.

3:10

For most people it's human nature to run from danger. No one can be faulted for it because it's simply a natural instinct. For firefighters, including part-time firefighters, their training tells them to run, Mr. Speaker, towards danger, to set aside concerns for themselves in order to help their fellow man. That kind of spirit and dedication deserves our respect, our sincere thanks, and, as proposed in this act today, our support through legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it is one thing to volunteer to coach a soccer team or serve on a library board. Many of us have been that kind of volunteer in our own communities. Those volunteer jobs are important. But it takes a special type of man or woman to be willing to put on a helmet, strap on a respirator, and hop onto a fire truck at 2 o'clock in the morning to help a neighbour. In many cases they might be driving a fire truck, not just riding on it. These individuals have tremendous community spirit, and they demonstrate it every day by putting their own lives at risk to help others. They might be a mechanic at a local car dealership or a farmer or a furniture salesperson, but they all have something in common. They all believe it's their duty to step up when they're needed.

I think that members of this Legislature will agree with me that all Albertans benefit from the goodwill and sacrifice that those volunteers have agreed to make. That is why I am glad that we can step up today and offer them something in return with this proposed act.

Contracting cancer through exposure to chemicals or other hazardous materials in the course of being a firefighter is, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, a known possibility. That is why we have implemented presumptive WCB coverage for 14 types of cancer, including four more just last week, for full-time firefighters. Part-time firefighters face the same risk as they are exposed to the same hazards as their full-time counterparts. They can be called out to fires at oil and gas facilities, explosions at remote utility installations, or chemical releases from motor vehicle accidents on the highways. In other words, they can easily come into contact with the same circumstances and the same hazards that full-time firefighters often do. Therefore, it makes sense that they should be offered the same WCB coverage as well.

Mr. Speaker, this proposed act has the full support of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, which passed a resolution suggesting to government to extend the coverage to volunteer firefighters at its own 2011 convention. These organizations have urged us to extend WCB coverage for presumptive cancers since their municipalities are considered the employers of firefighters even if they are part-time volunteers.

Passing this bill would also be in keeping with the majority of provinces and territories, that currently offer workers' compensation coverage to full-time firefighters, including British Columbia, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories. These jurisdictions have all extended coverage for presumptive cancers to part-time and volunteer firefighters as well. They have seen that it makes sense to support those volunteer firefighters who, unfortunately, contract cancer through their work and compensate them without forcing them to shoulder the burden of proof.

Mr. Speaker, we here in the Legislature have been given the task of representing Albertans. It is our job to act on their behalf. That is why I urge my colleagues to support this bill. Since we represent Albertans, then collectively we owe a huge debt of gratitude to those 10,000 part-time firefighters, who set aside their work and their free time to serve us in our time of need. The least we can do is to provide them with proper compensation coverage should they contract an illness in the line of duty.

I am proud to carry Bill 20, Mr. Speaker, and I encourage all of my colleagues in the Legislature to support it. Thank you so much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, then the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, then the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I am happy to stand today on behalf of the Wildrose caucus to express our support for Bill

20, which adds presumptive WCB coverage for volunteer firefighters who are diagnosed with one of the 14 cancers linked to the dangerous work. Nobody has a workplace that is more dangerous day in and day out than our firefighters. Even if the whole crew makes it back after fighting a fire without any apparent injury, there are the countless toxins that they are exposed to. Studies are confirming what common sense would tell you: smoke from all burning material is full of cancer-causing agents.

Mr. Speaker, houses are not just made out of wood. As anyone who has thrown a plastic wrapper into a campfire knows, burning plastic smells awful. Now think about all of the things in a house that are not wood or paper: counters, carpets, paint, siding. Buildings are full of all kinds of materials that are not meant to be burned. Burning material can be even more toxic when it comes to industrial fires.

Last week four cancers were added to the list for regular firefighters, and that process should be supported. It's a shame that only eight years ago firefighters had to prove which fire caused their cancer to be eligible for coverage. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, we are well past that.

Extending this coverage to the volunteer firefighters is also an important next step and one that we all need to support. These brave and generous people are essential to smaller communities across Alberta. Smaller towns cannot afford full-time forces, but fortunately smaller towns are blessed to have these wonderful people committed to rushing out in all hours and in all types of weather to contain any fires that break out in their community.

You know, people may be surprised – I was surprised, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly – at the number of volunteer firefighters that are in this province. I live in the city of Calgary, so I was quite taken aback when I started reading the numbers of volunteer firefighters that are in this province. They are truly a valuable safety net for our province, and they deserve our support. As we're hearing, they are facing some recruitment issues, and hopefully things like that combined with the proposed federal tax credit will help reverse some of the recruitment issues. The AUMA as well as volunteer firefighter groups have been pushing for this change. Good for them.

It's important, Mr. Speaker, and I say that as someone who growing up in Saskatchewan had a major house fire in their own home, where we lost everything. Believe it or not, they managed to save my two turtles and my dog out of that fire. We walked away with the clothes on our back.

I have always had a great admiration for the firefighters in this province, and I am extremely pleased to stand up and support Bill 20.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to speak to Bill 20, Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2011. Forty-two years ago as of August 30, 1969, Rob Tomlinson, a Calgary firefighter, stood up as my best man at my wedding. Rob has recently retired from the Calgary fire department, in which he was a captain. Rob served very diligently over those years for the department, and his service was very much appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the tradition started by a former Member for Calgary-North Hill, Richard Magnus, of extending the protection for firefighters due to a series of carcinogens has been extended to volunteer firefighters. As the hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration pointed out, simply having a V on the front of your jacket, which represents volunteer, should not prevent you from receiving the same benefits as your counterparts in the city.

But we still have a ways to go. Firefighters are not supported when they suffer from posttraumatic stress syndrome to the same extent that either armed forces members or RCMP members are supported. Mr. Speaker, I have spent a number of years through the Calgary-Varsity constituency working on behalf of another captain of the Calgary fire department by the name of Greg McDougall. When Greg McDougall was forced by the city into early retirement based on posttraumatic stress syndrome, there was extremely little support for him either from the city at that time or from the Workers' Compensation Board. It has been an ongoing struggle, actually, with a forced recommendation from the Ombudsman to require the Workers' Compensation Board to apologize to Mr. McDougall and look after his financial concerns.

3:20

While I am pleased to see it and to support the passing of Bill 20, until firefighters are dealt with in all circumstances, including posttraumatic stress disorder, we will not be finished. Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that the same rights that have been extended to volunteer firefighters will be extended to all first responders. In rural districts the firefighter and the paramedic are often the same individual. Police forces, whether they be sheriffs, whether they be RCMP, are also on the same site directing traffic and risking their lives, and at some point their contributions along with their comrades, the firefighters, need to be recognized.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to rise and speak in support of Bill 20, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2011. I think this bill recognizes that it is high time that we treat all professional firefighters in the same manner, and I stress the word "professional" because even though we have in this province full-time paid firefighters, a significant proportion of this province, including the community that I call home, the city of Leduc, is served by a volunteer force. As a matter of fact, the force in Leduc is a combination of both volunteer and full-time firefighters. I can assure you that when these brave men and women attend the scene of a fire, there is no difference between the volunteer and the full-time paid individual.

The risks that these individuals are exposed to are great, and it is something that we have recognized in this Chamber in previous amendments. I look back, Mr. Speaker, to Bill 201, that I was privileged to carry last year, the previous amendment act to the WCB act, that added additional presumptive cancers to the list for firefighters. Also, I was very pleased to see the recent addition of four new cancers by the WCB in the past week. I think that it is very fitting and it's a credit to the work of volunteer firefighters across our province that we would now, as proposed by Bill 20, offer volunteer firefighters the same level of protection, recognizing the significant risk that these brave men and women put themselves in when they go out to save our lives and our property on a day-by-day basis.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all my colleagues to support swift passage of Bill 20. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in recognizing the speaking order this afternoon, because of the time commitment of 20 minutes and 20 minutes, the person who introduced the bill, in this case the hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration, would have had 20 minutes. Then the second speaker would have had 20 minutes. Normally under our protocol it's a member of the Official Opposition that would get 20 minutes.

Also, Standing Order 29(2)(a) did not apply because in this case I just recognized the first person who stood and the third speaker, and this was the Member for Calgary-Varsity. I did not offer 29(2)(a) because if he had been recognized as second, it wouldn't have happened anyway.

Now we've got the fourth speaker, and that is the Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, who has participated, and we do have 29(2)(a) available. We'll start now with this one if anybody wants to participate under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Are there additional speakers? On the debate. Proceed.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Bill 20, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2011, is an unusual but a good request. I am glad that the Assembly is allowing this legislation to proceed quickly. Certainly, all Alberta firefighters must receive enhanced WCB cancer coverage. It was indicated in a government press release from last week that the list of cancers eligible for coverage will be among the best in Canada. Whether we have voluntary firefighters, Mr. Speaker, or we have full-time firefighters, no one denies that they should be protected under the Workers' Compensation Board for coverage.

Now, certainly, I have no problem supporting this bill. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity talked about the efforts by the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill I think it was called in those days, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Richard Magnus. He worked very hard on previous legislation to ensure that firefighters were covered.

But I would like this Assembly at this time to consider what we have done today for voluntary firefighters and to give due consideration to better protecting the rest of Alberta's workforce who each and every day when they go to work are exposed to agents or toxins. It has been known scientifically that cancer can result as exposure to these toxins and agents increases. Essentially, I would hope that what we have done for firefighters in the past, whether they're full-time or whether they're voluntary firefighters, all hon. members of this Assembly would consider for the rest of the workforce who day in and day out are exposed to cancer-causing agents.

We can go through the financial statements of the Workers' Compensation Board, and we can see where there are millions of dollars set aside in the occupational disease reserve fund. There are examples, for instance, with welders – and we have brought this up in the Assembly before – where welders have an unusual rate of throat or thoracic cancer. We don't know the causes of that, but it sure would be, I think, good public policy if this government was to act expediently once and for all to get a study done to see precisely the long-term effects that welding has on those who are qualified to practice welding procedures.

