



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

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Issue 37

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.

Monday, November 21, 2011

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Let us pray. As we begin our deliberations in this sitting of the Legislature, we ask for the insight we need to do our work to the benefit of our province and its people and to the benefit of our country. Amen.

Hon. members and all of our guests, today we'll be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Paul Lorieau, who's in the Speaker's gallery. I would ask that all participate in the language of one's choice.

### Hon. Members:

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

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very special guest, the acting chief of police from the Camrose Police Service, Mr. Lee Foreman. Lee moved from Medicine Hat to Camrose and joined the Camrose Police Service in 1982. He currently has over 29 years of public service with the Camrose Police Service and is the second in command as he's the inspector in charge of operations. In the past he has served in a variety of areas of the Camrose Police Service, primarily in patrol and investigations. He is a proud father of three young adult boys and is proud to have raised them in the Camrose community. His contributions to the city should be commended. That's why I'd ask Lee to rise so that he may receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two distinguished Albertans, the first being Deputy Commissioner Dale McGowan, who is the commanding officer of K Division of the RCMP, stationed here in Edmonton. Deputy Commissioner McGowan was born in Edmonton but has also served the RCMP in B.C., Saskatchewan, and all three northern territories. Sitting next to him is Chief Rod Knecht from the Edmonton Police Service. Chief Knecht is a native of Red Deer, Alberta, who has also served the RCMP throughout the country. We live in a terrific province, and I think we should feel much safer having quality individuals in senior roles like this running

our police services. Please join me in welcoming them with the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of grade 6 students from Thorncliffe elementary school in my constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark. This school is particularly special because of its excellent programs to individually assist students with special needs and with behavioural assistance as well as being a community school to 200 hard-working, very bright students, future leaders, I might say. Leading this group today is their teacher, Ms Karla Loberg. They are seated in the gallery above, and I would now ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly another visiting group, from the fine school of Forest Heights elementary in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. This group of 30 is sitting in the members' gallery. They are led by their teachers Ms Fritz and Kim Tew. Forest Heights elementary school has a regular English program as well as a German bilingual program, and they are doing very, very well in the Forest Heights neighbourhood. This is a very exceptional group of students. When their report cards come out on December 2, I'm confident they will all have As. With that, I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of 89 exceptional students from George McDougall high school, a school that I attended when I was a little bit younger. They are in both of the galleries today. Their teachers are with them, Mr. Sharun and Ms Sawby, as well as their group leaders, a group of parents and so forth: Tiffany Ascione, Constable Henry, and Cindy Davis. If they could all please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Mr. Del Graff, Alberta's Child and Youth Advocate. The office of the Child and Youth Advocate works with children who are receiving government services to ensure that we provide the highest level of assistance to these vulnerable youth. Of course, today he is very interested in the fact that we'll be tabling an act later in the House which will make the Child and Youth Advocate an officer of this Legislature. I will also have the privilege of tabling the latest annual report later today.

Mr. Graff is joined today by Jackie Stewart, senior manager of advocacy services; Terri Davies, senior manager of legal representation for children and youth; Anita Lindstrom, systems analyst; Maxine Salopree, advocate; and Laura Gibson, legal representative for children and youth intake caseworker. Last year the advocate's office provided more than 3,000 children and youth with advocacy services, including helping young people to under-

stand their rights and making sure they have an opportunity to participate and be heard when decisions are being made about them. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise to introduce to you and through you to members of this House Mrs. Shawna Benson. Shawna is a very close personal friend of mine. She grew up in Byemoor, where I taught for several years before I entered this House. She has worked relentlessly on rural community building and on engaging youth in the political process. She is a true leader now and for the future, and she's one of the most dynamic speakers you will ever hear. I'd ask Shawna, who's sitting in the members' gallery, to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly two individuals that are very supportive of more administrative penalties for impaired drivers. They are both from MADD Canada, an organization that doesn't need any introduction. They have been advocating increased safety on our roads for a number of years, and I'm very glad that they are here today to help us introduce some strengthening legislation on impaired driving. They are sitting in the members' gallery: Ms Louise Knox, a friend for many years and manager of the western provinces chapter services; and Mr. Wayne Kauffeldt, past chair of the national board, now a spokesman for the national board. Ladies and gentlemen, if you'd please receive them with the traditional warm welcome.

1:40

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you two different groups. The first group, seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, is from WorldSkills 2011 Team Alberta. We have three members of the Fierce Four, as we call them, as they were nicknamed in London. First are Sean Donnan from Leduc, Nigel Renschler from Stettler, and Tim Twa from Calgary. They are joined by Skills Canada Alberta representatives Kari Zral, event and competitor coordinator; and Shawna Bourke, director of communications and programming. Unfortunately, the fourth member, Luke Moore of Innisfail, couldn't be here, but we want to take a moment to honour him as well. I would ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The second introduction is some student representatives that are here today, Mr. Speaker, to see some of the important legislation that's coming forward. Two members of CAUS, which is the Council of Alberta University Students, Mr. Duncan Wojtaszek and Mr. Farid Iskandar, are here. Also, from ASEC we have Ms Carol Neuman and Mr. Timothy Jobs. I would ask all of them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Allred:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm especially pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the Assembly the chair and three members of the St. Albert 150th Anniversary Celebration Committee. This committee is chaired by

Margaret Plain and composed of Kevin Jones, Susan Jones, and Barry Bailey, who are in the public gallery today. Vice-chair Carol Watamaniuk was not able to come today. Margaret and her committee have worked diligently over the past few years to organize a host of events that have gone on throughout 2011 to celebrate the history of St. Albert, the oldest nonfortified community west of Winnipeg. I would ask Ms Plain and the members of the committee to rise, and in turn I'd ask members to give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Don Gnatiuk, president of Grande Prairie Regional College. Don is a relatively new member of my community, but he has made great strides in a short time to profile GPRC not just in Grande Prairie but in the whole province of Alberta. I'd ask him to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce a valued member of my department's appeals, education, and prosecution policy branch, Alberta's traffic safety co-ordinator, Mr. Robert Palser. Rob was the first Alberta Crown prosecutor to be designated as a qualified breathalyzer technician and is trained as a collision analyst and drug recognition evaluator. He also serves on the RCMP criminal crash investigation team for Alberta. He's clearly the perfect person to help Alberta create new and more effective impaired driving legislation. His efforts in this regard have been outstanding, and I'd like to recognize his efforts in the House today. It's certainly an honour to speak about him as a valued member of my department. I'd ask hon. members to extend their warm greeting.

## Members' Statements

### Tribute to Slave Lake Donors

**Ms Calahasen:** Today belongs to all of the givers I was involved with as they donated to help evacuees from the two municipalities and First Nations which were affected by fire. While our government went to great lengths to lessen the impact of the blaze, it is those who gave who have made quite a difference to the people who left their homes, sometimes with only the shirt on their back. I've been overwhelmed by the generosity of Albertans and Canadians alike.

So many to thank: the organizers of the Hope Concert, which brought people together after the fires; the many companies – Laricina, Pembina Pipeline, and ATCO – and the Loon River and Sawridge First Nations, who made generous donations. To Pro Bono Law Alberta, Legal Aid Alberta, and the many legal associations for providing free legal support to our residents. To institutions like ATB Financial, Scotiabank, and RBC for offering deferrals on loan payments for our residents. To AFSC for their willingness to help businesses get back on their feet. To all the retail stores who have offered discounts to the survivors of the fire as we reconstruct our lives.

To all those who collected, co-ordinated, and organized the massive outpouring of donations, especially the Slave Lake Rotary Club for the collection of many, many more donations which I do not have info on. To all the communities who ran collection drives. To Penn West for donating \$250,000 to the Red Cross; EllisDon, \$100,000; Merit Contractors for donating \$5,000 to the

Red Cross, \$2,500 to the Northern Haven women's shelter, and \$2,500 to the library; Alberta Sobey's Round Up program to the Slave Lake Native Friendship Centre, \$67,132; Canadian Crude Separators, \$100,000 to the Arctic Ice arena; Insurance Brokers to Slave Lake victims services, \$12,000; to West Fraser Timber for donating a fire truck to the Lesser Slave Lake regional fire department.

To Paul Brandt for his concert and for providing funds to the library. A special thank you to Lynne Carr from Oakdale, Ontario, who collected quilts all across Canada and personally delivered them to Slave Lake with my colleague from St. Albert. To the Canadian Red Cross, the Mustard Seed, the Salvation Army, the fire departments from across Alberta, and all of those who accepted donations on our behalf. And to the dozens of volunteers who sorted through countless semitrailers of donated goods.

My sincere gratitude to every individual and family who gave their hard-earned money to help our community get through this difficult time. While no one can give the residents of my constituency their homes back, all of these gifts gave us the next best thing, hope. Thank you so much for all your generosity.

### Temporary Foreign Workers

**Mr. Chase:** Mr. Speaker, enabling Albertans. Alberta needs an increase in the number of immigrants permitted under the provincial nominee program, which allows a faster tracking immigration process based on a person's job qualifications to meet employment requirements in Alberta. However, as is the case with most immigration policy matters, the federal government sets the quotas for the provinces. In sharp contrast to the global recession reality it would appear that a significant number of jobs are likely to be created in Alberta, thanks to our nonrenewable resource assets, which provides us with a degree of insulation from the economic downturn affecting the rest of the world.

As opposed to temporary foreign workers, TFWs, who are questionably recruited and lack the protection afforded to citizens, immigrants are a key component of Alberta's permanent employment force. Despite potential conflict in the competition for jobs, the Alberta Federation of Labour, AFL, to its credit has provided information and assistance to temporary foreign workers who were recruited to undercut wages of unionized employees in a province where unions are afforded little recognition by both federal and provincial governments.

TFWs have been used as pawns in forced contract agreements such as division 8, whereby the first signatory to the contract dictates the wages and working hours for the rest of the workers, whether union or nonunion. Recently in the oil sands 200 unionized insulators were laid off and replaced by TFWs due to Alberta's lax labour laws.

Immigrants are frequently caught in a cruel ping-pong game, bounced back and forth between the federal government, that sets the rules for their entrance and stay in the country, and the province, which has jurisdiction over their health care, education, housing, employment, the daily quality of their life. The offices of both one's MLA and MP, whether having achieved or applying for landed immigrant status as the first step to full citizenship, if so desired, should be considered as both a priority and a right in acquiring information and in seeking support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Health Quality Council Review

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A year ago Albertans found out what cabinet ministers have known for years. The health system is in crisis. Now, the Premier, who campaigned on calling a public inquiry, has broken her promise to Albertans. The question is: what does she have to hide? To the Premier. What is the Premier most afraid of? Is it the damning testimony of doctors McNamee and Winton, what an investigation of her own cabinet ministers may reveal, or how Albertans will react to the truth and facts before an election?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, today is an exciting day in Alberta. Today we are going to be tabling legislation that is going to ensure that we can have public, transparent, judge-led public inquiries into what's going on in health care. I am very proud of the fact that Albertans are going to be able to find out exactly what's going on in the system, and that's the appropriate place for us to find out exactly how health care can be improved.

1:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that *Hansard* shows that after months of opposition pressure the government only agreed to a Health Quality Council inquiry on the day that the McNamee story aired on national TV, why should anyone trust this Premier's and this government's sincerity this time, when the HQCA hand-off is so obviously intended to minimize the political damage of a real public inquiry?

**Ms Redford:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm going back to six or seven months ago when I was sitting in this Legislature. There were a number of issues with respect to health care, and my recollection is that hon. members of the opposition asked for the Health Quality Council to be given the authority to investigate and launch an inquiry. Today that legislation will be tabled, and the Health Quality Council will have more authority than they've ever had before.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, we have had the legislation in place for years, and many of those cabinet ministers and MLAs on that side have known about this.

Finally, to the Premier: given that we already have this legislation and the Premier has already flip-flopped many times, who is bullying the Premier out of calling a real public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act? Why are you breaking your promise, Madam Premier?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I think about my life, and I really can't think of anybody who has ever bullied me into doing anything. But I will tell you that the legislation that's being tabled today is being tabled because Albertans want to ensure that they know what's going on with health care. The Health Quality Council is more than qualified to do that work. They will be given additional powers to be able to do that work, and that's good for Albertans.

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

### Health Care Privatization

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year this government downplayed these leaked health care privatization documents, but the fact remains that the government does intend to run a parallel private, for-profit health system. Why did the Minister of Health and

Wellness present a privatization agenda to Albertans when they made it clear that they don't want it?

**Mr. Horne:** I presume that question was directed to me. You know, Mr. Speaker, earlier in this session and back in the spring we had a number of alleged, quote, privatization documents tabled in this House by members of the opposition. I don't know about you, but we on this side of the House are getting a little tired of it. None of the documents that have been tabled in this House can be attributed to any member of this caucus. The document that the hon. leader is holding up now is one such document. He's offered no proof, no substantiation . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader. [interjection] The hon. leader, please.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this is the minister that presented this document at caucus, when he's on the government's side, and given that the former minister said that these documents simply reflect comments from average Albertans, why did the current minister tell the public that this is what he heard from Albertans and then tell caucus that this is what he heard from Albertans, more privatization? Minister, tell the truth.

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, I must say it's very illuminating to be told about the substance of caucus discussions on this side of the House by someone who's standing on the other side of the House.

The fact of the matter is that no other government has stood up stronger and harder for public health care than this government caucus, and we'll continue to do so. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition is interested in tabling documents that are unattributed discussions to which he may or may not have been a party, I suppose that's his business. We're interested in getting on with the business of . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader. [interjections] Okay, okay. The Leader of the Opposition is recognized. Nobody else is.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Illumination is exactly what Albertans want. Let's shed a little bit of sunlight onto the truth.

Given that the Premier was there when these documents were discussed and won her campaign on a pledge of public health care just like the previous Premier did, can the Premier just be honest with Albertans, admit that she and her whole caucus share the same privatization agenda after the next election just as her two predecessors did? Premier, can you please answer that question?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the hon. member was doing all summer, but I think I was pretty clear for over eight months that I am committed to a publicly funded health care system in Alberta, full stop.

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

#### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. My first question is to the Premier. Why did this government feel it was necessary to handcuff the Minister of Finance by now requiring him to go to the President of the Treasury Board any time he wants to spend money in his department?

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

**Ms Redford:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's wonderful that the hon. member is standing up for our Minister of Finance because he sometimes needs some help in our cabinet.