Now, with that, I would just like to say that Bill 20 is the right thing and the fair thing to do, but we have so much work to do for the rest of the workforce in this province. I'm urging my colleagues: please don't forget that there are others that, unfortunately, are exposed to toxins and agents that produce cancers. It may not happen next week or next month. It may happen 10, 20 years down the road.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

There being none, the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House to participate in the debate, and Edmonton-Riverview to follow.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to have the opportunity this afternoon to rise and speak on Bill 20, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2011, as introduced by the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Now, we look at the situation in rural Alberta where most of the

volunteer firefighters exist. You see them having to come in from work in many cases. Of course, fires and all kinds of emergencies don't happen at a convenient time. So they have to come in and suit up, go out and fight the fire, and in many cases then go back to work. Now, of course, this is very difficult for the whole family. To think that these people are putting themselves in harm's way to save the lives and property of other people, I think it behooves us to make this kind of an adjustment so that if they are exposed to carcinogens, like so many firefighters are, and they develop these types of cancers, the least that we could do would be to make sure that they have compensation.

3:30

When we look at the volunteer fire departments and the type of backup that they would have versus what we would find in the cities, where they have many, many stations, top-notch equipment, this sort of thing, I think that in many cases we don't appreciate what these volunteers are putting up with in order to save people's lives. It's not only the fires that they attend to but other types of disasters and vehicle accidents. At any kind of emergency like that you will find volunteer firefighters on the line helping people.

It was interesting. A week ago in the county of Lacombe all of the municipalities within the county got together and signed agreements to assist in emergency management. Well, when you look at the personnel that will be carrying this out, it is primarily the firefighters in all those small towns and villages and the county that have gotten together to provide this service. Now, I know that it's getting more and more difficult for the volunteer firefighting units to find the people. Of course, this has a good deal to do with the jobs that people have and the area that they have to cover.

I think that this is a great move. I was very, very pleased with the answer yesterday to the question that I asked the minister about this very issue. He told me that I didn't have to wait long or to stay tuned, something like that. So I was very pleased to learn today that this was going to be introduced. I want to once again thank the minister for bringing this forward. It's a great move.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available should anyone wish to participate.

I see no movement, so I'll call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview to participate in the debate.

Dr. Taft: In the debate, Mr. Speaker, yes. I join with other members of the Assembly in supporting this bill. I want to make note of its admirable intent, which is to extend the protection offered to professional firefighters to volunteer firefighters under WCB. It's already been mentioned in this Assembly by the minister and by others some of the risks that all firefighters face, whether they're professionals or volunteers. If we expect people to volunteer for this position, we need to, I think, in some ways treat them even better than we treat professionals because they're not getting paid, they're committing their time, and they are after all risking their health and their lives on a volunteer basis.

I would like to get some questions on the record that the minister might address at later stages in the bill. These may be questions, Mr. Speaker, that I ought to know the answer to, but I'm going to proceed on the basis that there's no such thing as a stupid question. My first question is around the payment of WCB premiums. How will that be handled in this particular situation? Does the minister have a plan around this? Is there going to be a financial implication for volunteer fire departments, or does this flow through to the minister? Or are we going to expect these volunteer firefighters to now have to pay their own WCB premi-

ums? I don't know what the issues are here, Mr. Speaker, but I will be looking to the minister to answer that set of questions.

My second question is just around the position of the Workers' Compensation Board itself on this piece of legislation. Has the WCB been consulted? If so, did they say anything? If they haven't, they should be. I'd be curious and I would think all members of this Assembly would be curious to know what the WCB might be saying about Bill 20.

I also want to raise the question just around costs, which probably relates not just to premiums but to the payment of benefits. Has there been any assessment of the cost of this legislation? Do we have any idea at all how many volunteer firefighters might qualify for benefits and how much those benefits will cost? Has anybody looked at that? It seems to me a basic question that we should all be asking. It doesn't mean that I'm opposing the bill. I just want to be informed when I vote on something. So that's a handful of questions.

I also want to echo the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. The intent of this bill, as I noted in my very first comments, is to extend WCB protection to a group of people who do not currently have that protection. It's a good intent. I think it's an intent that should be applied to paid farm workers, Mr. Speaker. Paid farm workers run some of the same risks, don't they? They handle chemicals that can be carcinogenic. They run physical risks in running equipment. We all know that farms are among the most dangerous worksites in the world, perhaps not as dangerous as going into a burning building but very dangerous.

Ms Blakeman: You still get dead.

Dr. Taft: Yeah. Either way you get injured or killed.

Actually, it would be interesting if the minister had any statistical information he could provide to the Assembly comparing the accident, injury, work-related disease, and fatality rates of firefighters versus the same figures for paid farm workers. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that I won't be surprised if paid farm workers actually have a higher injury rate than firefighters. I don't know, but it wouldn't surprise me.

My point is that the intent here is to extend WCB benefits to volunteer firefighters. In that spirit I think everybody in this Assembly knows that I and other members of the Alberta Liberal caucus would like to see that intent flow through to paid farm workers. I just think it's an unacceptable failure – and I could choose much stronger language than that – that this government betrays an entire class of workers.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up by saying: good piece of legislation, let's get some more details, and let's take the intent of this and apply it to paid farm workers next.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Are there other participants?

I'll call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a second time]

3:40

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

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

Bill 19**Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2011**

The Chair: Are there comments or questions on Bill 19?

Hon. Members: Question.

The Chair: Question? No speaking? Wow, that's great. All right. The chair shall now call the question on Bill 19.

[The clauses of Bill 19 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Private Bills**Committee of the Whole****Bill Pr. 1****Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties Amendment Act, 2011**

The Chair: Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview on Bill Pr. 1.

Dr. Taft: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't prolong this. I want to first of all commend the work of the Private Bills Committee under the leadership of its fine chairman, the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill. On this bill we as a committee received a presentation from the petitioner, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. We did receive some useful background research and I suppose we'd call it advice from Parliamentary Counsel. There was no particular concern in the committee about Pr. 1, so I think you are well aware it deserves full support.

At some point, though, this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, I think it's just really important to remind members of this Assembly what private bills are about. I know there was a bit of confusion at one point, members mixing up private bills with private members' bills. They're actually two very different things. It took me a while as an MLA to learn the difference.

There is some documentation available on private bills, which I would like to bring to the attention of all members of the Assembly, particularly members of the Private Bills Committee. I know the chairman has worked at this. I'm just reinforcing the work of the chairman. Since in my position I'll never, ever be a chairman of a committee, I can only imagine and pretend and try to be helpful here. I would like members to take the time to study what a private bill is to understand how it differs from a private member's bill, to understand that the Private Bills Committee has a particular vetting role and questioning role, that private bills have a very long and ancient tradition, and that they need to be managed and approved through a due process, Mr. Chairman. It's that kind of background that I wanted to get on the table, that influences not just Pr. 1 but all of the other private bills we will be discussing today.

With those comments, I'll just wrap up by saying: glad to support Pr. 1.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wish to comment on the bill?

Seeing none, the chair shall now put the question.

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill Pr. 2**Galt Scholarship Fund Transfer Act**

The Chair: Does any hon. member wish to speak or comment on Bill Pr. 2? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I recall my colleague from Lethbridge-East having spoken in favour of second reading on this bill last night. She actually came in specially to do it because she was so impressed with this group and all of the wonderful work that it's done.

Essentially what we have is the Galt School of Nursing Alumnae Society transferring their trust fund to the University of Lethbridge, which allows the Galt scholarship fund to be continued and allows the administration of it to now be under the university. So it allows a very honourable family name in Lethbridge to continue and for the opportunities that are presented by the scholarship fund to also continue. It funds scholarships to students enrolled at the University of Lethbridge, specifically around encouraging students in health care, I believe.

I'm very happy to recommend passage of Bill Pr. 2, the Galt Scholarship Fund Transfer Act, in Committee of the Whole. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wish to speak on the bill?

Dr. Brown: Mr. Chairman, I wish to have the question put at this time.

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 2 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

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

The Chair: Any hon. members wish to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of my colleague from Calgary-Lougheed. This is a bill that was supported by the Private Bills Committee, and the committee recommended that the bill proceed. Therefore, I would ask for the question to be put.

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 7 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

3:50

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I would move that the committee now rise and report the following bills: Bill 19, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2011; Bill Pr. 1, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties Amendment Act, 2011; Bill Pr. 2, the Galt Scholarship Fund Transfer Act; and Bill Pr. 7, the Hull Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2011.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 19, Bill Pr. 1, Bill Pr. 2, and Bill Pr. 7.

Thank you, sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur with the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 8 Missing Persons Act

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

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and move third reading of Bill 8, the Missing Persons Act.

The Missing Persons Act was brought about at the request of the police in this province and will allow these police agencies to access personal information they need to help find missing persons in cases where the police have no reason to suspect that a crime has yet been committed. This will allow for more efficient police investigations when searching for missing persons. This act also ensures that the information collected is protected if the former missing person does not want to be contacted once found.

All information collected under this act is confidential and can only be used in situations cited in the legislation. Records and information collected must be kept separate from other police agency records and will not be shared. Amendments have been made to ensure that there is a review of the act in five years and to clarify the powers and duties of the Information and Privacy Commissioner under the FOIP Act.

I want to thank my hon. colleagues for their participation in the debate on this bill and for their continued support of this important legislation. Thank you, sir.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on the bill.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak in third reading on Bill 8, the Missing Persons Act. In third reading, of course, we're speaking to the anticipated effect of the act once it has been passed. It's no secret to anyone that

read the *Hansard* or followed the archival video from last night that I brought forward a number of amendments. That's not to say that I don't agree with the principle of what's been presented in the act. I just think that the way the act has been drafted creates as much possibility for harm as it creates possibility for doing good. I wish that the government, in supporting the sponsor of the bill, had chosen a way that did not throw the net so wide, that didn't capture every single Albertan as part of going forward.

I live in a society which is governed by permission. We willingly acknowledge that there's a set of rules that we all agree to abide by, and we all agree that we will have paid people put in positions of authority to implement those rules upon us. It's by consensus. We agree to this. So I don't want anyone running around there saying that I've got some kind of a hate on or that I've got a problem with police forces. I don't. I live in this society. I approve of that. I agree with that. However, we are also living in a society where increasingly we are losing control – indeed, it can be argued that we've lost control – of our personal information. It's now being held by so many different sets of government agencies, private entities that we don't know who is tracking our movements.

We no longer really have the ability to go about our lives without being under surveillance in some way, shape, or form, including, as I pointed out last night, with my iPhone. I'm a big Apple fan, and I love using my iPhone. Now I find out that they've been spying on me and tracking everywhere I go and every time I stop and for how long I stop, and all of that information is duly kept. Of course, Apple as well says: this will be kept in a separate database; we will not use this information except for our own purposes. They don't tell me what that is.

All of this always starts out well. Let me be really clear. When we're talking about electronic databases that are in use that have in them personal information, it is very, very rarely a computer problem that releases personal information. The systems that have been developed are actually very good at being able to bar people from getting access to a security level that they're not entitled to, et cetera, et cetera. If you're given a code or as a certain level of individual you are given access to this level of information and no more, the computer systems are actually really good at that stuff.

Consistently where we have found a problem with these databases is human beings willingly, knowingly contravening the rules that are there and accessing those databases. We've had a number of examples here very, very close to home. I live in Edmonton. We had a terrible experience for everyone involved, including members of the Edmonton Police Service, when it was discovered that members of the police service had accessed information, including home addresses, and in fact had used it for surveillance on a member of the media and on an individual who was then chief commissioner of the Edmonton Police Commission. Shocking, and as shocking to members of the Edmonton Police Service as it was to members of the public that that information would have been accessed for reasons for which it was not collected.

Then as people started to say, "Well, was my information looked at?" we further found out we had a very well-known defence attorney in town who went through the appropriate channels and found out that his information had been accessed literally dozens and dozens and dozens of times by different individuals, by the same individuals at different times, to track his whereabouts, to track what he was doing, to get into his finances, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So we know that these things happen.

That's my frustration. We are trying to create a good thing. We're trying to create a system by which we could find people who were missing, who may be in need of our help. That's a good idea, and the intent of that is good. But the effect of what I see that

we've done in Bill 8 is that and a whole bunch of other things, in that we have also essentially, I think, criminalized law-abiding Albertans who either forget or aren't feeling well or make a conscious choice to not tell a bunch of people where they are.

4:00

According to this legislation that can trigger the local police service under section 3 to apply *ex parte* to a justice of the peace for an order to get access to an astonishing array of information from bank records, employment records, health records, GPS records, cellphone, et cetera, et cetera, to track this person down. That's a wonderful thing if you're trying to find a missing person.

It's not such a wonderful thing if you're an individual who just decided to take off. It means that we're not allowed to do that in Alberta anymore because we in this Assembly passed a bill that said that we're not going to allow Albertans to play hooky, to take off, to forget. That's the part that I object to in this bill. I don't object to trying to do a good service, to try and find people who are missing and need help.

I came from the cafeteria downstairs. As I went by, there was a bulletin board with a photo of a young man. It just jumped out at me. I stopped and went back and looked. I thought: boy, that's a very attractive young man. Well, there's a bias. I went back and looked at the poster and realized that it's a poster of the young man from the military that has gone missing recently in Edmonton. You just have that little gasp of air when you go: oh, no; that's just awful. Everybody feels that.

This is my struggle with this bill. It did what it needed to do, and then it did a whole bunch more. That's my objection to the bill. I think the effect of the bill is that we haven't done enough to make sure that it's very clear that anyone who does access any of these records that can now be collected on an individual and uses them for a purpose beyond what they were intended for, the consequences will be severe. I think that needs to be made very well known and needs to be put into practice far more often. At this point it's worth it for people that want to be able to gain access that they shouldn't be gaining because they gain the information. That's what they want.

Let me give you another well-documented example from health information. We had the other woman in a – what do they call them? – love triangle who was regularly accessing health information on her lover's wife's progress through cancer treatment to see, you know, how she was doing. Can you imagine what an invasion into the privacy of that woman it was? Trying to survive cancer treatment is one thing, dealing with a family breakdown is another, and now to find out that a perfect stranger to her is regularly accessing her health records to see how she's coming along, or more likely how she's not coming along.

So that's what we know. Yet this bill did nothing to deal with what we know about what goes wrong in the system. It's giving immense powers to the police to once again collect information.

Now, the act says that you can only use it for this purpose. Yeah, true. But we've also had other instances where information was collected for a specific purpose – we were told it wasn't going to be used for anything else – and lo and behold, several years, 10 years, a dozen years down the road it is in fact linked to other databases and eventually used for other purposes. That's exactly what happens. So although we're told that today, we have no guarantee that in the future it won't be used for other purposes. That's a bigger problem, I think. Again, this act did a good thing, and then it went too far and allowed too many other things to happen along with this.

People say to me: "Well, for heaven's sake. If you've done nothing wrong, what's your problem? What are you worried

about?" Well, part of the issue that we found with collection of personal information and databases is that sometimes the information is wrong, and it's unverified or unverifiable. People are walking around looking at your information, using it for various purposes, and in fact it's wrong or it's misinterpreted.

A doctor codes an extra long visit with a patient as a diagnostic code for counselling on alcoholism because, well, that just gives him the half-hour billing, and that's close enough. In fact, that turns up in someone's employment record later when they're checked by an insurance company, and the person is denied a job. Again, these are real cases. A person is denied a job because it turns up in their health record that they've been counselled for alcoholism. Well, they weren't. They just had an extra long session with a doctor who decided to code it as a counselling session. You know, tick for alcoholism because it was a longer session and they wanted to be paid for it. But there it is. The information is in there. It wasn't correct, and it was misinterpreted further than that, and it had a huge effect down the line on somebody's life.

That's my concern when we start giving powers of collection of information to a group. This government has been very generous in giving overrides and exemptions around the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information to police services. There are a lot of exceptions that they already have in the health information bill, in the privacy and information protection bill, and under FOIP, a lot of extra power. More than any other organization the police services have those exemptions, so I think we need to be very, very cautious when we start handing over additional access to a very wide range of information.

Let's go back to that argument about, you know, if you're leading a good life and you're a good person, then what have you got to worry about? Well, we already know that things can be misinterpreted in a file.

Let me give another example with all those Google maps they're taking of people. Here's one. This happened to me. You all know in this House of my struggles with smoking and how it took me so long to quit and how hard it was. In the Google map picture of my home there is a woman sitting on the front steps smoking a cigarette. So I'm trying to tell my insurance company that I quit smoking, and there sitting on the front steps is a woman smoking a cigarette. Well, the woman is not me, but it's damn hard for me to convince the insurance company that it's not me because she's sitting on the front steps of my house. She's turning up in Google street view clearly smoking a cigarette on the front steps of my house. What the heck am I supposed to do with that?

Now I'm in an argument about whether or not I'm entitled to this health care because I'm a smoker and not a nonsmoker as I claimed. This is a true story, guys. I had to go through a number of things to prove that I wasn't blond and didn't weigh that much. "Here's a picture of me, and I don't know who that person was." It turned out to be someone who was visiting an individual who was boarding with me at the time. That's what happens to that information. It wasn't me, but she was smoking sitting on the front steps of my house. Therefore, I was in trouble with the insurance company that I had applied to to get a better rate because I went through all that hell and agony to quit smoking.

You start to get a picture here that this is not a perfect system, right? As people collect more – and I did nothing wrong there. I did everything right. I quit smoking. But I got caught in something that I couldn't verify, I had no control over, and there was information that they were using against me. So do you get a sense now? I've given you guys very specific examples, all of which can be verified really easily. That's why you have to be careful about, one, in how wide a net you allow people to collect information.

This bill collects a lot of information: closed-circuit television, bank records, employment records, health records, GPS tracking, cellphone, where you've searched, what archives you've searched in your web browser; what web pages you go to. Boy, you better be careful that when you were searching on your web browser, you didn't type in p-o-r-n. Oh, now you're in trouble, Mr. Minister of Infrastructure, because when they go looking for you because you haven't reported in, you've been on a porn site. Well, that wasn't what you were typing in. You know, the little numbers are . . .

Mr. Danyluk: I was looking for the corn site, not the porn site.

4:10

Ms Blakeman: That's exactly right. The little tiles that you're supposed to hit are so small for your fingers now. How many times do I make a mistake punching that stuff in?

That's the kind of mistake that happens. It turns up when they go looking for it, and they say: ho ho, the Minister of Infrastructure was surfing a porn site. And he's not. He was looking for something that was about oranges, and the O and the P are beside each other, and now he's in trouble. [interjection] A prune site. There you go.

I hope I've helped you understand why I think this bill is important and why I think we need to be so careful about doing this. It gets away from us literally with the click of a button. Once these are housed in electronic databases, linking them to other electronic databases, again, is done in a milli-microsecond and can be sent around the world faster than you can even think of doing it. That's why it's our responsibility in this House to be very, very cautious when we develop bills that empower any agency, including ourselves, to collect information on our public. We need to protect them. We don't need to be exposing them to wider opportunities, where someone else can be literally surfing through their life without that person being aware of it and without them having been able to give permission for it. I just want to make sure that what's a good idea in this bill doesn't turn out for us years later to be a bad idea.

How many times do we hear good stories about health records, and then how many stories do we hear about health records flying around in the wind outside of the back of somebody's garage? We find out about unencrypted laptops that have been picked up in your parked car and taken off somewhere. That's what we usually hear about health records. We don't hear about the good stories. We hear about how somebody's personal, private information is now out there, God knows where, being used for we don't know what, but it's not good.

Thanks very much for allowing me to put that on the record. You've all been very patient in listening to me. I wish I wasn't an expert on privacy, but unfortunately you all insisted on putting me on the committees in which I learned all of this, so you only have yourselves to blame.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, please, Mr. Speaker. I certainly am not an expert on privacy laws, but they are developing. It will be interesting to see in a couple of years exactly where we are with the Missing Persons Act, Bill 8. We had quite a discussion last night on this, and it was interesting to hear from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. Certainly, I would agree with her that it is a work-in-progress and we have to proceed with caution, but I think we have to proceed. I certainly respect her opinion, but I don't

think that we are giving the police far-reaching, wide-scoping powers. I, like others, am concerned about granting special powers to police forces, but they have a special job to do. There are odd occasions where those powers are, in my view, overstepped, but we have police commissions and we have a number of ways of dealing with police detachments that overstep their boundaries.