What I will tell you is that when you're on this side of the House and you're managing a government, you're managing a cabinet, we have rules of protocol which allow for us as government to make decisions that are in the best interests of government. I know that everyone in our cabinet is committed to that. That involves speaking to each other, balancing priorities, and working together as a team, and that's what we do.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that hon. minister's history as a wild spender in health, I can see why you put the political handcuffs on him.

Now, again a promise. The \$1.8 billion that's in the Alberta sustainability fund: will the Premier please commit to this House that that money will not be used for the Progressive Conservative's re-election slush fund in the next four months?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, we are the government of the day. We are committed to the future of this province. We are responsible fiscal conservatives that will ensure that we are managing a government and a budget and a caucus that's going to ensure that Albertans have the best services possible now and in the future. This random speculation is really out of sorts and not relevant to the real discussions in this House.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Again to the Premier: if this is a government that holds true to fiscal responsibility, why was it necessary, in the second quarter that was released today, for this government to increase borrowing by \$1.1 billion? That's not being a fiscal conservative. Ask those guys.

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, the quarterly update today reported on the circumstances as they've existed for the past six months in terms of fiscal planning. There was nothing out of the ordinary. There was no exception. There was no change in the way that we do business.

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

#### Tom Baker Cancer Centre Pathology Lab

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 2000 the world-class pathology lab at the Tom Baker cancer centre has developed and performed a variety of critical tests for cancer patients in Alberta. These tests are crucial in determining life-saving treatments. However, in nine days the cancer testing lab at the Tom Baker is going to be shut down. This superboard decision was made without consultation and despite questions and warnings from the lab's director, Dr. Tony Magliocco, and other pathologists. To the Premier: will you heed the warnings and stop the closure of the Tom Baker cancer centre pathology lab today?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, when we're managing health care, we have to understand that there are responsibilities the government takes on, and there are responsibilities that Alberta Health Services takes on. We know that some of the information we've seen today would certainly suggest that there's been a disagreement within the workplace with respect to some decisions. It's entirely appropriate for those to be dealt with within the workplace, and that's where we'll leave them.



**Mrs. Forsyth:** It's just so disgusting. Again to the Premier: given the proof of intimidation in the health care system and given that Dr. Magliocco has expressed no confidence in the Health Quality Council and, Premier, said he would return to Alberta to testify in a full judicial public inquiry, will you do the right thing, keep your promise of what you said you were going to do when you ran for leader, and call a full judicial public inquiry today and not your gobbledygook that you're tabling later on?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see that, in fact, if someone does have concerns with respect to doctor intimidation, they would be prepared to come to an inquiry. The legislation will be tabled in the House today to ensure that that can happen. If there are issues to be determined, then I have full confidence that the Health Quality Council is going to be able to get to the bottom of that, the physicians are going to be able to testify with protection. That's where we're going to deal with these issues, before we start suggesting that there may or may not be proof.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Given that Dr. Magliocco was ignored, stonewalled, ostracized, and intimidated for raising his concerns over the planned closure, it's clear that intimidation is real and world-class health professionals are leaving this province. What are you going to do to stop other world-class professionals from leaving our province? Premier, call the public inquiry today.

2:00

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, there will be legislation before this House that is going to allow for that inquiry to take place. It is very important that Albertans know what is happening, and it's also very important that we do not jump to conclusions. We know that there will be disagreements in workplaces, as we know there are in all workplaces, but when we start jumping to conclusions as to what that may or may not have resulted in or could have become, that is not appropriate for this House.

**The Speaker:** Okay. I've heard language in here already that I'm not sure *Hansard* is going to pick up. I will not recognize members if they continue to interject when they're not supposed to. I just simply will not recognize them when they think it's their turn in the question period.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

### Health Care Premiums

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2008 the PC government did away with health care premiums. Today the Finance minister threatened to reintroduce health care premiums, a regressive tax that will cost every family over a thousand dollars regardless of their income. This is an insignificant amount for Alberta's wealthiest individuals but a real burden on middle- and low-income families. My question is to the Premier. Will the government admit that this is going to be yet another tax and one that disproportionately and negatively affects middle- and low-income families in this province?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, this is exactly the point in time when we as a government are entering into budget deliberations. There are a number of points of view being expressed by Albertans across the province with respect to where we go in some difficult economic times. There's no doubt, as both the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance have said, that this is something that Albertans have raised with us. It was in that context that the comments were made.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that when the Conservatives did away with progressive income tax in this province, the Alberta Treasury estimated that it cost the province 1 and a half billion dollars a year way back in 2001 and that most of that was because of tax savings of up to \$60,000 for some of the wealthiest individuals in this province, will the Premier admit that the real source of the deficit was the decision to cut taxes for the wealthiest Albertans several years ago?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, right now in Alberta we have a situation where there is a deficit. We also know that this is a very difficult economic time. To start speculating on whether or not it has to do with whether or not a particular household income is paying more or less taxes from over six or seven years ago is not an appropriate analysis of the situation.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that this government seems desperate to try and find revenue that comes from the people least able to afford it instead of asking those who are wealthy and benefit from our society to pay their fair share and given that the health care premium goes into general revenues rather than into the health care system, will the Premier admit that it has nothing to do with health care and is simply another disproportionate tax on poor and middle-class families?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, this particular member happened to be at the media conference that we had this morning. I don't think that he washed his ears this morning because what we said at that media conference was that in our round-table discussions across the province these issues were raised. We made no commitment in any particular direction other than to listen to Albertans. I must remind this hon. member that he was the one out there advocating that we increase royalties substantially for corporations in this province, which significantly impacted negatively the oil and gas industry.

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

### Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During her campaign for party leadership the Premier promised not only to raise the meagre monthly allowance that AISH recipients receive to \$1,588, which barely approaches Alberta's deplorable poverty line; she also promised to increase the preclawback amount for the small minority who are able to work. To the Premier: given that the ability to earn bolsters a sense of independence in those very few AISH recipients who are able to work, when can we expect the Premier to make good on her promise?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member raises a very important point. It is important for people to feel that, where possible, they can make a contribution to their life. We are at the moment, right now, in the middle of budget deliberations. This is part of how we move forward with respect to both fiscal policy and public policy, and I think the hon. member can look forward to the results of that very soon.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. I can't wait, and the poor people on AISH are considerably more desperate than I am.

What does it say about this government's support for vulnerable Albertans that it has since 2008 offered AISH recipients less and less initiative to earn, Madam Premier?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I think what it says about this government is that in the past month and a half the party that is governing this province elected a leader that's committed to improving the quality of life of AISH recipients, and we will do that in the next budget.

**Mr. Chase:** When will the Premier stop talking about improving AISH benefits and implement the necessary changes to assist highly vulnerable Albertans? Talk is cheap. Solutions are more expensive.

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is very insightful in his comments. We are fully committed to honouring the commitment that I made, and we will do so.

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

### Keystone Pipeline Project

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has said that we cannot lobby the U.S. or intervene in their processes regarding the Keystone pipeline. My first question is indeed to the Premier. Can she please explain to Albertans and to this House what value, if any, her meetings with U.S. congressional leaders had in this regard, and can she update us on discussions she had along similar lines with Canadian counterparts?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, last week was a very interesting week, and I think that as Albertans we should be very proud of the reception we received in Washington, New York, Toronto, and Ottawa. The reason for that is that we were able to go and talk about what Alberta is. We talked about our success as environmental stewards. We talked about being strong partners with the United States with respect to economic development. Fortunately for us, because of some announcements that the State Department had made, the regulatory process was suspended with respect to Keystone when I was there. So we also had the opportunity to advocate very strongly for Keystone both with the State Department as well as with bipartisan congressional leaders.

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Premier, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the Minister of Intergovernmental, International and Aboriginal Relations. Considering the importance of Keystone, can the minister explain what good it is to have an interim envoy in Washington rather than employing someone on a longer term basis?

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

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dave Bronconnier's posting is, in fact, a very important assignment that comes at a very important time. Issues such as the Keystone XL and the oil sands are critically important issues that are front and centre to discuss in U.S. politics at this time. Dave has a significant voice. He gets the attention of the important decision-makers in the U.S., and I'm very confident that he will have an impact not only in Washington but in other key places around the United States.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Minister.

My final supplemental is to the Minister of Environment and Water. Obviously, Keystone is of vital importance to citizens across our country as well. During her visit to Ottawa last week was she able to get any kind of indication of when we'll see some real movement with our federal counterparts on world-class, joint monitoring systems for the oil sands so that this and other pipelines receive the required seals of approval as soon as possible?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Well, I can tell the hon. member that we've been having some good conversations with the federal minister. We're making great strides to move forward with our monitoring system, and I'm looking forward to the work that we're going to do together to have one first-class monitoring system here in Alberta with both the federal and provincial governments. We're moving very well on this. I've had a couple of conversations, and I look forward to announcing something with that minister soon.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

### Fixed Election Dates

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. We have yet another broken promise from this Premier and this government. The promise was fixed election dates, but instead we have a fixed election season. Now, to the Minister of Justice: when every other Canadian jurisdiction that has fixed election dates actually has that, a fixed date for the election, one day, why would Alberta need a three-month political window?

**Mr. Olson:** Mr. Speaker, we're going to be introducing legislation in a little while here, and I would prefer to have that debate after we've introduced the legislation. The hon. member will have all kinds of opportunity to debate at that point.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister, the hon. Minister of Justice, who should be able to answer the question. Hopefully, he's capable. What challenges do Alberta voters face that other Canadian voters don't when they can have one day for fixed elections, and you want this three-month-long political window?

2:10

**Mr. Olson:** Well, I'm very happy to have the debate now. I think we'll have a little bit more time later. It's not a question of Albertans facing unique challenges; it's a question of a made-in-Alberta solution that makes sense for Albertans.

**Mr. MacDonald:** This is not a made-in-Alberta solution; this is a Progressive Conservative made-in-Alberta solution.

Now, what is this government so afraid of that you can't pick one date every four years for Albertans to elect their government?

**Mr. Olson:** Mr. Speaker, it's not a question of being fearful of anything. I would imagine that anybody could figure out that when there's a three-month window to host and have an election, they should be ready for it at any time within that three months. It's very reasonable, and it's very flexible.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Provincial Achievement Tests

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's been some indication that this government will end the provincial achievement tests for grades 3 and 6 students. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Is the minister planning to cancel the provincial achievement tests?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, I will not pre-empt the outcome of a very healthy discussion I'm having right now with the Alberta School Boards Association and many individual school boards, with the parent council associations, and with parents, students, and others. What I can undertake at this point in time is that we are looking at the PAT exams, and we will make sure that at the end of the day we will have a solution that is both constructive to administering education in this province and to addressing some of the issues that have been raised with the tests.

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

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can the minister assure parents that he will address the legitimate concerns regarding undue stress, particularly on young students, that has been raised with regard to the PATs?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure parents of two things. I can assure them that, yes, indeed, we will be looking at some of the concerns that have been raised and looking at how we can alleviate some of the issues relevant to their concerns, but I can also assure parents that we will make sure we continue to develop and monitor our curriculum so that we continue to have one of the best curriculums in the world to such extent that we're actually exporting Alberta curriculum to many countries throughout the world.

**Mr. Doerksen:** Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: as these tests are to be gauging student achievement, how will the minister ensure that these tests are in fact used to address and gauge student achievement rather than as comparators between teachers, schools, and school divisions?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, these tests are really, actually, designed to test the curriculum and to see how the curriculum plays itself out in the classrooms. Then this is how we adjust and/or develop new curriculum. The fact is that, yes, there are third parties that utilize that test for purposes for which the test was not intended. It's a form of misuse of information and, frankly, arriving at very questionable conclusions. The fact is that we will look also at the possibility of making sure that these tests, which are very valid – they are there for a very good reason – are not misused by third parties.

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

### Environmental Monitoring of Oil Sands

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans want an oil sands industry they can be proud of, and industry wants to be innovative and respected internationally for its environmental record, but this government's continual foot-dragging is making both things impossible. We've had no new standards for oil sands water monitoring, no new CCS, no health impact studies. All promised; not delivered. To the Minister of Environment and Water. Industry will step up to the challenge if it's provided, so why does this government insist on dragging its feet on implementing environmental standards?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I wouldn't say that we're dragging our feet at all. I would say that what we're doing is working with the federal government to come up with a world-class monitoring system here in Alberta that Albertans can rely on. We looked at the portal that we announced a week or so ago. The transparency of the information is there. I would say that in the last month that I've spent here as minister, we're not dragging our feet.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, Mr. Speaker, back to the same minister. Given that this government's inaction has led the federal government to step into our oil sands to a degree never seen before, what tangible evidence can the minister offer us that would show that they're encouraging environmental innovation in the oil sands on a scale that can't be denied internationally?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I would say that we share the jurisdiction with regard to the environment with the federal government. Rather than having two separate monitoring systems for air, land, water, and biodiversity, we're doing what makes sense, and we're having one first-class system in Alberta. Albertans will see the transparency with that, and that is what we're doing with the federal government because we share that jurisdiction.

**Ms Blakeman:** I can't wait for transparency from a provincial and a federal government. Good Lord.

Back to the same minister: given that climate change is real and a threat to our biggest industry, what will the minister do to ensure Alberta is leading the way in environmental innovation rather than toddling along 10 steps behind?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'd like to say that I'm very proud that Alberta is leading the way and has been leading the way. We're the first one with regard to putting a price on carbon. We're the first one with regard to putting in a huge commitment with regard to carbon capture and storage, a \$2 billion investment that around the world is seen as a huge investment, taking real steps, real concrete steps to real projects on the ground. These are just a couple of the things that we're doing that are taking real leadership in Alberta, and quite frankly I'm proud of that.

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

### Noninstructional Postsecondary Tuition Fees

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. For some time now postsecondary students have been expressing their concerns about colleges, universities, and technical institutes basically sidestepping this province's tuition cap and charging high fees that are deemed noninstructional. Institutions are using fees for things such as athletics and recreation technology and registration fees as a way to get around tuition caps. My questions are to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. What are you doing to make sure that this practice stops and that students are not literally paying the price?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the students are extremely concerned about the cost of noninstructional fees, and so am I. It is an issue that we promised the students we would deal with when we met earlier this year. Since meeting with them, I have sent a letter to all of our postsecondary institutions asking them to develop policy on how they will include the students in the discourse around any future fees that will be charged to those students.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** To the same minister: when will students see outcomes?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you. We've asked all of the institutions to be back to us with their policies on student engagement within the next 90 days.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** To the same minister: given that the public postsecondary institutions' tuition fee regulations set a model for predictable increases to tuition fees, why not just regulate these noninstructional fees the same way you do tuitions?