I think this is, as technology changes, a very interesting concept. I note again that Alberta is the first jurisdiction in Canada to introduce legislation of this kind. I know there's a balance. I know there are people who are concerned about this act and how it fails to strike an appropriate balance between giving police the powers they need for missing person investigations and respecting individual rights. I don't think individual rights will be an issue here, at least I hope they are not.

We heard in the discussion previously on this bill about the role of the justices of the peace, and I'm satisfied, again, on the record, with the explanation that was provided by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne regarding this bill and the role that justices of the peace are going to play in this matter. But, certainly, there are organizations that have had issues with this approach. I'm sure all hon. members of the Assembly have heard from them as this bill was proceeding through the House. We do know this bill is a response to a resolution passed by the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police in spring 2010. We also heard of others who are supportive of this initiative. But we haven't really heard from those who have questions about it, and I think it's only fair that their concerns, Mr. Speaker, be part of the public record.

The chiefs of police, as I said, passed a resolution supporting this initiative. Calgary and Edmonton police services were involved in the drafting of the bill. But the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association believes that only the federal government has jurisdiction to regulate telecommunications services. The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association wants assurance that the proposed legislation actually fills a pressing need and does not merely duplicate current industry practices and/or existing legislation already available to law enforcement agencies.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic, which is located, I believe, at the University of Ottawa, have reported the introduction of the act but have not yet provided detailed comment that I'm aware of.

Now, I think this act has good intentions, just like the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, and if it could be used to solve an issue around a missing person, then I think all the work from the hon. member will be recognized. But the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association is one authority on wireless issues, developments, and trends in Canada, and it represents wireless service providers as well as companies that develop and produce products and services for the industry. They have CCed me on a letter with some of their issues, and this is a detailed letter. I think, with all respect to them, their opinions regarding this bill should be on the public record.

They have made general comments on Bill 8, and they note that they should not be construed as their recognition of the government of Alberta's jurisdiction to regulate the sphere of telecommunications services, which – and this is, again, the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association – they respectfully maintain is solely under federal law. They go into detail about this.

They, too, have concerns about the justice of the peace. We talked about this last night, Mr. Speaker, but the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association considers the test for access to subscriber records in Bill 8 to be overly open ended. In order to obtain an order from a justice of the peace for records – and that's

in section 3 – the justice of the peace need only be satisfied the information is required to investigate the whereabouts of a missing person. There is no reasonable grounds test, which is more typical for warrants and other orders. We had a brief discussion on this last night. All that is required is a belief that the telecommunications service provider may have information relevant to a missing person case. We do know that the portable devices – there are all kinds of programs now available that can tell a lot about the owner of the device. It can tell what time they used it. There are a lot of interesting things that go on that hopefully will never be needed, but if they are needed to solve an issue around a missing person, it would be available.

4:20

The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association: they were, I would have to say, quite concerned about Bill 8, but I don't share their concerns. Some of them I certainly do but not all of them. I don't think their concerns are a valid reason to delay this. I really don't, with all due respect.

They also talk about safeguards. The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association is also concerned that there are no safeguards in Bill 8 to help ensure that the subscriber information production requirements will be used appropriately: only in cases where a person is reported missing by a family member or other acquaintance. Police only have so much time to do a lot of work, and I don't think any police association or police service anywhere is going to be in a frivolous or vexatious way looking at someone's information. I can't see this happening.

The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association respectfully submits that Alberta should consider including in Bill 8 some safeguards contained in the proposed federal legislation, which was Bill C-52, dealing with lawful access as introduced in the House of Commons last fall. Bill C-52 had this, Mr. Speaker. The requesting officer must provide identifying information, badge number, agency, et cetera and state that the request has been made in exceptional circumstances. The officer must have reasonable grounds to believe that the information requested must be immediately necessary to prevent an unlawful act, serious injury, or crime.

The officer must report the request to a designated officer in the force, establishing the basis for the request, and the designated person must confirm with the telecommunications service provider in writing that the request was made in exceptional circumstances. A record must be kept for the request and the grounds for it. Internal audits of police and the national security agencies are required to ensure compliance with the subscriber information sections of the bill, with noncompliance being escalated to the minister. The Privacy Commissioner may also conduct such audits.

Well, that's a legislative wish list. Some of this has been provided, as I understand it, in Bill 8. But this is what the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association considers to be the very basic safeguards necessary to ensure that the application of the statute remains consistent with its intent.

They also have some issues around privacy, compensation, and technical and reporting standards. In the time that I have, Mr. Speaker, I would like to note what the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association had to say in conclusion regarding Bill 8. Of course, they're concerned about the general privacy implications for Canadian wireless subscribers given the low threshold, in their opinion, for obtaining an order for production of data under Bill 8 as well as the lack of safeguards to ensure that the power is not misused or used indiscriminately by Alberta law enforcement agencies. I can see why they would say that, but hopefully their concerns will be unfounded.

I'm hearing from hon. members that this is quite an important issue. The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association notes that Bill 8 offers no compensation for telecommunication service providers for complying with potential numerous orders – I don't think there will be a lot of orders, but we'll see – particularly in cases where the person in question turns out not to be missing and/or in cases where no crime was about to be committed. It's essential that potential costs to the service providers be minimized by limiting the use of the order power in the first instance. The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association is equally concerned about the technical and reporting standards that would result from complying with this legislation.

They conclude by expressing their appreciation for the opportunity to provide this submission in writing, and it is my privilege to present this to hon. members of this Assembly. That's one side of the argument. We heard, particularly in debate in committee, the other side of the argument last night.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I would like to say that this bill hopefully will allow a police agency to be able to do their work more effectively, more efficiently, and in cases where they need to have this, they will now have it. It will certainly be another tool for police services or police agencies to use to settle issues around missing persons. It could be a child. It could be an adult. It could be someone who, unfortunately, loses their way, and family members recognize after a period of time that maybe grandmother and grandfather are lost.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. members wish to speak under this 29(2)(a), five minutes of comments or questions? Anybody?

Seeing none, on the bill?

Seeing none, the chair shall now put the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a third time]

Bill 15

Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2011

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. You don't have to stand up because your foot is . . .

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to sit today, I guess, instead of stand today and move third reading of Bill 15, the Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2011.

I think we've had vigorous debate. The bill, with the able assistance of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, is amended from its original form. I think it's a better bill for it. I call the question in the absence of comments.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on Bill 15.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is legislation that we had an opportunity to deal with last night at committee, and certainly what we're looking at here with the amendment act is the clarification of the processes for applying for financial benefits for injury and for death benefits. We're setting out detailed procedures for reviews of decisions and applications, and these are consistent with procedures in other administrative tribunals. We're changing and removing some of the existing powers of review boards; for example, to call expert witnesses or to require a medical examination or a test by an ap-

proved physician. These amendments in the bill are mostly amendments that provide helpful clarifications. As I said, the amendments with respect to benefits for injury or death as a result of a crime add clarity for users of the act.

4:30

Certainly we must note, when we discuss the victims of crime fund, the amount, which is over \$48 million in net assets as at March 31, 2011, while the victims received just under \$14 million last year. While we applaud the diligent work of many of the not-for-profit organizations that receive grants to support victims' services, we do not wish to see a fund created for the benefit of victims either hoarded or diverted into government programs that do not directly benefit victims.

There was a review done on these proposed amendments by Alberta's Solicitor General and Public Security ministry, and that was done online before Christmas until the end of January. Six weeks later the amendment act was introduced in the Legislative Assembly. One could reasonably ask how there was time to consider the responses to the consultations, develop recommendations, and then have them approved and go through the legislative drafting process in a little bit more than seven weeks. I have not seen, Mr. Speaker, a report on the consultation or the review process that was published. It may or may not be an internal document, but I haven't seen it.

We have been working with this legislation since 1997, almost 14 years, except for provisions directly associated with financial benefits to individual victims of crime. That came into force a little later on. We do know that in May of 2005 the act was amended to incorporate the Canadian statement of basic principles of justice for victims of crime, which emphasizes the need to treat victims with courtesy, compassion, respect, and privacy. The principles state that the victim should be provided with information about the role they play within the system and acknowledge that a victim's views and concerns are important.

Last night we had a discussion about how an individual who was involved in a violent, vicious assault while he was driving a transit bus is currently receiving Workers' Compensation Board benefits. How does all of that work, or does it work? Would an individual, for instance, who is receiving Workers' Compensation Board benefits be eligible to make application before the victims of crime fund?

It's a regulated fund, a \$48 million value, and it is administered by the minister of finance and operates under the authority of the VCA. The Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security is responsible, of course, for the fund, and the fund is financed through a levy on provincial and federal fines. The purpose of the fund is to provide grants to victims' programs and to pay benefits to victims who suffer injury or death as a result of a criminal offence specified in the regulations under the Victims of Crime Act or, where death resulted, to pay benefits to dependants.

We talked in committee, Mr. Speaker, about the administration of the act and the role of the director. We had a good look, a sectional analysis last evening. We had, actually, a good discussion on this, and I appreciated the participation of the minister even if it's under difficult circumstances.

When we look at this bill at third reading, I'm confident that the amendments will provide helpful clarification to make the act more user friendly for victims. We on this side of the House support the new procedures for review of a decision on an application for benefits. They are consistent with the principles of natural justice. These procedures will make it clear to applicants how to go about contesting a decision that seems unfair or unjust. The procedural changes not only promote clarity and fairness for applicants; they are likely

to promote good practices in the review process, which is likely to result in fewer requests for judicial review.

We do however have concerns that the amendment act moves provisions as to who may apply for benefits into regulation. These provisions affect rights under the act and should be in the act rather than in the regulation. We know how this government likes to get enabling legislation and then write the regulations quietly, off by themselves. Sometimes they're public; sometimes they're not. That's how this government, unfortunately, is ruling. Yes.

We also have concerns about the power of the director of the act to collect health information – we talked about this last night – from health service providers without notice or consent by the individual. We think – and I hope we're wrong – that this could discourage victims from seeking assistance.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I certainly would like to thank the minister for his work on this amending legislation. Hopefully, people who need to apply to the victims of crime fund can do so with confidence, knowing that they will be treated fairly and justly, and there will be support there for them and their families if it is needed.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. member? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview on the bill.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to just get some comments on the record here in third reading. It's been clear that this is a piece of legislation that we've supported. Well done. I mean, it's a step in the right direction. It seems certain that it's going to pass, and here in third reading is an opportunity to speak briefly about the impact of this bill and about what the future might hold. What's the next step after this bill becomes law? I'm presuming that it will, which I think is a safe presumption to make.

I was reading very recently, Mr. Speaker, an article in *The Economist* magazine about a prison situation in the United States, and I was startled to read, although I had seen figures like this before – every time I see them they're startling – that in the United States 1 adult in 100 is in prison, which is astonishing. There are 3 million people, adults, in jail in the United States. That is startling. That's what I focused on initially, but then listening to the debate on the bill and this bill being about victims, I began to think: how many victims of crime are we looking at in a country like the United States, for example? Obviously, it's a staggering number. Many of those criminals will have had multiple victims, so we are looking at a huge, huge number of victims in the United States.

Now, we're lucky here, I think, although I'm just going on a hunch – I could be wrong – that the situation is somewhat different in Canada and in Alberta. But I'm just saying that on a hunch; I'm not sure. I am quite confident that Canada does not incarcerate people at the same rate as the United States, but I'm not as confident that there aren't as many victims of crime in Canada as there are in the United States.

4:40

Canada is sometimes labelled by some political and media commentators as being soft on crime. During the recent federal election I was reading that, actually, Canada's sentences are among the very longest in the developed world and that if you're going to go to jail for a long time for a crime, it's more likely to be a long time in Canada than anywhere else. Canada actually has some of the toughest sentencing procedures. Again, we have to remember, Mr. Speaker, that for each one of those there's a victim or multiple victims of a crime, and we can think of direct victims and indirect victims.

I think of a tragic case that came before this Assembly over the years for debate. I am trying to think of the name, and the name escapes me. Leslie Miller, I think it was. Her husband, if I have the correct name, was the victim of the crime. He was severely beaten.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Teskey was the guy who beat him.

Dr. Taft: That's right. He was severely beaten by a man, who ultimately was convicted, by the name of Teskey. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is helping my increasingly frail memory dredge up these facts.

You know what? Mr. Miller wasn't the only victim of that crime. From the moment he was left permanently and severely disabled, his wife also became a victim of that crime as did other members of that family. We're talking about a lot of people involved here, Mr. Speaker, and when we discuss victims of crime, I think we need to stretch our thinking a bit to really comprehend what's going on.

One other startling figure I saw reported on television. It was an interview with a so-called expert on the news, so I take that for what it's worth. The claim that this person made was that about 1 in 4 jobs in the United States now applies one way or another to security. The person was using that in the broadest sense, so they were including the armed forces, the police, the private security, and perhaps even indirect industries like weapons manufacturing, and so on; prison guards, for sure. It was a staggering portion in the U.S. of the number of jobs tied up in security. I believe the figure that this person put forward was 1 in 4. Again, what does that tell us? Well, that tells us that there are not only an awful lot of security issues; there are a lot of victims' issues.

I think I need to make a point at this time also, Mr. Speaker, about the future plans for prisons in Alberta and in Canada. There are going to be cost implications for this province if the federal prison construction program goes ahead, and this is all aimed at a point I want to make in a moment here. We have seen through the last federal election campaign and in the weeks leading up to it the current federal government proposing a multi multi billion dollar prison construction program even though the statistics that are generally reported show that crime is going down. When a former member of this Assembly was questioned about that – until this election he was in the federal cabinet, Stockwell Day – he said, “Well, those prisons are being built for unreported crimes,” which is a kind of contradictory thing once you think about it. If the crimes are unreported, how are we going to sentence people and put them into prisons?

There are cost implications to this for Alberta, and this issue undoubtedly is going to come before this Assembly because the cost of operating those prisons is borne substantially by provincial governments. Again, my point here, Mr. Speaker, is that we're spending money on criminals; we're not spending money on the victims. Too often the victims continue to be forgotten. This bill is a little step in the right direction. The victims of crime fund is a step in the right direction. What I would challenge this Assembly to consider as we move forward and maybe bring other legislation to the floor of the Assembly is to think about: how do we reduce the number of victims by reducing the number of criminals? That's the real challenge here. It would be absolutely fabulous if someday we don't have to make any payments to victims of crime because there are no victims of crime. Now, that's not going to happen, but we can certainly set that as a goal.

That raises for me some broader issues. How do we reduce the number of criminals? I think there are a lot of pretty widely accepted ways to approach that, and a lot of it comes down to

investing in our children from the very youngest ages. There's a lot of good evidence that by grades 3 or 4 teachers and specialists can predict with remarkable accuracy which kids will complete high school, which ones won't, which ones are likely to run into problems with the law, which ones are likely to become criminals and, therefore, create victims of crime.

Do you know what's interesting, Mr. Speaker? It's that a lot of those people who become criminals, creating victims of crime, are themselves at some point early in their lives victims of crime. The victimization of children creates criminals, which creates more victims in a kind of vicious circle that we can break if we put our minds to it. I'm thinking of some basic things. An issue I've raised repeatedly in this Assembly is dedicated funding to feed hungry children in Alberta, dedicated funding for school nutrition programs, early intervention for kids who are identified as at risk, more aggressive than what we do now. That intervention might be all kinds of things.

I was talking to a teacher the other day who teaches grade 2. One of the children in her class has a particular behaviour problem. The teacher strongly suspects that this student has eyesight issues. But it's an impoverished family, and it's finding a way to get eyeglasses for that grade 2 student. To get that grade 2 student to an eye doctor or an optometrist to have her eyes checked and then to afford glasses, well, is something that most Albertans would handle. In this case and in many other impoverished families, families of immigrants, children of dysfunctional families they don't have a chance with something as simple as getting their eyes tested and getting glasses. So what's going to happen to that girl from grade 2 if this turns out to be the case and she has an eye problem and it doesn't get addressed? She's going to continue to flounder in school. It rapidly increases the risk that she is going to end up in the justice system and end up creating victims of crime. That's just one example.

When I look at this bill and I think about this issue – and I commend the Assembly for creating a fund and improving a fund that pays out victims of crime – I want to leave a larger challenge here, which is: in the long term how are we as MLAs going to reduce the number of victims of crime by reducing the number of criminals? What are we going to do? What is this government going to do through education, through our schools, through community supports, that are shown over and over and over to pay huge dividends? What are we going to do to act, to reduce the number of victims of crime?

I just want to leave those comments on the record, Mr. Speaker. Maybe next year we'll see something that goes beyond this current legislation. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. members?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a third time]

4:50

Bill 1 Asia Advisory Council Act

The Deputy Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of our hon. Premier I'm very pleased to rise and move third reading of Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act.

As you would know, Mr. Speaker, we've had some excellent debate since our Premier first introduced this bill in the Assembly a couple of months ago. In fact, a number of hon. members asked some very good questions, which spurred some informative dis-

cussion, and that, in turn, encouraged others to reflect and to realize precisely what the importance of Bill 1 is to the future prosperity of our province.

Obviously, I won't be repeating all that was said at that time, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to provide just a few minutes of brief overview regarding some of the more salient points. During our research and then the ensuing debate there was no question that further diversifying our markets will be a critical element of Alberta's future economic success. There certainly was no disagreement in the House, to my recollection, that Alberta needs to expand beyond our biggest trading partner, that being the U.S.A., of course, which receives about 85 per cent of our exports. The U.S.A. has been and still is our greatest trading partner.

Of course, there are some points to note that will provide some context to all of this, and I'd like to do that briefly. Today the U.S.A. struggles to recover from the global economic recession while some markets in Asia are pulling into the fast lane, so to speak, with China on track to surpass the U.S.A. in terms of GDP. India is predicted to eventually surpass China, so we can see where that's heading. That said, these Asian markets are already important to Alberta, and their importance will increase.

In fact, yesterday our Minister of International and Intergovernmental Affairs chaired a session at a conference that focused solely on China and India as two large and emerging economic powers for the entire world to note. There was a lot of excellent discussion, I'm told, on how these markets will impact Alberta and, of course, Canada and also about the many opportunities that this economic shift is going to present. As well, the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy's final report identifies specifically Asia as one of the main game changers in Alberta's future. That report, Mr. Speaker, confirms that with the establishment of the Asia advisory council as enunciated by this bill, we are right on track to tap into the tremendous opportunities available in these aforementioned Asian markets.

Of course, I don't think it's any secret to many that our Alberta government has long been cultivating this relationship with regions in Asia. In fact, we've been developing partnerships in China, in Japan, in India, and other eastern countries for decades, in fact, from the very opening of an Alberta office in Tokyo back in 1970 right up to last year's opening of a joint trade and investment office in Shanghai. Alberta has been twinned with a great many regions in Asia, and these relationships also continue to foster economic, scientific, and cultural ties, which is what this bill is all about.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, our missions to countries in Asia have established and strengthened Alberta's relationships with governments, with business leaders, and certainly with investors. Everyone is now looking to Alberta, and Alberta is looking back to them to partner where we can and to seek greater investment and other opportunities for economic ties wherever possible. That type of foundation, that we have built over many years, has in fact positioned Alberta for even greater success in the years ahead. So we are now at a pivotal time, at a pivotal turning point. That's why it's so critical that our next steps be very deliberate, very specific, very focused on behalf of the future of this great province.

Just a couple of final points. The Asia advisory council will in essence bring together the best and the brightest minds. These members will be experts in their respective fields, be that business or energy or technology or academia or a host of other areas, and they will also be experts on Asia. The council members will provide a targeted insight through this bill that will be of great value to the government of Alberta and, in turn, to Albertans in general. With the experience and guidance of this particular group of knowledgeable and committed people I'm confident that we will

set new goals that reflect the new global economy, an economy, I should add, where the strength of our relationship with Asia will determine our future success.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the creation of an Asia advisory council because of its immense importance. In fact, it's so important that having this legislation created emphasizes it most illustratively. With this bill we're signalling to Asia and to the world that Alberta is comfortable being out front when it comes to furthering our engagement with these rapidly growing markets.