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That suggestion has come up from the students, but, you know, we have 26 publicly funded postsecondaries across Alberta, and they're all very different and unique institutions. Some are extremely large; some are smaller and rural. We determined that it would be better if each institution had a chance to look at how they could engage their student body, their students in the process and come up with a way that would work in their institution. We don't believe that one solution would work in every institution across the province.

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

#### Fixed Election Dates

*(continued)*

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nations, provinces, and municipalities across Canada and around the world have had no difficulty operating with fixed election dates, but in Alberta somehow we're being told it's just not manageable and that the best we can do is narrow it to a three-month season. Now, seasons might be fine for duck hunting or theatre, but democracy deserves better. My question to the Attorney General is: what possible defence can he offer for the Premier abandoning her promise to deliver on the long-awaited fixed election date for Alberta?

**Mr. Olson:** Mr. Speaker, we're very comfortable on this side with this because it's flexible. In the springtime, for example, there are changes of season. There are many things that come up. There's Easter. There are dates where if you had an arbitrarily fixed election date, it would make it very inconvenient to have an election. It's a reasonable thing to do. Albertans are not going to be fooled in any way or prejudiced in any way, nor is the opposition, by having a flexible period of time within which to have an election.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that other provinces have the same range of unpredictable issues that Alberta has – I'm pretty sure Manitoba has had a flood or two – and given that Alberta municipalities have managed for years to hold elections quite successfully on fixed dates, why is the Attorney General supporting

the Premier's decision to secure political advantage at the expense of keeping her promise to Albertans?

2:20

**Mr. Olson:** Mr. Speaker, any political advantage, if there were any, would be minuscule in this example. Three months is a very small window of time within which to call an election. The opposition will know years ahead of time when the election is coming, and they can do everything they need to do to prepare. Albertans, again, are not going to be prejudiced in any way, but it will be flexible enough that people will also not be inconvenienced.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the long string of broken promises is becoming a growing embarrassment to the new Premier and that her failure to stick with a fixed election promise would be so easy to correct, will the Attorney General commit today to flip back from the Premier's flop on this issue and consult with opposition parties and give us a fixed election date and not a fixed election season?

**Mr. Olson:** Well, this brings me back nicely to my original comment with the previous question, that we're going to have a chance to debate all of this once we actually introduce the legislation.

#### Electricity Regulation

**Mr. Hehr:** Over 10 years ago this government decided to deregulate electricity. The promise of better service and lower costs to consumers never happened. This change has led to significantly higher energy prices and unstable, unpredictable markets. My question is for the Minister of Energy. How is it that every time you promise lower prices, our electricity bills continue to grow?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, as usual the hon. member is about half right and half wrong. It is true that prices for electricity have increased since January – I'm happy to explain the reasons why – but if you compare Alberta to other non hydro dependent electrical systems, we are in the middle of the pack and very competitive.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, given that five electricity producers control 70 per cent of the market and that the Market Surveillance Administrator identified over 46 violations of market manipulation in the past year, why aren't you defending Alberta consumers?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report that just recently the Market Surveillance Administrator did identify an irregularity in one generator's practice, investigated, found there was an irregularity, and has negotiated with the company and imposed both a fine and a payback to the pool to make up for that transgression. So the system is working.

**Mr. Hehr:** Do you really think that a \$125,000 fine for causing 5 and a half million dollars in damage is an appropriate fine? Is that what I'm hearing from the minister?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has a wonderful imagination in coming up with imaginative figures in terms of total damage, but I can assure you that if there is a problem with the fine and the compensation, the decision made by the Market Surveillance Administrator goes to the Alberta Utilities Commission, which has the final word on the appropriateness of the penalty.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

### High-speed Internet Service for Rural Alberta

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very frustrated that there are still parts of our province that are left with poor access to high-speed Internet service and in some cases none at all. I represent an area comprising parts of Camrose and Leduc counties where access to the Internet is very poor. To the Minister of Service Alberta. Mr. Minister, it seems that no action has taken place recently on this file for quite some time. Are you finally going to do something to bring parts of rural Alberta into the 21st century and ensure that unconnected . . .

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At present 3.3 million, or 94 per cent of Albertans, have access to high-speed Internet through private service initiatives and strategic government infrastructure. Now, we are committed to taking this up to 98 per cent, and to find that remaining 4 per cent, we are pinpointing reasons as to why some people are not receiving service today. We will bring forth solutions that are cost-effective and that can be executed in a very timely fashion.

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that our government is now forecasting a significant deficit and with continued efforts to balance the budget, can the minister assure this House that this important initiative will not disappear from the government's radar screen?

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the members of the House and all Albertans that this is a priority of this Premier and our government. We are committed to a thriving rural Alberta community. We will deliver on this promise. We will make sure our rural communities are thriving and have access to high-speed Internet to capitalize on every technology that the rest of Albertans have at their disposal.

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: will this minister leverage the SuperNet in his efforts to close the service gap, considering that all Albertans have invested millions of dollars in building this vital piece of communications infrastructure?

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a leader by creating the SuperNet; 429 communities throughout this province have fibre optics in the ground. We're a leader across not just Canada but internationally. We will capitalize on that technology. We will make sure that that infrastructure that we've put in place is best utilized and that we come forth with the most productive, cost-effective solutions moving forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

### Provincial Tax Alternatives

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans fought for many years to get the federal tax-and-spend Liberals out of Ottawa, but it seems that they have resurfaced here in Alberta under our new tax-and-spend Premier. Today the Finance minister and Treasury Board president all but promised that their Christmas gift to Alberta families next year will be a \$1,000 per year tax increase dressed up as the old health care premiums. To our Finance minister. This is a very, very simple question. Are you considering bringing back the old health care premiums at the next budget? Yes or no?

**Mr. Liepert:** It's a pretty simple answer, Mr. Speaker. It's no. I think this particular member, who was also at the media briefing, if he'd have washed his ears this morning, might have heard the same thing as the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Anderson:** Well, I am happy to hear that, Mr. Speaker.

Given that at today's press conference the Finance minister all but announced that health care premiums were coming back to pay for this government's all-you-can-eat spending buffet, are you, Minister, willing to say that under no conditions – under no conditions – will you as minister, will this government be raising taxes, fees, premiums, or any other money grab on the backs of hard-working Alberta families? Admit to that now, and I'll believe you.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, the first question this member raised was whether we'd be bringing back the health care premiums, that were cancelled a few years ago, and my answer to that was no. What we do have to look at – and, quite frankly, it's what Albertans are saying – is that we need to ensure that as we move forward, there's a recognition by Albertans of the cost of health care. As we move forward, we're going to look at how that can be accomplished, and at this stage there's nothing that I have to announce.

**Mr. Anderson:** Well, that was as clear as mud.

Given that this Finance minister has mused this last week about introducing a provincial sales tax, bringing back a \$1,000 per year tax hike on everyone, or health premiums as he calls it, and given that his government now has a \$6 billion cash shortfall, will this minister confirm that he and this new Premier's balanced budget strategy entails taxing Albertans more and praying that the price of oil hits \$120 a barrel? Is that the plan?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. The member, as is typical, throws a lot of numbers around there, and frankly I don't know sometimes where he . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance has the floor.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I'll continue on. These numbers that are being tossed around have no validity. What we did announce this morning is that at this point in time, second-quarter results, we are very close to what we said in this House in February, that our projected deficit this year would be about \$3.1 billion now, all of it covered by the sustainability fund. We do not have a debt in this province, and that's because of the good management of this government.

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order? Okay.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Property Tax Deferral

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the largest constituent groups in Edmonton-Calder is seniors, and I do believe that we need to do everything possible to keep them in their homes. It reflects directly on their quality of life, on their dignity, and on their overall health. One simple solution would be to address a property tax deferral program. My question is to the Minister of Seniors. Minister, will you consider such a property tax program for Alberta seniors?

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the question is a valid question and probably a really brilliant idea as well. I can tell you that I've had the opportunity to read about B.C. and what they've done for property tax deferral. It has kept seniors in their homes. I want to tell you that I'm committing that next spring as part of the government agenda I'm going to bring this thing forward.

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

**Mr. Elniski:** No supplemental. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### 2:30 Alleged Intimidation of Physicians

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the joint submission to the Health Quality Council of Alberta made by the Alberta Medical Association and the Canadian Medical Association, widespread physician intimidation is described as well as an environment of "chronic instability" in Alberta's health care system. Since last March the AMA, the Alberta Medical Association, has had no master agreement with this province. To the minister of health. During negotiations the ministry threatened to terminate programs such as the physician and family support program and cast doubt on the future of other programs and staffing of physician offices. Are these the tactics of a government intent on eliminating intimidation of physicians?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows full and well, discussions between the government, Alberta Health Services, and the Alberta Medical Association on a new agreement have been ongoing for some time. The discussions, I can report, are positive. They're constructive. The new president of the Alberta Medical Association, Dr. Linda Slocombe, and I have spoken several times. We are continuing to work toward a new agreement with Alberta's doctors. I see nothing but positive and constructive dialogue in the months to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, I'm glad the minister is so optimistic, Mr. Speaker.

Given that such deplorable tactics persist, what confidence can Albertans have that current negotiations will result in an agreement fostering meaningful physician engagement in our health care system?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, the very act of the negotiations and the issues that are discussed are evidence of this government's

commitment to a constructive, positive relationship with physicians. My barometer is the feedback I receive from Dr. Linda Slocombe, the AMA president, on behalf of her members. As I will continue to report to this House, we're on a very positive path toward addressing a number of the issues raised by the hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** A lot of ground to catch up, Mr. Speaker, on the loss of confidence in this province among physicians.

When will the province do what most provinces have done and implement continuance provisions that allow the building of trust and for the AMA to transition from one agreement to the next? Continuance provisions.

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously, it would be inappropriate for me to stand here and discuss specifics of discussions that may be under way between government, Alberta Health Services, and the Alberta Medical Association. What I will say is that this government is committed to continuing to provide an environment of stability and predictability for physicians that practise in this province. The same is true for all other health professionals. The discussions that are under way now reflect that spirit on both sides, and I have every reason to believe that will continue.

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

### Bullying Prevention

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week was National Bullying Awareness Week. We're hearing too often the tragic stories of youth that have been victimized and targeted by this senseless act. My question is to the Minister of Education. How is this government raising awareness of this very important issue?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that we have to raise awareness, but the fact is that bullying does exist. There are a variety of forms of bullying. There is cyberbullying. There is homophobic bullying. There's a variety of it, and there's no place for that in Alberta, never mind in schools and schoolyards but even outside of schoolyards. As the Alberta government we will be raising awareness on how to identify bullying and how to eradicate bullying from our schools.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Leadership is required, for appropriate behaviour must be modelled if this government is truly to change the culture around bullying. What concrete steps is the Minister of Education taking to change peoples' behaviour?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, behaviour must be modelled, and we all have to work as a community to eradicate this culture of bullying. Number one, we are providing our schools and our teachers and administrators with tools on how to recognize bullying. You will see that the currently tabled Bill 18 is being consulted on further with Albertans, and we are looking at legislative enhancement to allow teachers to deal with bullying in schools. But in the end all of us in this Chamber and everybody throughout Alberta can be a positive contributor to eradicating bullying simply by leading by example. As government we will be enhancing awareness through a variety of media that accesses not only children but teachers, parents, coaches, grandparents, and everybody in our community.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I understand it, bullying prevention is a crossministry initiative involving Education and Human Services. My question is for the Minister of Human Services. What is the government doing for ongoing bullying prevention and supports for all Albertans?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, there has been an ongoing crossministry initiative and a crossministry committee on this, led now by Human Services. We do have 15 passionate, inspiring young people on a youth advisory committee who advise us with respect to this area. They helped to create a website for youth. It's b-free.ca, which has advice and tips for youth who are experiencing bullying or are concerned about a friend. Along with the B-Free website we have a toll-free 24-hour bullying helpline, 1.888.456.2323, and two other websites for adults and children. So there are a number of things happening, but much more has to be done in this age of technology.

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

#### GreenTRIP Incentives Program

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. GreenTRIP was announced more than three years ago, and only this year did the government finally begin to honour its commitment to the municipalities. The \$2 billion was committed in 2008 with no plan for transit improvements to use the full amount within 10 years. To the Minister of Transportation: is the government still planning to support transit to the tune of \$2 billion, or will it be on the chopping block like the Premier is considering doing to some of the CCS fund?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we're in the budget process right now, but what has been committed to GreenTRIP, to the municipalities will be honoured.

**Mr. Kang:** Mr. Speaker, to the minister again: given that of the \$2 billion promised only \$575 million has been allocated, will the minister explain why Calgary has been left out in the cold? Does this government plan to end the program before Calgary projects are approved?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, in fact, Calgary hasn't been left out in the cold. I want to inform the hon. member that Calgary is working on an application that we have been discussing with them, and that is in the process.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister again: given that the city of Edmonton was able to shuffle MSI money away from the NAIT LRT project to be replaced by the funding from GreenTRIP, will the ministry approve similar applications being considered by the city of Calgary?

**Mr. Danyluk:** I'm not exactly sure, Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member is talking about, shuffling MSI funding and moving projects over from one to the other. I think it's very clear that the applications that are in place for the GreenTRIP program, also for the MSI program go through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Do we work with the municipalities on their projects on a regular basis

in consultation? Of course we do because we want to make sure that the funding that is provided for municipalities is used in the best way, and they want the same goal as well.

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

#### Electricity Import Manipulation

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans were shocked to learn earlier this month that TransAlta had acted in a way that artificially increased electricity prices. Too many people feel the system is just not working. To the Minister of Energy: what happened in this case, and what impact did this have on my constituents?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, for 31 hours in November of last year TransAlta took certain steps that had the effect of impeding electricity imports from British Columbia. The result of that was that power pool prices in Alberta were higher than they otherwise would have been. However, I want to stress that only industrial consumers who purchased energy from the power pool in real time were impacted. Residential consumers who buy on a regulated price: their price is set one month in advance so was not affected by the temporary boost in prices.

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

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you. To the same minister: what is being done about this infraction of the rules?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, the Market Surveillance Administrator is in effect the policeman that regulates and monitors this industry. They noticed the irregularities last November. They asked TransAlta to stop and undertook an investigation. As a result of that, they found that there was a violation of the rules, and based on negotiations TransAlta has agreed to pay a penalty of \$370,000; \$245,000 of that is for, in effect, excess profit. The other \$125,000 of that is an administrative penalty.