I would like to conclude by thanking you for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and all members of the House for their anticipated support of this new bill and also for the input and the good discussion that has occurred to date. On that note, I would encourage all members to kindly offer their support for Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview on the bill.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. There's been quite a lot of debate on this bill through its journey to becoming legislation, and there have certainly been challenges from some MLAs that for the flagship bill it's not particularly bold or visionary. Yet when the chips are down, I think it's better to do this than to not do it. In some ways it's reinforcing things that are already happening. It's kind of perhaps in the spirit of the former Premier, Ralph Klein, who talked about finding a parade and getting in front of it. Certainly, there has already long been a parade of business and tourism and academic exchanges and so on between Alberta and Asia, and this legislation is perhaps just trying to get in front of that parade, to run around, hurry up, and get in front of it. For all that, it's better to be done, I suppose, than to not be done.

There's been quite a lot of discussion in this Assembly about China. I spoke during committee, I believe it was, or perhaps second reading about China, and I reflected on China's rising power. I was trying to make clear in my comments that we should not be naive about doing business with China or any other Asian country. What I didn't have the time to say is that, despite my cautions, I still think it's a good idea that we proceed, we reach out, we build the relationships with Asia that this legislation envisions. I just don't want us to be, as I was saying at the time, sort of good-hearted Boy Scouts out there in a big bad jungle. We need to be sharp and astute and canny and shrewd. Sometimes Canadians don't do those things very well, and I think we need to.

I've also been struck with how much of the conversation or debate that I've heard on this bill has focused on China. We're forgetting perhaps some very important other countries. I look at you, Mr. Speaker, and I think of Vietnam or Malaysia or the Philippines. There are many, many tens of thousands of Edmontonians who are from the Philippines or Indonesia, which is a deeply impoverished but rapidly expanding economy. I visited there a couple of years ago. I was most impressed with what I saw and with the industriousness of the people, but I was also struck with the enormity of the challenges they face. And, of course, India. There are a handful of members of this Assembly whose ancestry goes back to India.

5:00

These are countries that are setting the global agenda. It's widely understood that the current global recession would be much more severe if it weren't for the demands of the economies of China and India and the rest of Asia. Particularly, this has been

beneficial to Canada because the demand is for raw materials, but it has been Asia that has prevented this economic recession from becoming even more severe.

I also wanted to just make note briefly of the lessons from Vietnam. Now, I have not been to Vietnam – I'd love to go there – but there's a lesson here, I think, about trade versus war. We all know that there was a very long, multistage war between Vietnam and a series of colonial powers – the French, the Americans, the Chinese – and that that went on and on and on. Vietnam fought a valiant war that stretched probably 20 years or more – somebody here could correct me on that – and was flattened. Billions of dollars, probably hundreds of billions of dollars were spent. Hundreds of thousands or millions of people died. It was a horrifying war.

At the end of it what was achieved? I suppose the Vietnamese would say, "Well, we kept our independence," and so they did, and good for them. But when I reflect back on that war now, I think: well, okay; what's happened since? When we switched from war to trade, suddenly good things happened. Suddenly things are getting built instead of destroyed, people are flourishing instead of getting killed and maimed, societies are expanding instead of being pounded down, and friendships and bridges are getting built instead of enemies being made. So I think there's an important lesson to be learned from the experience of Vietnam and, by all accounts, of Southeast Asia. The country to watch, perhaps above larger, more populous ones, is Vietnam because of the industriousness, the coherence, the determination, the pride of the people.

When I look at what's happening in a different part of Asia, Afghanistan, I find myself wondering: gee, wouldn't we have been better off to have learned the lessons of Vietnam? Instead of pouring countless billions of dollars into war, what if we poured countless billions of dollars into trade and friendship, and if we had opened our arms to our enemies, might we have actually turned them into allies and even friends and had a much more constructive result? So as we look at Asia, those are issues I'd like us to be considering.

I want to talk, before we leave, about a couple of specific economic and, I guess we would say, engineering or scientific issues. One is renewable energy; the other is a pipeline. This week China announced that it is aiming at getting 50 per cent of its energy from renewable resources within the next couple of decades. It's a hugely ambitious objective. Right on its heels, I think yesterday – or perhaps it was even today; I lose track; things happen so quickly – Japan announced that because of the nuclear catastrophe that resulted from the earthquake and the tsunami, they're putting their nuclear expansion programs on hold, and they are shifting to renewable energy.

The Member for St. Albert came to visit a house I'm building about a week ago, and it's a house that's going to depend heavily on solar energy. I fully expect we'll be buying the technology, the solar panels that'll go on the roof, from Asia, or at least there'll be Asian components in them. That's clearly the way of the future.

Alberta will be one of the last to get on that train because we have so many fossil resources, but what's going to make our fossil fuels less and less valuable, I predict, in the 15-year range and beyond is the enormous innovation that's going to come out of Asia in terms of renewable energy supply: solar, wind, tidal, biomass, what have you. If we build relations with Asia and if we follow some of the ideas that other panels have recently put forward to create a more broadly based energy economy in Alberta, I think we're going to have to build those relations with Asia. I think we should even look to them to try to emulate some of their leadership on these issues because I think we're falling behind.

I will wrap up with one other point, which is the debate around a pipeline to carry Alberta's oil production or bitumen production to the west coast. As complicated as that is, as laden as it is with environmental controversy, with land claims from First Nations, and so on, I myself think it should be done. I'm not going to speak for others. I believe that in the end we need to do that. I think Alberta needs to diversify its market away from the United States to include an ocean port on the west coast of Canada. We could then sell wherever. It might go to Asia. It might go down the coast to California, as has been speculated. It might go to South America. It could go anywhere. But we need that port for our energy exports.

The other morning I was at a breakfast speech given by somebody who spent many years in here, former Premier Peter Lougheed, and in that speech he made a point that if he were the Premier, he would not sign another approval for an oil sands project that did not include upgrading in Alberta. He said – and I will repeat this – that if he were still Premier, he would not approve another oil sands project that did not include upgrading in Alberta. He said that publicly. He said some other fairly dramatic things as well, but I'll focus on that one.

You know, that was and, I believe, continues to be consistent with the policy of the Alberta Liberals. Why do I say that? I would be much less supportive of a pipeline to the west coast, Mr. Speaker, for just shipping out raw bitumen. I think that would be a travesty. I think that would be a sellout. I think that constructing a pipeline to the west coast should go hand in hand with an increased commitment to adding value here. If we ship raw bitumen to Asia, where they upgrade it at lower environmental standards, lower wages, lower labour standards, and then sell the crude oil or the refined product from where they are, we're foolish.

That goes back to my early comment about Canadians sometimes being a little naive internationally. We need to be every bit as far sighted and determined and disciplined as countries like Korea and Singapore and Taiwan were in creating Asian tigers and as India and China and other countries are today. Otherwise, they will eat our lunch for us, as they say. They will get our jobs, they will take our wealth, and we'll be left impoverished not just financially but politically and culturally and otherwise.

I wanted to make that point. Let's look hard at building that pipeline, but let's make sure that it's not just there for raw bitumen. Let's look at building bridges that reach into the renewable energy industries that are so aggressively developing in Asia. Let's look at building allies, friendships, joint ventures with countries across Asia, and through the process let's not just build a better Alberta, a better Canada, a better Asia but a better world.

Thank you.

5:10

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

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize that this is the last opportunity to speak about Bill 1.

Mr. MacDonald: Are you a fan of this bill?

Mr. Hinman: A fan? I think that the fan should blow the paper away that this was written on.

It's very disappointing when we consider that we just are pulling out of a recession, that we've got a \$6.1 billion cash deficit year to year running here in the province, that we've got a third-year deficit running. The Premier's council just put out today or, I guess, yesterday, you know, their wonderful book here, *Shaping Alberta's Future*. Then we look at Bill 1. We're going to form a committee to go to Asia.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview brought up some very important points I just want to start with. There's no question that the two most important things for us to have that security now and in the future are to look at the oil and gas industry and where we're going and what we can achieve. There's no question we need a pipeline. I could see that being Bill 1. The government says: "We need a pipeline to the west coast. We're trapped. We have no place to take our commodities." This is a repeat of 2003 with BSE, when all of our customers went to the States. When they decide to shut that border, we're in big trouble.

There are many things, Mr. Speaker, that this government should have been looking at as a number one priority. I would say that because of our economy and our exporting, the number one priority should be a pipeline to the west coast. It's just hard to believe that the number two priority, that I look at, is that we need a natural gas strategy here in the province.

We have an abundance of natural gas. What are we going to do to capitalize on that, and how are we going to go forward? What are they capitalizing on? They're saying a committee to Asia and that we need a \$2 billion carbon sequestration and capture program to see if this is going to pan out in the future. It's very disappointing how we're letting down Albertans and the future.

Let's just take the next step, if we want to do that, and talk about renewable energies – there are so many people in this House that are so passionate about it – and have a little bit of a breakdown. It's interesting. Back in 2010 – I believe it was December – there were quite a few protesters that were protesting the Copenhagen conference and what we were going to do there. It's interesting. The one individual drove a Prius and showed up at this rally I was at. I asked him: "Do you have any idea of the rare-earth elements that are needed and how much to produce this Prius that you want to drive around in? Where are our lithium mines to produce the batteries? How much mining do we need in order to build solar panels?" All of those are dependent on rare-earth elements.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview talked about this. China hopes to get 50 per cent of their energy from nonrenewable. Well, they have 90 per cent – or maybe it's 99 per cent – right now of the mines and the rare-earth elements in China, and we're dependent on buying that export from them. If we move over, it's very true. The hon. Member for Red Deer-South is shaking his head, saying: it's not true. Do the research, and see where the rare-earth elements are and what the future is if we don't change our strategy.