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

2:40

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Energy: given that some have estimated the cost to consumers to be more than \$5 million, shouldn't the fine be higher, and can't this money be returned to those who paid the inflated prices?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the second question, the legislation requires that all fines go into the general revenues, so that's a matter of legislation and is dealt with that way. With respect to the so-called \$5 million estimate, as I indicated to my Liberal friend earlier, that's based on a guess, really a guesstimate, that assumes that for the 31 hours in question all consumers were paying the real-time pool price. In fact, that's not the case. As I indicated earlier, residential consumers pay a month in advance and were not affected by that. Even industrial consumers often hedge their purchases. So in that respect, the \$5 million figure is not accurate.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes the question-and-answer period for today. Twenty members were recognized. There were 116 questions and responses. We have a very, very busy Routine to deal with in the next 18 minutes, so we're going to go immediately to Members' Statements, and I'm going to call on the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

### Family Violence Prevention Month

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to recognize November as Family Violence Prevention Month in Alberta. This month is a serious reminder to all of us that we can help to prevent and address family violence in our communities. This issue has devastating effects for individuals and families across the province. We know that family violence also has profound and lifelong consequences for children regardless of whether they are abused directly or a witness to it.

According to a 2008 study neglect and exposure to intimate partner violence are the most common forms of substantiated maltreatment causing children to come into care, with each issue accounting for about 34 per cent of all substantiated cases in Canada. We need to continue our efforts to protect children and support all Albertans who are struggling with the trauma of family violence and help them as they work to rebuild their lives.

The government of Alberta is working closely with families and communities to provide support for those affected by family violence. More than \$65 million is invested each year across government, including support for women's shelters, victims' support programs, safe visitation sites, public awareness and education efforts, and many other programs and services.

This spring in the Legislature we passed amendments to the Protection Against Family Violence Act with the unanimous support of all parties. These changes improved protection for those affected by family violence and came into force on November 1 of this year. These amendments hold accountable those who violate protection orders and make Alberta's penalties for such violations amongst the strongest in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, if an Albertan knows someone who is experiencing abuse in their family, I encourage them to call the family violence info line at 310-1818 for information and to connect with support or to visit [familyviolence.alberta.ca](http://familyviolence.alberta.ca). We all need to keep working to prevent family violence so Albertans can live safely in their homes and communities.

Thank you.

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

### St. Albert Sesquicentennial

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of St. Albert by Albert Lacombe in 1861. As such, St. Albert is the oldest nonfortified community west of Winnipeg. St. Albert's 150th anniversary committee organized a marvellous series of programs throughout the year to celebrate this major event in the history of not just St. Albert but the province of Alberta.

The year kicked off with a parish event to mark the actual founding of St. Albert in 1861 by Father Lacombe and Bishop Taché, which also marked the establishment of the Catholic church and the Grey Nuns in St. Albert.

The kickoff for the 150th anniversary committee was the performance of *The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon* in the newly renovated curling rink, and thank you to the province of Alberta for a major contribution to the funding of this facility.

A major Canadian Western Bank rendezvous gala was held in the Enjoy Centre, the Hole family's new commercial and botanical complex. This and other galas were well attended, including guests such as our Lieutenant Governor, the Hon.

Donald Ethell, and Her Honour Linda Ethell as well as Premier Stelmach and Mrs. Stelmach.

Over the spring and summer St. Albert hosted a number of unique events for all ages, including a soap box derby, a performance and tour called Meet the Street, which featured various street names and the pioneers they were named after.

Traditional events such as the St. Albert Rodeo parade, the International Children's Festival, Canada Day, the farmers' market, and rockin' August as well as the 55-plus Winter Games were supplemented with the 150th anniversary activities.

The crème de la crème was the August 28 picnic, which attracted over 10,000 residents, former residents, and visitors. This event featured 10 separate venues along the Sturgeon River from Big Lake to Riverlot 56, including Grain Elevator park and the botanical gardens. These venues featured on-site artists and artistic demonstrations, aboriginal dancers, athletic and cultural events, and, of course, a large variety of different ethnic and traditional foods.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Team Alberta WorldSkills Achievements

**Mr. Ouellette:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to recognize the members of Team Alberta's Fierce Four, three of whom are with us today in the members' and public galleries. These young Albertans were part of the Team Canada contingent at the recent WorldSkills competition in London, England. As you are aware, Calgary played host to the WorldSkills in 2009, and we were all witness to the incredible technical expertise and problem-solving skills of these competitors in areas like refrigeration, web design, autobody repair, and hairstyling.

Mr. Speaker, skills competitions at all levels, from the provincial to the national and all the way to the international, are events that shine a spotlight on the importance and value of apprenticeship and skilled labour in our province and around the world.

Tradespersons and skilled workers are the foundation of Alberta's economy, and these members of Team Alberta are tremendous role models for the rewards of a career in the trades. The excellence that the Fierce Four put on display for the world to see did not come without a great deal of support from the team at Skills Canada Alberta and especially from their employers.

Mr. Speaker, a tip of the hat should be extended to Marc Seabrook of Onsite Machining Solutions in Innisfail, Murray Brennan of Brennan Auto Body Repair in Stettler, John Goucher of Allied Projects in Calgary, and Chad Theriault of Millenium Mechanical Services in Leduc. These employers played a huge role in supporting these competitors and deserve their own recognition for helping these Albertans realize their goals.

It's easy to see why Alberta is making such an impact on the world stage when you combine the incredible support for these competitors and the individual drive and determination of the Fierce Four. I encourage all Albertans to learn more about skills competitions in their communities and to see first-hand the dedication of so many of their fellow Albertans.

I would like to congratulate Team Alberta, their employers, and the team at Skills Canada Alberta for all their hard work at the recent WorldSkills competition.

### Global Entrepreneurship Week

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on two extraordinary Calgary events last week as part of this year's celebration of Global Entrepreneurship Week. The Canadian Youth Business Foundation organized the YOU Innovate Canada tournament,



which challenged Canadians 16 years and older to think like entrepreneurs by creating new value out of an ordinary coffee cup. Forty videos were submitted from across Alberta, including participation from six postsecondary institutions.

The community award went to a team called Something Awesome, which was comprised of Kendra Wannamaker, Nicolette Bell, Kyler Marshall, and Connor Dyck. This team also received over 11,000 online votes.

The postsecondary award went to a team called Boja, which was comprised of Breana Baker, Olivia Bohdan, Josh Holloway, and Adam Holloway. I'm pleased to note that the government of Alberta is a proud partner to this great initiative with a \$1 million contribution. Mr. Speaker, I was truly impressed and inspired by the level of social consciousness exhibited by these young people's project concepts and ideas.

Another leading-edge initiative is the Trico Charitable Foundation, dedicated to the development of social enterprise, which essentially encompasses a business operation commonly run by charities or nonprofits. Revenue raised by the business operation is reinvested into the charity to support their programs and operations. The foundation organized Enterprising Spirit: Creating Value and Social Good conference, that attracted over 150 delegates from all over Canada.

This unique conference was highlighted by the inaugural Social EnterPrize awards, annual grants to grow and sustain social enterprises, provoke innovation, and build capacity in the nonprofit sector. Awards went to Ms Caroline Arcand, executive director of Groupe Convex; the Social EnterPrize award for mature organizations was given to Potluck Café and Catering of Vancouver; and the grant for emerging organizations was given to Mission Possible of Vancouver.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

2:50

**Kyle Fundytus**

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with great sadness that I rise today and comment on the terrible tragedy that killed a local minor hockey player last week. Kyle Fundytus was an aspiring young hockey player for the midget double-A South Side Athletic Club who was hit in the neck by a puck while going down to block a shot during a game. He was just 16 years old. Neck guards are mandatory in minor hockey, and Kyle was wearing one, but unfortunately that wasn't able to save him.

Tragic accidents like this one affect many different people on many levels not only at Holy Trinity high school, located in my constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods, but also in the entire city of Edmonton and in our province who know how to appreciate the sport of hockey. Those who knew Kyle say that he was a dedicated teammate, a hard worker, and that he had an infectious passion for the game of hockey.

Our most sincere condolences go out to Kyle's family, friends, and teammates during such a difficult time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I'm pleased to table five copies of the committee's report on the review of the Lobbyists Act dated

November 2011. Copies of this report will be distributed to all the members today.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 24

#### Health Quality Council of Alberta Act

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move first reading of Bill 24, the Health Quality Council of Alberta Act.

The proposed bill will give the Health Quality Council of Alberta expanded powers to investigate health system matters and have it report directly to the Legislative Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

#### Bill 25

#### Child and Youth Advocate Act

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great privilege to move for first reading Bill 25, the Child and Youth Advocate Act.

The act would make the Child and Youth Advocate an officer of the Legislature and set up appropriate mandates for him. It would also provide for the establishment of a council for quality assurance, clarify provisions around the so-called publication ban, and provide for greater sharing of information about children in care or children in need with caregivers and others who are associated with those children.

I would move first reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

#### Bill 21

#### Election Amendment Act, 2011

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce for first reading Bill 21, the Election Amendment Act, 2011, which will amend the Election Act to provide for a fixed election time period and, thus, allow all of us to prepare for elections with greater certainty.

I move first reading of Bill 21.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a first time]

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

#### Bill 22

#### Justice and Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2011

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce for first reading Bill 22, the Justice and Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2011.

This bill contains amendments and housekeeping changes to a number of justice statutes. The changes in Bill 22 will increase clarity, fix a few errors, improve the functioning of Alberta's courts, and increase the effectiveness of our legislation.

I move first reading of Bill 22. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 22 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Order.

[Motion carried]

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

### Bill 23

#### Land Assembly Project Area Amendment Act, 2011

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Land Assembly Project Area Amendment Act, 2011.

This amendment is to empower landowners and to clear up any confusion that exists with the existing lap of legislation. It gives landowners as many options as possible when we're working with them and they're impacted by a potential major infrastructure project. It will also ensure full consultation, fair compensation, and full access to the courts.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a first time]

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

### Bill 26

#### Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2011

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 26, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2011.

I'm very pleased to bring forward this very important piece of legislation. Impaired driving is something that affects all Albertans and continues to be a major safety concern for everyone on the road. This is a serious matter. Many alcohol-related collisions are preventable. This legislation focuses on improving safety on our roads by encouraging greater personal responsibility and behaviours that help save lives.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to table the appropriate number of copies of the Child and Youth Advocate's 2010-11 annual report. This is the first report provided by this particular youth advocate, who was appointed on June 1, and if the Child and Youth Advocate Act that I've just tabled is passed, this will be the last one tabled by a minister because the Speaker will be tabling future Child and Youth Advocate reports in the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As deputy chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities it is my pleasure to table the appropriate number of copies of the annual report dated 2010-2011. The council works to improve the lives of Albertans, particularly those that have disabilities. They work on behalf of all Albertans to provide the Premier and the minister for seniors and community supports with advice for this Legislature.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of the 2010-2011 annual report of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta. The council is a vital communications link that works with Albertans and seniors' organizations to share information about the issues that are important to seniors with government.

Thank you very much.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I have three tablings from constituents. The first is from Hadi Schiestl, who is a resident of Lions Village Railtown. She and a number of other residents there are asking the government to please bring forward legislation on life-lease situations.

The second tabling that I have is from constituent Kent McKay. He is very supportive of the Royal Alberta Museum, the importance of it for Edmonton. He believes that it will help to revitalize our downtown core and that it represents our centennial legacy and an embodiment of our culture and that we should stop arguing and get on with it.

The final tabling is an e-mail from Ian O'Donnell, who is the chair of the development committee for the Downtown Edmonton Community League, so the local community league. He is writing to me for provincial support for the downtown arena, recognizing the province's role in making urban centres attractive to business investment and potential residents, and notes that we need to attract and retain talent. He views amenities and attractions as an important consideration.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 7(7) says, "At 3 p.m. the items in the ordinary daily routine will be deemed to be concluded and the Speaker shall notify the Assembly." Well, hon. members, that's what the standing orders say. I've notified the Assembly.

3:00

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** I've called Orders of the Day, which means that other things can come in, but there are some things that we have to conclude.

We have a privilege motion that hangs over from before, and I will call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to deal with that. We have a point of order that we have to deal with as well. We also have to deal with the provisions of Standing Order 58(1), which states that

at the commencement of every Legislature the Assembly shall elect

(b) a Deputy Chair of Committees, according to the procedure set out in Schedule A with respect to the Speaker, with all necessary modifications.

And it should be done immediately, so that matter has to be dealt with, too.

Now that we've crossed the line, Government House Leader, did you want to attract my attention?

**Mr. Hancock:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time, after you've dealt with the points of order and privilege, it would be my intention to ask for the attention of the House for two unanimous consent motions, the first to deal with the election of the Deputy Chair of Committees to be dealt with at 6 o'clock this evening and the second to allow a reversion to government business briefly for

the purpose of allowing the tabling of supplementary estimates and the two associated government motions. That's what was done last fall, and it gives the opposition time. So at the appropriate time I'd request that you call on those two pieces.

**The Speaker:** Well, seeing that we're now into Orders of the Day and seeing that we're up against Standing Order 58(1) and as I've already indicated my intention to deal with the privilege motion and the point of order motion, I do believe, in terms of trying to set a schedule for this afternoon, that I would ask that the Government House Leader propose the suggestion that there be unanimous consent to do the election of the Deputy Chair of Committees at 6 o'clock tonight and see what happens.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then I would request unanimous consent of the House to refer to section 58(1) and establish the earliest possible time at 6 o'clock p.m., rather than adjourning at the normal adjournment hour, to deal with the election of the Deputy Chair of Committees at that time.

**The Speaker:** This requires the unanimous consent of the Assembly to deal with this matter beyond the ordinary termination time of 6 o'clock. I will ask the two questions.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Speaker:** Then we will deal with the election of the Deputy Chair of Committees immediately after we deal with the privilege motion and the point of order.

Edmonton-Strathcona.

### Privilege Misleading the House

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising in accordance with Standing Order 15(2) to raise a point of privilege, that on November 30, 2010, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek interfered with the ability of members of this House to fulfill their duties when as Minister of Health and Wellness he made statements about a government document regarding the source of materials contained in that document titled Alberta's Health Legislation: Moving Forward, dated July 12, 2010.

It's our view that in mischaracterizing the source of this information, he deliberately misled the House and, in so doing, interfered with the ability of several members to fulfill their duty as Members of the Legislative Assembly.

I'd like to start first with preliminary matters. Points of privilege must be raised at the earliest opportunity. I believe this was done. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood sent a notice concerning this point of privilege to your office, Mr. Speaker, on October 24, the first day of the fall sitting. Although the statements by the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek to which this point relates were made in the House in November and December 2010, a document which raises the question of the veracity of those statements only came into our possession just prior to the commencement of the fall sitting in October of 2011. That document was tabled in the House at the first possible opportunity on October 24, 2011. As such, it is our view that the point of privilege was raised in a timely manner and is in order.

I'd now like to address the substantive elements of the NDP opposition's point of privilege against the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek and former Minister of Health and Wellness. In terms of the form of contempt that we believe the member's actions took, I can refer to several authorities on points of privilege relating to

deliberately misleading the House. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, 2nd edition, says on page 83 that "deliberately attempting to mislead the House" is considered a contempt of the House, and *Erskine May*, at page 132, states that "the Commons may treat the making of deliberately misleading statement as a contempt." I would also like to note, Mr. Speaker, that in one of your previous rulings on a point of privilege on November 7, 2007, at page 1860 in *Hansard* you said, "These purported questions of privilege allow members to allege that someone is deliberately misleading the Assembly, which is something they could not say in the ordinary course of debate under our rules of debate."

I'd now like to review the facts upon which we make this point of privilege, and it relates primarily to statements made by the member. I believe the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek deliberately misled the House in a statement he made on November 30, 2010. The statement is found on page 1691 of *Hansard*, in which the Member for Calgary-Mountain View raised a question concerning the government document titled Alberta's Health Legislation: Moving Forward, which he described as a plan "to bring in two-tiered American-style health care." The Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, who was Minister of Health and Wellness at the time, responded by saying:

It's a simple statement of fact that it is not a document that I authored. What it is is a document that reflects concerns, opinions, and comments from Albertans, and inasmuch as there are some things in there that we looked at and decided not to do – specifically, I went out and said that I'm not going to do this – we have to listen to what Albertans have to say.

To give further context to the minister's statements on November 30, one can also review additional statements made by the then Minister of Health and Wellness in response to further questioning from the opposition. On December 1, 2010, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood asked a question about: "a document laying out the government's . . . plan to privatize health care was leaked to opposition parties," to which the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek responded:

There is no secret plan. There is no secret agenda. There is nothing on the table whatsoever to do with privatization. There is nothing there to do with a two-tier system. What we've made very clear and what I would ask this member to accept and understand is that there are Albertans out there who have opinions of a wide range. Whether we like them or not, whether we agree with them or not, they deserve to be heard, and all that the document reflected is what was heard.

Again, on December 2, 2010, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View asked about "the document which reveals the government's . . . plan to introduce two-tiered American-style health care," and the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek said:

Mr. Speaker, I already said that this is a departmental document that reflected views, opinions, comments, and ideas by Albertans, so you might say that it came from a variety of sources right across the province.

And here is the important part, Mr. Speaker.

All that the department did was co-ordinate all of that, put it into one document, and said: here's what Albertans said. We looked at that document, and I said that there are things in here that we can do and things that we can't do.

So the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, who was minister of health at the time, contended that the document was simply a reflection of opinions of Albertans that the government had gathered and that the PowerPoint dated July 12 was merely a summary of the opinions expressed by Albertans.

Now, obviously, Mr. Speaker, when the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek made these statements at the time, members on this side of the House were understandably suspicious. If these documents merely summarized public opinion, where was the reference to the opinions we knew full well had also been expressed during the consultations, opinions calling on government to increase public funding and to increase the scope of public provision of health care to add, for instance, pharmaceutical therapy, preventative therapies, and dental care? These were also opinions held by Albertans. We knew they had been presented to the government during consultations, yet they did not appear in the so-called public opinion summary. Notwithstanding these circumstantial concerns, there was no direct evidence that the minister's statement that the document was merely a summary of Albertans' opinions was untrue.

That was the state of affairs until the point at which our offices received a second document, entitled Minister's Report, concerning the proposed Alberta health act and dated May 2010, two months before the document which was the source of the debate last fall and therefore a document that was prepared for the minister prior to the Alberta health legislation *Moving Forward* document, which is dated July 12, 2010. Mr. Speaker, I tabled this document for the information of all members on October 24, 2011.

**3:10**

First, let me outline why we believe this document to be relevant to the discussion of the subsequent document that's dated July 12, which was the subject of so much debate. A review of the first one, the May 2010 document, in comparison to the July document reveals that the former was clearly the source for the latter. Here are a few examples. Both documents propose that all health providers be allowed to work concurrently in both the public and the private health care systems. Both documents propose that the government regulate private insurance for publicly funded health services rather than continue to prohibit it. Both talk about the need for a process to determine which health services will be fully funded, partially funded, or unfunded.

The May and July documents bear additional similarities: both documents discuss the need for consistent approaches to designation and regulation of health facilities, both talk about flexible funding for out-of-province and out-of-country health services, and both talk about the current ban on queue-jumping and extra billing. The similarities between the two documents are such that it is reasonable to conclude that the May document is the source of the July document.

Now, the problem is that the next question becomes: well, did the May document actually arise from the opinions of Albertans? Perhaps that's what the then Minister of Health and Wellness meant when he said that the July PowerPoint was simply a summary of opinions from Albertans. Well, I would suggest that that's not the case. The appearance of the May document provides support for the fact that the July document was not merely a summary of public opinion in two ways. First and most importantly, the May document itself states that the source of the policy options contained in it, including the controversial policies that were the subject of debate in November last fall, is the ministry of health. The May 2010 document says on page 5 that "Alberta Health and Wellness has identified the elements listed below for consideration and direction."

The document goes on to list two elements, those that promote public confidence and those that "identify what services are funded and permit flexibility in how they are funded." On page 10 of the document from May the ministry writes about lifting the prohibition on private insurance for publicly funded services in

order to "provide more flexibility to Albertans and the government for the funding of health services." This policy proposal also appeared in the July document and was one of the contentious issues discussed in debate last fall.

The key issue to the point being made today, however, is the quote that precedes this statement within the May document. "Alberta Health and Wellness is considering options to regulate private insurance for health services rather than having only a prohibition in the Act." Alberta Health and Wellness is considering the options, not Albertan opinions. Clearly, again it shows what the source of this policy is.

Further down on page 10 the document addresses the issue of physician opt-in/opt-out options. Now, this is another contentious policy issue that is commonly associated with increasing the privatization of health care. Nonetheless, the ministry document suggests that midwives are allowed to opt in and out, and it's not fair that they're allowed this option and doctors are not. For the point at hand the relevant quote from the May document is this: "Alberta Health and Wellness would like to be able to apply the same conditions to all health providers." So again the source of the policy is Alberta Health and Wellness. Indeed, the document itself acknowledges that this policy shift is in clear contradiction to the prevailing public view on the subject.

Now, the second reason the appearance of the May document demonstrates that the July document did not arise from summarizing Albertans' public opinions relates to the date . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please excuse me for a second. Would you please take your seat?

Standing Order 15(1) and (2) at several occasions talks about a brief statement. The hon. member has now had nearly 15 minutes. I suppose it's subjective to determine what brief is, but to the point would be very helpful to all members as this is a private members' day, and brief usually would be several moments. If you would get to the point, that would really be helpful, I do believe, and if you could advise me as to how much more time you will require, that would help me fix in my mind the agenda for the remainder of the afternoon, which seems to be really, really plugged.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say that I've got about four minutes left. I believe it's important to review the document in question in order to make the case.

**The Speaker:** You just wasted 20 seconds. I'll give you four more minutes.

**Ms Notley:** The government has embarked on two sets of consultations with Albertans on health care since the last election, one in October of 2009 and one in June of 2010. The consultation of October 2009 produced a report dated January 2010, and that report made no mention of any of the policy provisions which were included in the July 2010 document.

We don't know exactly what the public consultations were, what they heard in June of 2010. However, we do know that they occurred after the May document was written. Clearly, consultations that took place after the document was written cannot be the source of that document. Even Tories are subject to the regular rules of space and time. Given that every component of the July PowerPoint had already been carefully constructed in the May document, it is clear that the June consultations were not the source of the July PowerPoint.

In summary, we know that the document prepared for the minister in May 2010 contains a list of proposals for significant changes to the health care system which would lead to more privately funded health care, and the document states that these

proposals were identified by Alberta Health and Wellness for inclusion in either the Alberta Health Act or regulations. We also know that many of these same proposals appeared in the July 2010 government document. When members of the opposition asked the then Minister of Health and Wellness about those proposals, the minister and Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek told the House repeatedly that the document was no more than a collection of opinions.

Mr. Speaker, it's my submission that it's now a matter of applying the precedent in these cases to the facts I've just outlined. In previous rulings on points of privilege, for example November 7, 2007, you referred to the test that needs to be met, and it's outlined in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 86, footnote 128, where it states:

The following elements have to be established when it is alleged that a Member is in contempt for deliberately misleading the House: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the Member making the statement knew [it] at the time . . . and three, that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I've demonstrated the first test, that the member's statement that the July 2010 document was simply a collection of Albertans' views on the health system was misleading. The May 2010 document, that we've since introduced, including proposals for privatization, says that those proposals were identified, in fact, by Alberta Health and Wellness. The second test is also met as the May 2010 document was prepared for the member in his capacity as minister of health at the time and is directed to him, and we can assume that he received it at that time and was aware of it. Finally, the third test is also met because the May 2010 document establishes that he had been briefed on the proposals, but when he was asked by the opposition in November about the other document, he repeatedly told the House in unequivocal language that the proposals were nothing more than opinions from the general public.

This was not merely a question of not knowing the answer, Mr. Speaker. Rather, it was a question of giving the Assembly the wrong answer over and over. I submit that the member not only misled the House but that he did so deliberately to avoid taking responsibility for controversial policies for increased privatization of our public health care system that were being very seriously considered within his ministry and by his caucus.

By misleading the House, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek interfered with the ability of all members to do their duty. Health policy has been a top priority for Albertans, and proposals for privatization of aspects of the public health care system have been highly contentious. Albertans are concerned about this issue and see the Assembly as a key forum through which to hold the government accountable. By failing to acknowledge the actions of the ministry for which he was responsible at the time, the member gave false information to this House and thereby prevented an honest and open debate. It's a critical component of the obligations of members of this Assembly to hold the political heads of government departments accountable for the actions of those departments. When members of the House are intentionally misled about the actions of those departments, we cannot do that job.

Mr. Speaker, it is a principle of parliamentary practice that outside of making a point of privilege, it is unparliamentary and, indeed, prohibited for one member to allege that another has in any way lied or otherwise misled the House. That principle is a sound one and is premised on the collective understanding we share of the fundamentally important role that this Assembly plays in our democratic system. It is because of this role that I would suggest that members are in a position of trust, not only in relation

to their colleagues in this Legislature but in relation to all Albertans. As such, incidents of misleading each other or Albertans must be treated seriously in order to maintain the reputation of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I would therefore ask that you find that a prima facie case against the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek exists and have this matter referred to the appropriate standing committee.

3:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that statement was 21 minutes in length. I heard exactly what has transpired. Now, I have one question for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. Your text: you read from it. You must have a written text in front of you. Is this correct?

**Ms Notley:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Did you by way of courtesy provide this to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, or is this the first he's heard of this?

**Ms Notley:** No. I provided the House leader with particulars. This was written by me this morning.

**The Speaker:** That's what I mean. Has the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek received a copy of your submission prior to hearing it now in the House? Just yes or no.

**Ms Notley:** Not what I just wrote. He received particulars. I believe that if the House leader for the government provided him with my particulars, he received the particulars on Friday afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** He received the text that you gave today?

**Ms Notley:** No, just the particulars, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Okay. I just wanted to clarify in my head because there has to be a process here of fairness. So, hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, you've not heard any of this till now?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** No.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Then I'll give you till tomorrow, if you wish, to respond. You have to have a chance to study this and to see this.

Nobody else has moved after the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona made the presentation, so I gather there are just the two.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, you wish to participate in this, too?

**Mr. Chase:** Very briefly.

**The Speaker:** Okay. I'll recognize you tomorrow, prior to, and then if this goes on a third day, it goes on.

Now we're going to move on to the next one. We have a point of order. Airdrie-Chestermere.

#### **Point of Order Factual Accuracy**

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am bringing a point of order under Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j), and (l). It is regarding the Finance minister's comment that this province has no debt. I

asked for the Blues. They are not ready yet for this, so I'll just cite from memory.

Essentially, this hon. minister said that I was factually incorrect on various issues and then proceeded to say that we as a province had no debt. The fact that he was making allegations against me that I had made some things up, made facts up: I would say that that also "imputes false and unavowed motives" to myself. It's insulting language. It also under (l) introduces a matter into debate that "offends the practices and precedents of this Assembly" in that it wasn't true because the practices of this Assembly are that you tell the truth in this Assembly and that you don't say things that don't meet that criteria.

With regard to the comment that he made, that this province has no debt, I just simply refer to the document that this Finance minister presented this morning, the second-quarter budget update. Specifically, on page 10 it lists direct borrowing for capital purposes, just in this budget, as \$1.8 billion. On page 8 it goes through the different liabilities that this government has. In accumulated debt it talks about \$828 million; liabilities for capital projects as it stands at the end of the second-quarter forecast, \$5.2 billion; other liabilities, \$7.6 billion; pension liabilities, \$9.9 billion; as well as self-supporting lending organizations. But even if you just look at liabilities for capital projects, just look at that line, clearly in the last several years the government has indeed taken on debt to the tune of, as it says right in his own second-quarter budget estimate, \$5.2 billion.

I would ask that the Finance minister correct his misstatement in that regard so that he doesn't introduce a matter into debate that offends the practices and precedents of this Assembly, which is to actually tell the truth when stating numbers like that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance on this purported point of order.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I think we can fix this very easily. What I should have said is no net debt because we have substantive dollars in the sustainability fund to cover any borrowing that's out there. If it makes the member happy, we'll add "net debt" into my comments.

**An Hon. Member:** How about being honest?

**The Speaker:** Whoa, whoa. There's more debate?

You know, if people didn't debate things in the question period, we wouldn't have these issues. The purpose of question period is to ask for information, not to have a debate, so if we didn't have a debate in the questions and answers, we wouldn't have these issues.

I think this is a dispute of facts. I think this is an exchange of debate. We've heard a point raised. We've heard a clarification given. I have no doubt at all that as soon as the supplementary estimates come in here, are introduced in this fall session, we're going to have all kinds of ample opportunity to debate this. We'll hear it again ad nauseam.