I'm going to talk about that in a minute, what our strategy is here. With the lower Athabasca regional plan we just doused some opportunities for exploration and development of some possible rare-earth mineral mines. We're shooting ourselves in the foot on how we want to go forward by not thinking: where do we do that? I mean, it takes 500 pounds of rare-earth elements to build a two-megawatt windmill. Where are we going to get that? All of a sudden the table has turned, and we have to go to China to try and buy these rare-earth elements because we don't allow mineral operations to exist here in the province. I've been speaking to some explorers that are in there, and they say that Alberta is the worst place in Canada to try and open and develop a mine. We have to ask ourselves: why? If we're so excited about going into the nonrenewables, are we going to allow ourselves to be self-sufficient or switch over to these things and then find out that we are unable to go forward on them?

This idea that through Bill 1 the future of this province is going to be formed by a volunteer committee that's going to go over to Asia when we can't even get our number one export to the west coast is – I don't even know if you'd call it buying the wheel before the cart, before the horse. I mean, it's just wrong, Mr.

Speaker. So I have to again go on the record and say how disappointing it is for myself and for many Albertans that I've talked to that the number one priority, the number one bill that this government came up with is, in fact, a committee to go to Asia to see if we can open up exports when we can't even get our products there. There's a problem here. We're not thinking things through, and it's very disappointing.

Shaping Alberta's Future: Report of the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy. Everything in here goes against the Alberta Advantage. What they're saying is that government knows how to run businesses, pick the new businesses. It's interesting because when we even look at Texas, who built their wealth on the oil and gas industry, it's those people that have created the wealth who then turn around and invest in microchips and nanotechnology.

To think that the government is going to tax, whether it's \$4 billion or \$6 billion, \$8 billion, \$10 billion, \$12 billion, out of our current industry to then put together a super slush fund and say, "This is what we're going to do," that these are the industries, whether it's nanotechnology or something, that the government is going to pick and choose where we're going to spend this money, it's going to collapse the Alberta economy to a greater extent. We're going to go back to run not just massive cash deficits but actual deficit budgets in two or three years if they're going to raise the taxes and say, "We've got an opportunity to go forward here; let's send the committee to Asia to see if we can export something" when we cannot get our products there or we don't meet their standards. It's disappointing.

The natural gas strategy: like I say, to me that's the natural direction we should be taking. We understand that we want to reduce pollutants. High-carbon fuels have more pollutants in them. Methane, a one-carbon fuel, is the cleanest, whether it's for producing electricity, whether it's for compressing that to become liquefied, compressed natural gas. There are many, many areas, Mr. Speaker, that we could be looking at and realizing that this is our opportunity.

Perhaps the most important natural strategy that we should be taking on here in Alberta is to make sure that we're not putting up rules and regulations – for example, a tax on CO₂ emissions – to the detriment of an industry that we have here. Too often government seems to see a lucrative business, and they rub their hands together and say, "What a great opportunity; we can now tax this business," only to lose it. Our strategy should be, as it has been for years, to be the most competitive tax regime in not just North America but the world.

We are competing with some giant countries out there that don't have universal health care, so we can't add onerous regulations, even onerous taxation, and then think that we're still going to have these other social benefits that we do and try to export to such countries in Asia or to India or other areas in the world. We need to come back home and focus on: what do we do well? Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*: look at what your natural commodities are, your natural abilities. Let's make sure that we do it in an environmentally proper way. We as Albertans, I think, have one of the best environments in the world. Yes, we've made a few mistakes, but that doesn't mean that we haven't learned from those mistakes in going forward.

Another strategy that we should be looking at is water. For heaven's sake, we have flooding going on again, massive destruction, but are we filling up our reservoirs on and off the stream? Do we have enough? The bottom line is no. When are we going to wake up and realize that we need to have a water strategy that is more than just not using it wisely but actually storing and containing the water that we have? Still, 50 per cent of our water allocation is being lost and going out of the province, and then we

say: oh, we don't have enough. I mean, who would cut their paycheque in half because they don't need it all this month and let it go out? You put it in a savings account.

5:20

We need to have a strategy, Mr. Speaker, for saving our water. Get some on- and off-stream storage; be looking at that. There are just so many areas. We need to have a strategy on how we are going to produce electricity cheaply, and \$16 billion in power lines is not the answer to having an energy advantage here in the province. There are so many areas where we should be focusing and looking at: what is the Alberta advantage?

How do we encourage entrepreneurs and people with capital to come here and invest in our schools, invest in technology, and not say that the government is going to tax it? We're going to get some elite groups that are not able to raise their own money for their ideas, and they're going to pick and fund other ones. Yes, it works sometimes, but entrepreneurial start-ups and new ideas, whether it's energy, whether it's nanotechnology – let the university work, again, with some free enterprisers, with some wealthy philanthropists.

There are many directions that we should go, but increasing taxes, which is what shaping the Alberta future is about, is wrong. Putting together an Asia committee to go over there and see if we can do business with them is wrong. Until we get a pipeline, until we have our rules and regulations in order so that we can export to them, there are just so many areas that are a major concern.

Like I say, the other one I want to reflect on a little bit is our Alberta Land Stewardship Act and the way that we've attacked industry that would produce a lot of these things that we need, these rare-earth metals, gold, diamonds. There are many things like that that are being mined in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, but the last place they look to come to is Alberta. Again, LARP has extinguished some of those opportunities.

I spoke with an individual today who said, you know, that to buy the mineral permit was only \$675, but they spent probably \$30,000 exploring, doing assay tests to see if it's worth while. The government is telling them, "Well, we don't know that we're going to recognize any of those expenses, but we'll give you back your \$675" when they've got two years of exploring going in. They were told originally, two years ago, that this isn't part of the LARP plan, but because they changed it – they didn't even go and make any presentations so that we could perhaps have a hydro dam in the north. Again, it just shows the shortsightedness that we have here in the province. We need to be open to business, we want to protect our environment, and we're not addressing any of those critical and important issues with Bill 1 or any other bill.

We're undermining our future. We're losing the Alberta advantage. We're not going to have what I call cheap energy, and we're not even going to have good energy. We have to ask: why aren't we focusing on the big picture, Mr. Speaker? Why are we missing this and talking about bigger government, bigger programs, more taxes, more committees and thinking that we're going to somehow surge ahead in a province that is being undermined by this very government, that is picking businesses, picking industry rather than creating a level playing field and realizing what we need to do to be competitive with our neighbours, let alone our distance neighbors, let alone the rest of the world?

This bill fails to address it. It shouldn't be passed. We don't need an Asia committee. I would hope that the members in this House would speak against it and vote against it as third reading comes.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much. I appreciated hearing from the hon. member. I appreciated his comments on Bill 1, and some things he says I certainly do not disagree with.

Now, I know your party has had some issues with the centralized planning that was done with the Health Services Board by our friends across the way. It's interesting that a candidate for the leadership of the party of our friends across the way, Mr. Gary Mar, indicates that centralized health care was a mistake. He also notes that he's very uncomfortable with giving cabinet the power to decree the need for new power lines, and he feels that the land-use framework was imposed without proper consultation. I'm getting this information from the *Calgary Herald*. Mr. Mar indicates that regional planning makes more sense. This, of course, we know, was dismantled and cut when Mr. Mar was probably in the Deep Six cheering on Mr. Klein and Mr. West whenever they cut some essential services, including regional planning.

My question to you after that, hon. member, is: do you have any idea whether Mr. Mar as a leadership candidate supports Bill 1 or not?

Mr. Hinman: I appreciate the question. I guess I'd have to say that I haven't had quite the enthusiasm that you have in watching the leadership race for this PC, or, as I say, this phony conservative, government. I mean, they talk the talk, but they never walk the walk. They talk about being fiscally conservative, yet we have a \$6.1 billion deficit. It's interesting that it's going to heat up here as we come to an end. I think we're going to see a lot of truth coming out on the dictatorship that we've been experiencing. These power lines aren't needed. They didn't go through a proper process.

The truth is that we don't need an Asia committee. We have a lot of companies that are already doing business there. The truth is that we don't need \$16 billion in power lines. The truth is that we don't need a centralized, government-run, minister-run land-use assembly act that's going to say what can and can't be done. "You know what? I don't like minerals and rare-earth metals, so why would I allow that? We'll wipe that out." Or they like something else. They don't even understand what they're wiping out with their across-the-board legislation and placing it under the purview of one individual. Whether they're short-sighted or self-serving is a major concern.

It'll be interesting to see if any of the new PC candidates, these phony conservative candidates, come out and want to try and rein in this ridiculous spending, these ridiculous regulations, and these. . .

Mr. Zwozdesky: Point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Zwozdesky: A bit of latitude is accepted, but under 459 of *Beauchesne* this is not relevant to the discussion of Bill 1, so could I please ask the member to get back to the bill? A good try there, hon. members, to sidetrack this into a different issue. Relevance is of importance here, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order. The chair noticed that the discussion has ventured out too far from Bill 1. Please, hon. member, stay on Bill 1.

Mr. Hinman: Excellent counsel. We'll wrap it back up.

Debate Continued

Mr. Hinman: There are all these important things, but these PCs, phony conservatives, want to talk about an Asia committee and think that that's going to somehow look at yonder star to shine bright, that that's going to save them when they haven't even looked after what's wrong here in our own home. They don't have the priorities on where to spend their tax money, where to use their intellectual intelligence to make decisions. Like I say, we're looking at some star way off in the galaxy, thinking we're going to be able to go there for the answer. We need to prioritize here at home, get our spending in order.

I mean, that could have been Bill 1, to educate Albertans on how important it is that we prioritize our infrastructure and our social programs so that we can afford them and balance our books. The dilemma that we've run into: if we can't afford to balance the books today, if we have to pay 10 cents, 15 cents, or 20 cents on every dollar as it's coming in and being collected, we'll afford less. We won't be able to have the health care that we have. We won't be able to have the education that we have, the postsecondary. We won't be able to build the infrastructure. Bill 1 should have been focused on one of those.

To say that the number one priority of this government is to look to an Asia committee and, again, to tax Albertans over the next 20 years to have the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy is plain wrong. It's failing Albertans. This government needs to vote against Bill 1 and refocus their ideas on something that's going to have some economic and social advantages for Albertans and not just a few PC, or politically connected, individuals to this old, tired government.

I hope that answers your question, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

The Deputy Speaker: We have 10 seconds left, so I will recognize the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo on the bill.