We're going to move on now to the election of the Deputy Chair of Committees under Standing Order 58(1). The chair has provided to all members the process. It is in your standing orders. I'm just going to briefly deal with this matter to provide the outline again.

Basically, the process is that the Speaker calls for nominations. Individuals who are interested may be nominated. I'd ask that there be a nomination time frame of no more than a minute to two minutes. It's not expected that those who are nominated, he or she, would have to give a speech. They would be asked by me if they're prepared to accept the nomination. When we've gone through that process and we have one, two, three, four, or whatever number that

choose to do this, you have in the document attached the process for the way that the voting will occur and how you will walk to the polling station. It'll be conducted by the table officers.

I'm going to announce now that pursuant to the standing orders there will be an election for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees, and I'm now going to call for nominations from the floor.

### Election of a Deputy Chair of Committees

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

**Mr. Quest:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to nominate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek to the position of Deputy Chair of Committees. As you know, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek served as Deputy Government House Leader in this Assembly for a total of almost 11 years, so he's intimately familiar with the rules, proceedings, and standing orders of this House. This member is in his fifth term as an elected member of this Legislature, including four ministerial portfolios. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek has a long list of recognitions and awards, including a Queen's jubilee medal.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek is an exemplary member of this Assembly who is amply qualified to hold this position, so I urge all members today to elect him as our Deputy Chair of Committees.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek: will you accept the nomination?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Yes. I accept the nomination, and I thank the hon. member for nominating me.

Thank you very much.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege and honour to nominate the Member for Edmonton-Centre for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees, if that's the right term. I think everybody in this Assembly knows that this member is an enormously competent parliamentarian. She's well experienced. She's been House leader of the opposition since 2003. She has a formidable knowledge, which she has frequently drawn on to display, of parliamentary procedures, and she's very hard working.

I would like to point out to all members of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that it is relatively common for people who occupy this position to be from the opposition caucus. The current federal Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole is from the opposition. There are similar situations in British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and Ontario. I think it would be, frankly, a breath of fresh air for a member from the opposition to occupy a position like this.

She is, as we all know, a committed parliamentarian, and she has shown over and over a passion for due process, for respect of the procedures, and for balance, Mr. Speaker. I think this member would be a terrific person for this position.

Thank you.

3:30

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, will you accept the nomination?

**Ms Blakeman:** Yes, I happily accept the nomination. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed an honour and a pleasure for me to nominate the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House to the position of Deputy Chair of Committees. He's been a trusted friend and colleague to many of us for many, many years. He served Albertans and members of this Assembly for over 30 years in such capacities as minister of environment, minister of agriculture, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, Minister of Transportation, Minister of Infrastructure, minister of government services as well as numerous committees, too numerous to mention. He's also carried out these duties with a great degree of dedication and distinction.

He has already occupied the chair on numerous occasions when called upon to do so during the many late night sessions we've had. He has shown his abilities to carry out the duties of this position in an efficient and fair manner and has gained the respect of all members of this Assembly.

Having been in the chair myself as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees, I believe this member has the experience and working knowledge of the requirements of this position to serve us well. I ask all members of this Assembly to support the nomination of the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

**The Speaker:** To the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House: are you prepared to accept the nomination?

**Mr. Lund:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I would be only too happy and honoured to serve as Deputy Chair of Committees.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there further nominations? The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to nominate as Deputy Chair of Committees the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. This hon. member has served proudly in four ministries, has been in this House for 14 years, is an extremely bright, articulate individual, full of energy. I think that it would make for a very fair debate. He's very fair minded. He would make sure that everyone had an fair opportunity to respond.

You know, for someone who's one of the leaders of this House, as the Deputy Chair of Committees is – of course, certainly serving under your direction, Mr. Speaker – I think it's great to have someone from the economic engine of Canada and Alberta in that position. I think that the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo would be very fair minded as he oversaw the committee work. I ask all members – and I'm sure all members will be very happy and excited to have this opportunity to vote for the good Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** To the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo: are you prepared to accept the nomination?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Speaker, I believe in fair and square, not nail 'em and jail 'em, so yes, I do.

**The Speaker:** Are there additional nominations?

Having heard, hon. members, four individuals nominated and four individuals accepted, before we move forward, now that all members know who are participating of the four who have agreed to accept the nominations, is there any desire on any member to withdraw at this point?

Well, then, we are going to prepare. We are going to move forward now. I'll call the nominations closed, and the office of the Clerk will now immediately prepare and post an alphabetical list of members' names nominated as candidates for the election to the position of Deputy Chair of Committees. In a few minutes from now ballot papers will be provided to all members. You will see the manner in which you will proceed to the election box. The boxes will be on this table. You will come down the aisles in which you sit, just go through, record it, and vote in a very secret ballot way. This process is now under way. Take a few minutes, take a little refreshment, and we'll be back.

A number have asked the question about the process: how long is this going to take? Well, we don't know, but we won't call you back to vote until 3:45, so you've got nine minutes, okay? Be back by that time. I don't know, Clerk, if we can even ring the bells a minute or so before that.

[The Assembly recessed from 3:35 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. while the lists of candidates were posted]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there are four ballot boxes in front on the Clerk's table. In the documentation we sent you, we indicated the manner in which people should proceed, so we'll ask the hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation to lead that row up this way and the hon. Deputy Speaker to lead that row, and you just follow down sequentially.

[Members voted from 3:45 p.m. to 3:52 p.m.]

**The Speaker:** Have all members voted who wish to vote? No member has not availed themselves of the opportunity to vote?

Okay. Then the table officers will retire with the Sergeant-at-Arms to count the ballots, and we'll return shortly. The bell will be rung for one minute to give you one minute to get back into the Assembly. This may take up to 10 minutes or something.

[Ballots were counted from 3:52 p.m. to 4:04 p.m.]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the rules are such that the Clerk will ring the bells for one minute to recall members to their seats. That has been done.

When all members are seated, the Clerk will announce the number of ballots cast, the number of spoiled ballots, and the number of votes required to achieve the 50 per cent plus one majority. If one candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, the Clerk will announce the name of that member to the Assembly. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, the Clerk will announce the name of the candidate having the least number of total votes cast, which will be excluded from subsequent ballots. If every candidate receives the same number of votes, no name will be excluded from the next ballot.

Subsequent ballots will be conducted in the manner prescribed and will continue until such time as a candidate is elected Deputy Chair of Committees upon having received a majority of the votes cast. At any time after the result of the first ballot has been declared but before the commencement of the second or subsequent ballot, a candidate may withdraw from the election, which will then proceed as if such member had not been nominated.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the number of ballots cast for the position of Deputy Chair of Committees, 67; the number of spoiled ballots, zero; the number of votes required to achieve the 50 per cent plus one majority, 34. The member having received the majority of the votes cast, Mr. Zwodzesky. Mr. Zwodzesky is the Deputy Chair of Committees for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the 27th Legislature. [applause]

**The Speaker:** Congratulations to the new Deputy Chair of Committees.

Hon. members, we will continue the Routine for the day. I'm now going to call on the hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated to you earlier today, I have circulated to opposition House leaders an intention to bring forward a request for unanimous consent, as we did last fall at this time, to revert to government business for a short period of time this afternoon to allow for the delivery of a message from His Honour with respect to supplementary estimates, the tabling of a quarterly budget report, the tabling of the supplementary estimates, and dealing with government motions 23 and 24, of which 24 is not debatable. Just that short piece. I'd ask for the unanimous consent of the House to revert to government business to accomplish that specific piece of business.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Hon. members, there is a request for unanimous consent. On the request put forward by the hon. Government House Leader, two questions. Would all hon. members in the Assembly who agree please say yes? If you're opposed, say no.

[Unanimous consent denied]

### Motions for Returns

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

#### Occupational Cancer Rates

M17. Mr. Chase moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing a copy of the analysis by employment and immigration on occupational cancer rates referenced on page 38, note 14, of the April 2010 report of the Auditor General of Alberta.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the government's response and the opportunity to respond to the response.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, with respect to this motion for a return I will have to advise that the government will be asking that we reject this motion for a return. It refers to a copy of the analysis by employment and immigration on occupational cancer rates referenced on page 38, note 14, of the April 2010 report of the Auditor General.

In reporting to the Auditor General, Mr. Speaker, the former department of employment and immigration made an error in citing an incorrect number from a reference. The error was corrected and explained to the Auditor General after the report was complete. In the report a footnote that reads, "Analysis by the Department" in fact refers to the number that was quoted incorrectly. As such, there is no additional information on the analysis by the department on the occupational cancer rates.

That being said, if the hon. member is interested in pursuing that particular topic with me, I would be more than happy to zero in on the type of information he is wishing to get and to work with him in terms of whether that information might be made available or not.

With respect to the specific request there is no analysis because it actually was an error in the report which was later corrected with the Auditor General.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity to close the debate.

**Mr. Chase:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the hon. House leader's offer to work with me. My request goes beyond a single number. It's how the information on occupational cancer rates was arrived at. It's the procedure that I'm looking for as opposed to a specific number.

I appreciate, for example, that a former hon. member, Richard Magnus, who represented Calgary-North Hill, did tremendous work in providing firefighters with further extension of cancer recognition. The hon. member across the floor, now the hon. Minister of Education, who was formerly the minister of employment and immigration, took what Richard Magnus had begun and further extended the occupational cancer rate information for firefighters.

4:10

Mr. Speaker, my concern is that I believe cancer rates are underreported, not necessarily deliberately, by employment and immigration. I think what happens is that as people retire, leave their jobs, we lose a tremendous amount of this information. I think that in order for us to be accurate and provide benefits for people who have suffered from cancer which resulted from the types of jobs they were doing – firefighters is an obvious one, but I've previously mentioned how first responders come into contact with a number of the carcinogens which firefighters experience.

In terms of closing debate, I will take the hon. House leader, the new Minister of Human Services, at his offer. Whatever information he can provide me with and, obviously, possibly provide this House with – I'd put it that way – on how these statistics are calculated would be very beneficial.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion for a Return 17 lost]

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

**The Chair:** The chair would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 203

#### Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It is with pleasure that I rise to open Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 203, the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act.

I'd like to thank all of my colleagues from all corners of the House for sharing their thoughts and comments during second reading. Of course, that was back in the spring. I'd also like to thank all ministers in each of the related departments for their unanimous support of the bill. Considering the timing of the debate, it's important to quickly review the key components of the bill.

This act was simply created to improve the lives of Albertans since it promotes not only the importance of outdoor activities but also draws attention to the fact that living an active lifestyle contributes to overall well-being. Now, Mr. Chair, although it's not a lengthy bill at all, the message it provides is very important. In section 1 it reads: "In recognition of the importance of outdoor recreation to the people of Alberta, the second weekend of April in each year shall be known as "Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend".



This time of year provides Albertans with the perfect opportunity to get outside to enjoy all that our wonderful province has to offer. Now, the long, cold winter, that we've been rather rudely reminded of very lately, will be replaced – yes, it will – at that time of the year with warmer temperatures and longer days, and at that time there will still be snow in the mountains, so Albertans can get their last shot at their favourite winter activity. Meanwhile in the rest of the province everything is finally going to be thawing out, and this might just be the nudge that a great percentage of Albertans are going to need to finally get back outside and bike, hike, jog, golf, or visit farms or forests, waterways, ranches, parklands, mountains, and more.

Albertans, Mr. Chair, are responsible for the great success of government-recognized occasions such as Family Day and arts weekend, and I'm convinced that Alberta GO weekend will be every bit as successful. Now, I hope that colleagues are aware that in America they celebrate a similar sort of event, and there is overwhelming participation and success. In Canada, though, we would be at the front of the pack with this.

Part of the good news is that the only start-up cost is promoting the day. The rest is up to community groups and organizations, who can't wait to make this their own. As a matter of fact, Mr. Chair, asking just one time, I've had over a hundred letters of support from all sorts of groups across Alberta – municipalities, recreation and sports clubs, seniors' councils, health organizations, numerous other important groups – and the message has been consistent. The possibilities are endless.

Now, Mr. Chair, Albertans take a great deal of pride in our natural landscape, and like me they don't take it for granted. That's why it's important that we acknowledge the appreciation Albertans have for our province through legislation such as the Alberta GO weekend act. Bill 203 will also promote our internal tourism sector while encouraging Albertans to explore their pristine natural environment.

We all know that living an active lifestyle, which includes getting outdoors, can improve the overall well-being of one's body and mind, and overwhelming medical research asserts this. It's counterproductive, in my humble opinion, to just complain about addictions and type 2 diabetes and heart disease and osteoporosis, cancer, stroke, obesity, or that people of all ages are spending too much time cooped up in front of one type of screen or another. Now, Mr. Chair, I recognize that Bill 203 is not the final answer to the question as to how to ensure that Albertans become more active, but it would be a huge, important piece of the solution which complements other related government initiatives which increase active living.

Bill 203 will impact Albertans' lives on many levels. We must continue to inspire people to value and enjoy our natural heritage as well as the benefits they provide for current and future generations. I believe that this bill is in the interest of all Albertans, and I earnestly encourage and invite all members to vote in support of Bill 203. Mr. Chair, this bill passed quickly and easily in first and second readings, and I trust that all members will ensure that this will be the case, indeed, in committee.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would never want to suggest that I was opposed to anything that promoted healthy lifestyles. As the hon. member pointed out, this is just a first step, but I would like to see it taken considerably further than just suggesting that a weekend in April, the second weekend of April, be considered for fitness.

The hon. member talked about potentially getting away from statistics, but it's those statistics that provide the need and the encouragement for such an activity weekend as the member is suggesting. Alberta, well, Canada for that matter has a significant number of deaths due to heart and stroke. Childhood obesity in Alberta in particular is growing at a very frightening rate, and one of the ways to combat obesity, beyond dealing with the most important factor, which is poverty, is exercise.

As a former teacher for 34 years I promoted physical fitness by example. I'm rather pleased to say that a number of students chose to participate as opposed to were forced to participate, as the government has previously done, by mandating daily exercise. Frequently students, regardless of the season, when I taught elementary on a Friday afternoon, would choose to participate in outdoor pursuits. We would go on lengthy runs or lengthy cross-country skis, depending on what the weather conditions were. As a result, a number of my former students, who got sort of bitten at an early age, have gone on to compete in triathlons and marathons, in the TransRockies mountain bicycle race. I'm pleased that the enthusiasm that I showed in the classroom and for fitness in general carried over, but I don't believe that simply designating a day is going to have much of an effect and certainly not the desired effect.

**4:20**

When the government decided through Don Getty and some of the misfortunes that Don Getty's son experienced to set aside a day in February called Family Day, it was considered a holiday. It was a specific day that was set aside in recognition of the need for families to get together and enjoy each other's company. The government went beyond just mandating it. It became an Alberta provincial holiday, and it was recognized.

This particular bill, which, incidentally, I am supporting, is the lowest level of encouragement that the government could possibly provide. If the government is truly serious about increasing fitness and getting individuals involved in the process, then there are ways to do it, and that's increasing, for example, our parks and protected areas.

So many times I've called on the government, whether it's the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation or the minister of the environment or the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. I've said, "Set aside the Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kôp area, that is part of the Castle-Crown," which unfortunately is being overrun with clear-cutting. If you want to create and promote recreation, then provide parks for Albertans to recreate within. Maintain the trails so that they can hike. April, for example, is Alberta's snowiest month, so there is the possibility that some people at lower altitudes would be hiking while others at higher altitudes would be enjoying cross-country skiing, alpine skiing, climbing what may be left of icefalls.

These are all worthwhile activities, but they require more than just a verbal statement that in April the second week is get outdoors weekend. I don't see how that's going to promote a significant number of people getting involved. However, to the hon. member's credit, if it gets even a few out, then the bill has value. I want to see the next steps. I want to see the government supporting our parks and recreation. I want to see the government funding ice arenas instead of selling off part of Olympic Park for condominium development or business offices or a hotel. Put the money into improving the ski jump, improving the luge. In other words, put your money where your mouth is.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Does any other hon. member wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mrs. Sarich:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise today in Committee of the Whole and share my comments on Bill 203, the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act. Before I begin, I would like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed for all of his hard work he has put into drafting this particular piece of legislation. I feel that the bill provides an excellent opportunity to step back and rethink about the attitudes and approaches surrounding a very important issue, an issue that can be characterized as a healthy and active Alberta and Albertan.

Today, Mr. Chairman, I would like to focus the majority of my comments on the preamble of this particular bill; specifically, the part pertaining to the medical benefits of the act. For the record I'm referring to the initial line in the preamble. It reads: "Whereas there are significant health and lifestyle benefits associated with active living and outdoor activity."

Mr. Chairman, it is very important to understand the value of a healthy and active lifestyle along with the corresponding medical benefits. The link between physical activity and a person's health is very strong and at times can be challenging for individuals. Not only does a physically active lifestyle lead to a longer life expectancy and improve one's quality of life; it also reduces stress, which in itself is a tremendous medical benefit.

During a time when obesity rates in this province are of epidemic proportion and continue to rise exponentially, understanding the value of a healthy lifestyle is of the utmost importance, and I can tell that the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed strongly believes in encouraging Albertans to lead a healthy lifestyle. I certainly commend him for taking this particular approach and call to action.

Mr. Chairman, quite clearly, there are significant health and lifestyle benefits associated with active living and outdoor activity, and at times we have to prompt it so that it can move forward. That leaves little to be disputed around this particular issue. Physical activity contributes to health and wellness in a number of ways. One is that being active decreases a person's risk for cardiovascular disease, and in companion to that, it will have long-term and short-term benefits returned in terms of the investment that we make in our health and wellness for Albertans.

Physical activity also helps the body to use and become more efficient in terms of weight loss and those other conditions that would benefit in the direction of a healthy lifestyle. Studies also show that 60 per cent of Canadian adults are obese or overweight, and roughly half of Canadians are deemed to be physically inactive. That's why this is a very good direction.

Likewise, Mr. Chairman, it is estimated that becoming physically active can reduce the risk of heart attack by as much as 55 per cent by taking up and moving forward to promote and engage in a healthy lifestyle. Quite clearly, this is the link between being physically active and living a very healthy life.

Another medical benefit of a physically active lifestyle includes that it can increase your basal metabolic rate. At times, as you're getting older and with the growing population, this particular health rate has a tendency to slow down, so anything that an individual can do to up their basal metabolic rate really helps decrease your appetite and reduces adipose tissue, or body fat.

Mr. Chairman, regular exercise is a very important part of a healthy lifestyle for adults, children, and youth, and Bill 203 intends to act as that initiative to get Albertans excited about exercising regularly. People who lead an active lifestyle are less likely to get ill and more likely to live longer. Exercise not only makes you more physically fit, but it also improves your mental and physical well-being, and it's important that it become more and more a part of our lifestyle.

Mr. Chairman, to be physically active and to recognize the benefits of such does not mean that you have to work out for many hours a day. Physical activity can take many forms and should be encouraged in one's daily work routine. Walking, as an example, is a very good physical activity, one that is not expensive. If you go out to the malls, you notice that the malls have become more comfortable gathering spaces, and you see a lot of people taking up the challenge to do walking inside malls. After all, especially in Edmonton, we are a winter city. Inactivity has an adverse medical effect, which can cost not only lives, but in the end it causes a lot of expenditures on the health and wellness side for our government. As well, as we all know, the costs associated with poor health are not insignificant. It puts a strain on our health care system, and even from a corporate perspective absenteeism and other costs in our medical system are attributed to it.

4:30

The combination of a poor diet and lack of physical activity is directly linked to heart disease and cardiovascular disease. We do have a rise of type 2 diabetes in this particular province, and that's also a concern. In Canada we are also currently ranked the third highest in the world when it comes to obesity rates and the third lowest in the world when it comes to walking and other leisure activities. We can see, as demonstrated by the important criteria that are outlined in this piece of legislation, that there is a need for promoting physical activity and making it fun for all to enjoy.

Bill 203 intends to make physical activity fun. It also has several health and wellness advantages not only for an individual, but I can see that the corporate sector could also step up and engage their employee complements right across the province to be more mindful of engaging in more physical activity. Who knows? They may even stretch to promote something that would occur on a particular weekend.

Bill 203 is a reasonable step to take towards promoting healthy lifestyles across our great province. The preamble acknowledges one of the major reasons for having this bill, which is the health and lifestyle benefits associated with active living and outdoor activity. If this preamble was not included in the bill, we would be missing an important link between health benefits and living an active lifestyle.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would again like to stress the importance of this particular Bill 203. It maintains that the benefits of promotion and participation in the great outdoors weekend can be far reaching, and it could shift a cultural response from Albertans. This weekend has the potential to improve both the physical and mental well-being of Albertans. Such active living can lead to a longer life, reduce stress, and improve overall quality of life. After all, health and wellness are priorities for our government and should be for all Albertans as well.

I would again like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed for his hard work that went into drafting this particular bill. I will be in support of Bill 203, and I urge all of my hon. colleagues to do the same.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to rise today in Committee of the Whole and speak to Bill 203, the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act, brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

I would first like to thank my hon. colleague for this important piece of legislation. The bill that we are discussing today is a

meaningful way to further encourage Albertans to participate in healthy outdoor fun through the implementation of an Alberta get outdoors weekend. The objective of Bill 203 is to create a weekend every year during which Albertans are encouraged to get outside, be active, and take advantage of all that this great province has to offer. It is important that this weekend is not just a one-time event and that we, instead, implement it as an annual celebration of outdoor recreational activities in Alberta.

Today I would like to focus on section 1 of Bill 203 as it deals with the need to make the Alberta get outdoors weekend an annual one. The vision that we would like to accomplish through this bill is to see a province where citizens are much more active in the great outdoors. While it may only begin with one weekend a year, this initiative has the potential to raise awareness all year long. In other words, this bill is about creating and implementing a vision for future generations. The government of Alberta is committed to continued support of Albertans leading active, healthy lives. Specifically, this bill will help us achieve this goal because it will promote lasting health effects to the people of Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, we need to encourage Albertans to get outside and partake in an activity that they love or to try something new. As well, this is not simply about getting individuals involved. It is about involving whole communities through local events. As I see it, this bill would be a wonderful way to revitalize community spirit across the province and to create a greater sense of inclusiveness. The weekend would encourage participation by all citizens, making their lifestyles more active and healthy. Also, by making this weekend an annual event, communities would be able to plan events for their areas and advertise community and scheduled activities that could become family traditions.

In many ways we can relate this proposed weekend to Family Day in February, in which many people plan and take part in activities aimed at the whole family. This is a day that brings families together, strengthening their bonds with their community by encouraging them to participate in special events. It becomes something that people can look forward to and plan for every year. As section 1 of this bill suggests, this is something that the government of Alberta is committed to supporting. By combining this opportunity for community involvement with the promotion of outdoor physical activity, an Alberta get outdoors weekend could help families take up and maintain healthy lifestyles together.

There is at least one good example of such specialized events just south of the border. The United States has implemented National Get Outdoors Day. This annual event, which began in 2008, takes place in June and encourages all Americans to take part in healthy outdoor fun. The goal they have set for their national event is to offer opportunities for citizens to experience traditional and nontraditional types of outdoor activities. Mr. Chairman, the U.S. government is hoping to connect people back to public lands and to reconnect them with the great outdoors. By making this an annual event, various communities are able to get involved and plan specific events for their area, making it a more unique and special occasion.

A planned weekend for physical activity can go a long way in assisting Albertans with leading healthy lifestyles, which is why this government remains committed to ensuring that we have these opportunities annually, as is clearly articulated in the wording of section 1 of the bill.

I think the city of Denver is a wonderful example of what a community can do with an annual event like Get Outdoors Day. Because Get Outdoors Day is celebrated each year, Denver is able to plan elaborate community activities in advance to bring the citizens of the area out to enjoy the great outdoors. Denver incorporates a 10-kilometre sports walk, camping equipment

demonstrations, canoeing, fishing, skiing, mountain biking, and many other events, all for the enjoyment of the public. It goes beyond just the physical activities, with information sessions also offered on general wellness, nutrition, and outdoor safety.

While I believe that we are already doing a lot to encourage outdoor activity, Alberta's children and adults alike are now less connected to the outdoors than in previous generations. According to the findings from the Canadian Community Health Survey in 2004 26 per cent of Canadian children and adolescents aged two to 17 were overweight or obese. Also, the report concluded that for children aged two to 11 and for adolescents aged 12 to 17, the likelihood of being overweight or obese tends to rise as time that is spent watching TV, playing video games, or using the computer increases.

#### 4:40

As is suggested in section 1 of this bill, one of the benefits of having an annual Alberta get outdoors weekend would be to assist in countering these negative trends by providing kids and their families with an abundance of practical and fun outdoor activities. Active living can lead to a longer life, reduce stress, and improve Albertans' quality of life, which is why I think it is such a significant issue to be brought to the forefront of public awareness.

Mr. Chairman, Alberta has spectacular scenery, diverse wildlife, and numerous recreational opportunities. We are lucky as Albertans to have this beautiful province to call home. I feel that having an annual Alberta get outdoors weekend will encourage us to take advantage of our magnificent and readily available natural beauty while also promoting significant health and lifestyle benefits through active living. By encouraging the enjoyment of many outdoor attractions, we can show Albertans how easy and fun it is to be active.

Having a yearly scheduled event will give communities the opportunity to plan events in advance that will lead to further enjoyment of Alberta's vast natural landscapes. Ultimately, the main goal of this bill is to encourage individuals to get outdoors, get some exercise, and to have fun, and I believe that Bill 203 will do just that.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 203 is a beneficial piece of legislation, and I would like to thank again the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed for bringing it forward.

With that, I will conclude my comments. I look forward to the remainder of the debate. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

**Mr. Quest:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise today in Committee of the Whole to speak to Bill 203, the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act. Debates around this act so far have been productive, and already we've learned so much about the positive effects of physical activity on our well-being, and I think those are indisputable. We've become acquainted with similar events in other jurisdictions and reacquainted with initiatives already in place in our province.

That's part of the intent of this bill, and I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed for all of his efforts in raising awareness in this matter. I know physical activity and health and well-being are a big part of this member's life. He climbed a certain mountain at least a couple of times and, I think, many others and, obviously, didn't fall off. In fact, it might just be the kind of boost that we need to get us outdoors more often.

Mr. Chairman, there is a strong basis for passing this bill, and there are a number of reasons for choosing the second weekend in April for the Alberta get outdoors weekend. In fact, I think it's

great that we would establish what will likely become a great Alberta tradition. This will be my focus. As stated earlier, section 1 of Bill 203 reads: "In recognition of the importance of outdoor recreation to the people of Alberta, the second weekend of April in each year shall be known as 'Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend.'"

Mr. Chairman, the first reason that comes to mind for choosing this particular weekend is actually a question: why not? We are built to experience the outdoors, and we're eager to spend time outside. This is another excuse to do that, and it's a good one. By this time in April the snow is all but gone, hopefully much earlier. Who in Alberta is not tempted to engage in outdoor activities at that time? Not just adults, but kids are reminded at the same time that they need to get their bikes out of the garage and out of the shed, that footballs, baseball bats and balls, and soccer gear need to come out. On the second weekend in April golfers are also highly motivated – highly motivated – to hit the greens.

Mr. Chairman, the point that I'm trying to make here is that by April virtually every Albertan eagerly awaits the chance to get outdoors, so why not make the second weekend in April the official Alberta get outdoors weekend?

Another benefit of choosing this date includes the opportunity to practise both summer and winter sports. We can start to get outside, but we can still partake in winter sports. There's still some skiing going on in the mountains, but the golf courses are also starting to open up, or certainly the driving ranges. Soccer and baseball fields might not be ready, but sidewalks and bike trails and maybe even backyards are.

Mr. Chairman, walking or running on those urban parkland trails after a long winter is always a pleasure. It's an opportunity to breathe fresh air, relax, walk the dog, or spend some quality time with the family. Students can resume their favourite playground activities. Schoolchildren can go outside. It's great for a DPA and all sorts of initiatives like that to get the kids out. This bill aligns well with other learning activities that are already taking place in our classrooms, so there are many direct and indirect benefits. Kindergarten to grade 12 phys ed programs, like the DPA that we were just talking about, say that students must have the opportunity to participate in five dimensions of physical activities, which includes activities in an alternate environment, for example aquatics and outdoor sports.

I think the point is that it's a reminder that we need to get outside. We need to think about it. But we need to do more than think about; we need to actually do something about it. I think that if this raises awareness – and I'm sure it will – for Albertans to get outside and get physical, then it's certainly well worth while.