Mr. Boutilier: On the bill? Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's the end of questions, I guess, so I won't ask the member the question. I would have asked a question on the bill. You would think that rather than forming a committee, one of the top priorities on this bill would have been dealing perhaps with the economic engine of Canada, the oil sands, and perhaps twinning a highway that is an important economic link to the oil sands centre. Clearly, it's not Bill 1, and what a surprise that it's not Bill 1.

5:30

I want to say that Bill 1, if you can imagine, is a bill to form a committee. Let's think about that for a moment. That, number one, lacks imagination. Let's have Bill 1 to form a committee. Not only that; let's form a committee to allow the inmates to run the asylum.

Really, one thinks of the lack of imagination that goes around Bill 1, Mr. Speaker. I can only say that I could not support Bill 1 in third reading because it lacks imagination. My concern is simply this: one of the key components of any government is to govern and to govern properly. To come up with a bill to say: let's form a committee – there are 30, 40, 50 committees. Gee whiz. Are the next 50 committees going to be Bill 1 to come in front of the next Premier, whoever that may be? In my judgment it lacks imagination. Actually, it's often said that if everyone is thinking the same, then nobody is thinking, as quoted by Winston Churchill.

I want to say today that it's my observation that the front-bench thinking of allowing the Premier to come forward with Bill 1 lacks that imagination. Someone should have had the courage to stand

up and say: "Mr. Premier, this is not a good bill. This does not represent the energy, the imagination that is required, of what Albertans are expecting of you."

Tomorrow this Premier will celebrate his birthday, and of course my son is celebrating his birthday tomorrow. I think you know what birthday I'm going to be at. Certainly, I wish the Premier a happy birthday, but I'm going to be with my four-year-old son tomorrow. The reason is because my son has imagination. My son has an imagination of a future, so that's why I'm going to be spending my time with him. I like to hang around people that have imagination, and that's what I'm going to be doing.

Bill 1 lacks imagination. It lacks energy. It lacks the creative thoughtfulness to come forward. It has no vision. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that if Bill 1 had been brought forward by the Minister of Transportation, who said, "I think Bill 1 should be that we will commit to twinning highway 63, an economic engine of Canada, an important connection to Alberta," – but the reality of it is that I think there's more paving going on in Sylvan Lake. Perhaps Sylvan Lake is the economic engine of Canada, and it's not the oil sands. I'm not so sure. I've just driven by there, and I saw a lot of work going on.

Mr. Mason: It's the waterslide.

Mr. Boutilier: It must be the waterslide.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that Bill 1 should have been a commitment by the Minister of Transportation to say that we want to connect the oil sands capital of the world with the rest of Alberta, and not only connect on the highway, since we haven't seen any pavement, but also we could connect in a pipeline.

In fact, I want to say that Premier Lougheed, who I met with not that long ago, clearly indicated that before any more expansion goes forward, we need to start committing to upgrading in Alberta, and we haven't seen that. Once again, it's an example of a lack of imagination, basically, after 40 years.

If I could use this example. It's kind of like a 60-year-old person getting a facelift. And if you can imagine, then they live for 40 years, it keeps stretching and redefining, but when the person turns 100, facelifts don't work anymore. It just really is time for something else. I think that is indicative of this government. They have run out of ideas. They have run out of steam. They've just run out of energy. Mr. Speaker, I believe that their time is up. Do not pass go.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I do not support Bill 1. I think you're saying, "Let's form a committee" to have some bureaucrats. We saw the committee work already, saying, "Let's come forward and raise taxes, so we don't depend on just oil revenues anymore." Well, that is really quite a solution, the creativeness of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this: I do not support in third reading this bill. I believe that, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar a few weeks ago mentioned, he wanted to know – I was going to send over to the Minister of Education a globe because they clearly do not even know where Asia is. Businesses are 15 years out in front of this government. This government is forming a committee, yet universities and research institutions and businesses have been out there for the last 15 years. Not only are they down the road; they're around the corner. This government with this bill forming a committee is not even at the starting gate. Clearly, members for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and Edmonton-Gold Bar, I want to let you know that I am sending a globe over to the esteemed Minister of Education since he was the one interjecting.

I observed his performance, of course, down in Eckville about two weeks ago, and that was 750. In fact, the Member for

Innisfail-Sylvan Lake was there that night. I want to say that I thank the member from Sundre for taking the opportunity to introduce me and my colleagues there. It was interesting. It was the day before Good Friday, for those who are Christian, but I actually think the crucifixion started the night before. It was in Eckville, and it was really about the fact of celebrating. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was there as well. It was nice to see him there and others. Clearly, that night was quite an example.

On Bill 1, Mr. Speaker, the key is that given the fact that it lacks imagination, we have truly, truly seen a government that has run out of ideas. The gas tank is on empty. Consequently I will send that globe over. I would really wish the government the best in catching up with Alberta businesses and Alberta universities and Alberta research institutions who have been utilizing the important partnerships in Asia for the last 15 years. I'm glad to see that they're forming a committee. That means they're not even at the starting gate. It is an embarrassment to call a government that says that this is Bill 1.

I will not be supporting in third reading this bill. I want to say that I'll be spending tomorrow with my son because he has a lot more imagination. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Seeing none, any other hon. member wish to speak on the bill?

Seeing none, the chair shall now put the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:38 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Benito	Fritz	Morton
Berger	Goudreau	Olson
Bhullar	Groeneveld	Ouellette
Blackett	Hayden	Rogers
Brown	Horne	Sarich
Calahasen	Lindsay	Taft
Dallas	Lund	VanderBurg
Danyluk	McFarland	Weadick
Doerksen	Mitzel	Zwozdesky
Drysdale		

Against the motion:

Boutilier	Hinman	MacDonald
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Totals:	For – 28	Against – 3
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[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a third time]

5:50 Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole
(continued)

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

The Chair: The Committee of the Whole is now back to order.

Bill 16
Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2011

The Chair: Are there any hon. members wishing to comment or speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Hinman: Yes. Thank you. Committee of the Whole on Bill 16, the Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2011. I guess that we'd have to say, first of all, that we understand the necessity to update many regulations that the industry has. It has been tough. We support the intent of this bill, but the question is: is the content correct? It's a wonderful thing to say that our intentions are good, but are the actions actually wrong? Again, this has come forward. We would like to spend more time doing some research. It's to provide regulation for in situ coal gasification and to eliminate duplication in regulation of energy use already administered by Alberta Environment and to strengthen the power of the Market Surveillance Administrator.

In situ coal gasification has a lot of potential although it has its share of problems as well. I hope the regulatory framework finds the right balance of vigilance without overburdening entrepreneurs. It's obvious that it's important that there be a regulatory framework specific to this method of extraction because it's not the same as it is for coal mining. It's a bit ridiculous that this is the framework that the industry has been working under. I guess it's that old saying that it's better late than never, so here it is.

Speaking of better late than never, it's good to see that this bill reduces one of the thousands of cases of overregulation in this province; namely, the duplication of regulation governing energy use for industry and manufacturing.

The other major part of this bill clarifies and strengthens the power of the Market Surveillance Administrator. This person's role is to be the independent policeman for our power market. The power that he's given to look to the concerns of the Independent System Operator through the AUC for adjudication will make him better able to carry out this mandate. Doing some research on the Market Surveillance Administrator, however, we had trouble finding much activity.

This may be related to our concern about the Market Surveillance Administrator, who is of course appointed by the minister, which, again, is problematic for us when we see the centralization. It's going to be appointed by the minister; we have some concerns. Given the disturbingly close relationship between this government and the power industry, it's not unreasonable to be skeptical of whether this appointment will always be an independent policeman. We would like to see the Market Surveillance Administrator appointed by the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment and that in addition to his existing powers, he report to the committee once a year.

These are a few of the areas that are definitely of concern to us. We are always a little bit nervous with how fast this government loves to bring in a bill. To try and do research, I mean, we're not staffed well enough.

I think the other opposition leaders want some time. At this point I'll sit down and let the hon. member from the NDP put forward a few of his concerns.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to talk a little bit about Bill 16. I have spoken on Bill 16 already with respect to many of the specific aspects within the bill. I wanted to talk a little bit more about the intent of the bill with respect to coal gasification, which is a major component of this particular bill. This seems to be an emerging technology, but it also appears to be an emerging economic development strategy of the government, and it is cause for concern.

Now, it's clear that the process of in situ coal gasification will produce somewhat fewer greenhouse gases than burning coal di-

rectly, but I think there are still a number of concerns. It's interesting that this bill, in my view, paves the way for some of the components of the report of the Premier's task force on competitiveness. *Shaping Alberta's Future: Report of the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy* is headed, of course, by Dr. Emerson, who in the previous election was elected as a Liberal. Then before he even sat in Parliament, he joined Mr. Harper's cabinet as a Conservative. Of course, there was not a chance in Hades that he was going to be re-elected by his constituents after pulling that stunt, so he took on a stint here with the Premier's task force.

It is clear that this report is a very, very carbon-intensive report. This report has a brown future for the province of Alberta whereas the Alberta New Democrats want to see a green future. It's clear that the direction, at least in this report and, obviously, supported by this piece of legislation, is to depend more heavily on the development of our coal reserves as an energy strategy going forward.

I think that it is a matter of considerable concern, and I think it should be for all Albertans because they're going against the direction that's being set by science and they're going against the direction that's being set in the rest of the world. I think that when they talk about a carbon-intensive economic development strategy

as envisaged by a global centre for energy that we have to express concern. It says:

The Opportunity: To become a leading innovator in making energy from high-carbon resources (such as bitumen and coal) more acceptable, and a global centre of high-carbon energy expertise.

The idea contained in the report is:

Create a Global Centre for Energy – a crucible for accelerating innovation to transform environmental and operational performance. Design it to be a catalyst and funder of collaborative research, a meeting place of diverse interests, and a showcase of achievement. Make Alberta internationally respected for pioneering research, with authoritative evidence and industrial-strength solutions.

Mr. Chairman, I'll just go a little further. It says:

We envision the creation of a Global Centre for Energy with a mandate to foster expertise in high-carbon development and make Alberta the global "go-to" place for ideas, products and services.

The Chair: Hon. member, it's 6 o'clock. I hesitate to interrupt, but we can continue this at 7:30.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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