I urge all members of the Assembly to support this bill and the date chosen for the Alberta get outdoors weekend. I think April is the perfect time, so I'll be supporting this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the chair shall now call on the bill's sponsor, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, to close the debate.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It is indeed a pleasure to rise once more to offer concluding remarks for Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 203, the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act. I would like to thank all members that participated in committee as well as during first and second reading.

This bill will ensure that we acknowledge the importance of outdoor recreation and that we are committed to improving the mental, physical, and environmental benefits of outdoor recreation. We'll also recognize that there are significant health and lifestyle benefits associated with active living and outdoor activity.

Mr. Chair, I believe that the current wording of the bill accurately reflects the objective and the intention that was debated in second reading.

Now, Mr. Chair, a point of clarification if I may. I'm just wondering exactly how many minutes are remaining in my concluding speech.

**The Chair:** You have four more minutes.

**Mr. Rodney:** Okay. Because there have been people from around the province who have asked that I read their names in. These are organizations of all kinds that took the time to write in. I sent out one single e-mail about a year ago saying: do you like the idea or do you not?

With the time that we have remaining, these are the names. Feel free to let me know when the time is out so that we can have a vote before the end of our time span here. The town of Sylvan Lake; the town of Devon; the county of Barrhead; the town of Crossfield; the city of Leduc; Spirit River; Linda Nelson, deputy chief administrative officer; the town of Coalhurst; the town of Hinton; the village of Strome; the town of Sexsmith; NPRL manager; president of Alberta 55 plus; provincial commissioner, Girl Guides of Canada, Alberta; the town of Killam; administrative assistant, the town of Black Diamond; the village of Warburg – I see all of the members are just very curious to see if they had something from their particular constituency, but I can assure you that it's from all over the province – the village of Chauvin; Hines Creek; Youngstown; the town of Stavely; the town of Bowden; the town of Vulcan; Fort Macleod; InMotion Network; recreation and parks, Parkland county; the town of Bon Accord; Alberta Centre for Active Living; Chris Brookes, Alberta Snowmobile Association; 2010 ABA president; NWAB.

Do we still have enough time to go through the rest?

4:50

**The Chair:** You have one minute and 49 seconds.

**Mr. Rodney:** One minute. Thank you.

Lac La Biche, Rainbow Lake, Boys & Girls Clubs, Valleyview, Ever Active Schools. I don't want to run out of time completely. I'll mention the rest, if there is time, during third reading.

Mr. Chair, as you can see, there are all sorts of stakeholders, all sorts of groups from across the province. People of every age and activity level and activity style are very interested in helping to promote this.

Again, I just encourage all members to vote in favour of Bill 203. If passed, it will just take one more step forward in improving the health and well-being of Albertans.

With that, Mr. Chair, I move to adjourn debate and call the question in Committee of the Whole on private member's Bill 203, the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend Act, 2011.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I just want to clarify that you called for a motion to close the debate.

**Mr. Rodney:** Agreed. Close the debate. Thank you for the clarification.

**The Chair:** We have no other speakers, and the sponsor of the bill has closed the debate, so the chair shall now call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 203 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.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 203.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard the report by the hon. Member for Strathcona, does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 204 Justice System Monitoring Act

[Debate adjourned May 9: Mrs. Sarich speaking]

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

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know my time is short, but with the allotted time I'm very pleased to speak to the private member's bill put forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, Bill 204, the Justice System Monitoring Act. I certainly congratulate the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for the foresight and the leadership in bringing forward this private member's bill.

The act touches on one of perhaps our most cherished principles, that of accountability. I never forget who my bosses are, the people of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, proud Albertans as are other members of this House. And when your bosses are upset, you listen. My bosses are very upset when it comes to the issue of some of the handling of things by this government. They have called me, and they want to know what the heck is going on relative to the issue of justice monitoring.

When we look at the cold, hard facts of the government's mismanagement, Mr. Speaker, we certainly hold some various dubious records in the Canadian court system. We are first in defendants not showing up for their court date. We're second in the length of time to complete a court case, at 270 days. The last fact concerns me perhaps the most, that 56 per cent of people in custody have not been convicted of the crime. If people are guilty, get them in front of a judge and jury. That's what my citizens are telling me and what Albertans, I know, have been telling this government. If they're not, set them free to live their lives as Albertans. Well, this government continues to fiddle, blind to the smoke and fire around them.

We are paying attention, none more so than the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. She was the Solicitor General and a proud

member under Premier Klein, pertaining to her tireless efforts in preventing the exploitation of abused children. No one in this House has done more for the victims of crime.

Ultimately, my theory is that justice delayed is certainly justice denied. It's a lot like health care in this province. To give you a small example, my constituents, seniors, were promised a long-term care facility over three years ago by the PC government. As they remain cooped up in acute-care beds on the third and fourth floors of our hospital, clearly, they made a commitment and haven't lived up to it. In fact, they still have not, if you can believe this, even broken ground on the new facility, that was announced three years ago. The fact is that they've had four to five press announcements but at this point have not even broken ground. That's a small example of what has not been working within this government.

The Justice System Monitoring Act will track very important points: the length of time from laying a charge until a concluding verdict, the total time for court hearings in a case, the length of time between reporting an offence and laying a charge, the number of delays exceeding three months, the number of prosecutions involved in each file – need I go on? – the number of adjournments granted, the number of trials that begin on their designated day, and the approximate cost of delays in terms of peace officers, prosecutors, as well as witnesses, victims, and jurors.

The way that this bill works is very simple. The ministry will have six months after the calendar year-end to present a report online providing the statistics outlined in the act. If the House is not sitting, the report must be tabled within 15 days of the next sitting. The tabled report will be referred to the relevant committee. Six months after the committee receives the data, they will report to this House. The minister will have three months after the committee report to respond. This, Mr. Speaker, is true accountability.

Now, I know that I only have a minute or so to conclude, so I will of course keep my comments relative to this, on private members' day, in the time to go. One argument that should be made, very relevant to this important point, is that old story of jurisdiction. You know, one argument that will be made . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but the time limit for consideration of this item is concluded.

### 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

#### Postsecondary Student Funding Review

506. Ms Woo-Paw moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to review the procedures and rules that determine postsecondary student funding to ensure that student funding meets the diverse and evolving needs of students in the 21st century.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today and open debate on Motion 506, which urges the government to review postsecondary student funding. I'm proposing this motion in order to express concerns that I have heard from young Albertans about the current structure of student funding.

We already have some of the best postsecondary institutions in the world, and ensuring that funding for students who attend these institutions is viable and adequate is of the utmost importance. To

be clear, I don't think a complete overhaul of our current student funding structure is necessary. The affordability framework, published in 2006, acknowledges that affordability is key to raising postsecondary participation and attainment levels. But demographics have changed in the past five years, and to respond to such changes, we must re-evaluate student funding policies. The age of students is also increasing as over half of postsecondary students are now over the age of 25. Students are also working more than ever before, with over 70 per cent of students holding a job while they continue their studies.

While these demographic shifts affect all students, I believe they especially impact individuals studying part-time. Mr. Speaker, we have over 85,000 part-time students studying at postsecondary institutions in our province. It is often the case that part-time students have full-time jobs, families, and other responsibilities that make their postsecondary commitments especially challenging.

In discussions with students and faculty members as well as members of the various postsecondary student associations, which represent well over 120,000 students, individuals raised concerns about the accessibility of funding for part-time students. Currently part-time students are unable to access the same opportunities for bursaries and scholarships as full-time students. While I understand the need to differentiate between part-time and full-time funding, I think it's important to review the funding in place so that students studying part-time have equitable access to bursaries and scholarship programs as well as adequate funds.

Indeed, student leaders raised concerns that part-time students are more likely to visit campus food banks than are full-time students. These campus food banks are often the last resource for students who are having trouble making ends meet. While I commend the Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology for programs such as the Alberta part-time bursary, I think it's important to review the range of programs within the ministry to ensure the needs of part-time students are met.

In addition to discussing part-time student funding, I also want to mention the importance of funding for those who wish to conduct part of their studies or broaden their studies in a foreign country. In the 21st century the benefits of international learning experiences are well recognized. There are also increasing opportunities for students to capitalize on in major Asian institutions such as in India and China. Our government understands the importance of competing on the global stage and contributing to the global community. In my opinion, one of the best ways to ensure that Albertans are global citizens is to provide needed supports for students who can benefit from international studies such as exposure to different cultures, an opportunity to learn or enhance a second or third language, and to learn different ways of addressing issues or solving problems. As the importance and level of interest for international studies is expected to increase, ensuring our funding criteria and assessment processes are responsive to current contexts is critical and should be achieved through a comprehensive review.

Finally, I want to briefly discuss the importance of completing a comprehensive review of student funding in the immediate future. There are about 600,000 Albertans aged 20 to 29 right now, Mr. Speaker. This figure will not be higher for at least 20 years according to the Minister of Finance's medium-growth scenario. In other words, the number of Albertans who are of the typical age for postsecondary students is at its peak right now, and these students will be the leaders and shapers of our province over the next several decades. It is therefore imperative that we take action now to ensure our policies and programs are truly responsive to the needs of the people the programs are intended to support.

Mr. Speaker, one of Alberta's most urgent issues is ensuring that we have a sufficient pool of an educated and skilled workforce. Failing to adequately support the growing number of learners who are eager to obtain an education but face barriers to achieving their goals not only hampers these learners' development and their families' well-being but also the well-being of our province.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, I think that a review of postsecondary student funding is of the utmost importance. It is imperative that this review happen sooner rather than later as the number of Albertans in their 20s is currently at its peak. Conducting such a review immediately will ensure that we maximize return on taxpayer dollars.

I also think that such a review ought to focus on the issues I have raised today: responsive and equitable funding criteria for part-time students, assistance for students wishing to study internationally, and funding that encourages diversity and inclusiveness in our postsecondary education system. I acknowledge the fact that the issues I raise today are complex. I believe that a full review of student funding, with stakeholder involvement, will help to properly address these issues.

I wish to thank the endorsement of Motion 506 from the Alberta Graduate Council, the Alberta Students' Executive Council, the Calgary Medical Students Association, the Canadian Federation of Medical Students, the Council of Alberta University Students, the medical students' association, and the Postdoctoral Association of the University of Calgary. Some of the representatives are here this afternoon in the gallery. I really appreciate your presence.

I look forward to comments from my hon. colleagues on Motion 506, and I encourage everyone to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe – am I right? – that I have five minutes to speak to this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Ten.

**Dr. Taft:** I have 10 minutes? Okay. Thank you very much. I know many others want to participate, so I will try not to take up the full 10 minutes, but this is a very important issue.

I want to commend the hon. member for bringing this motion forward. I think the spirit is good; the approach is fine. I think the choice of wording of the motion reflects the parliamentary constraints on what we can do in a motion and what we can't do in a motion in terms of requesting funding. I do like the idea that's brought forward here of reviewing the procedures and rules that determine postsecondary student funding because I think that if we were to do that sort of a review properly, it would drive us back to some basic questions. What do we want our postsecondary system to achieve? Why do we have a postsecondary system at all? Why do we educate people?

I think that if we were to revisit those kinds of values and those kinds of questions, we would get a new appreciation for why postsecondary education is so important. I think it's clear that we support postsecondary education not just because of the knowledge and skills that are delivered or acquired but because it makes for a better society. It makes for healthier citizens. It makes for citizens who are more engaged. It also strengthens our democracy because it encourages free and open and well-informed debate on issues. So I think that if the government was to follow this motion and actually start the review where, I would suggest, every review should begin, which is around questions of why –

what are we trying to achieve? – that would be a very healthy thing.

The Member for Calgary-Mackay has covered a lot of ground in her comments. She referred to, I noticed with some interest, the value of international studies, and that's, of course, a value that goes both ways. When Albertans go and study abroad and come back home, they bring the whole world with them. They bring the language and the values and the attitudes and the knowledge that they acquired abroad back home with them, and we benefit from that. Likewise, with students who live elsewhere and come and study here, we gain from their presence here.

5:10

I say that because two doors down from the house where my wife and I live, last winter there were four students from Kazakhstan. We struck up a friendship, and I wouldn't be surprised, Mr. Speaker, if some day we go to Kazakhstan. It opened up our world to a society in central Asia about which we knew next to nothing beforehand. So that's terrific.

I think that in the end we do need to come down to specifics. We do need a government that looks hard at things like tuition costs, which, in my view, are too high and have escalated too rapidly, and at an issue that came up earlier in this Assembly today, nontuition fees, which can come out of the blue and can seem arbitrary and unfair.

I also think that we need to revisit or challenge ourselves with the gap between our very low postsecondary participation rate and our low high school completion rates and the fact that we have a highly educated general population. Of course, that can be a mystery at first glance. How can that gap be? How can we have such low graduation rates and low postsecondary participation rates and such a well-educated population? As I've said before in this Assembly, it's because people are getting trained outside of Alberta and are moving here. In fact, I know an economist who's looked specifically at the value of this to Alberta, and it's well over a billion dollars a year that we gain in a kind of informal transfer payment from people who are educated at Dalhousie or McGill or Laval or UBC or wherever and move to Alberta with all that training in place.

I think we have to ask ourselves: is having the lowest postsecondary education rate in the country the best we can do? I don't think it is. I think we need to reduce the barriers to postsecondary education so that we get that rate up to something we can actually be proud of. I think it comes down to viewing education, from K to 12 right through postgraduate, not as a cost but as an investment, and I say that very seriously, Mr. Speaker. We keep tabs on the value of our infrastructure and our roads and our transmission lines. We keep tabs on the value of our buildings and our facilities, but we completely ignore the value of having a highly educated population. That value is immense, and I suspect that it's actually measurable. That value represents our investment in ourselves, in our children, and in our future. If we understand education as an investment and not just as an expense, then I think this motion makes perfect sense. I think that if that approach infused and informed the suggestion made in this motion, it would be a great thing.

I congratulate the member for bringing this forward. I hope other members can support it, and I hope that the government pays attention if it passes in this Assembly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to

rise today and speak on Motion 506. I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Mackay for bringing this forward. You know, the objective of the motion is, clearly, for us to look at how student funding is done today, and it is very important.

When I meet with the student organizations across the province or just students within the postsecondaries, it is always one of the issues that comes up. It's issues around loans; it's issues around grants; it's issues around bursaries; it's issues around remissions. It's all of those things rolled together because at the end of the day our education needs to be accessible, it needs to be affordable, and it needs to be of high quality. Those are the things that we ask of it, and those are the things that our students ask of it as well.

Clearly, those things don't always work very well together because sometimes to maintain high quality, of course, there is some cost to it. We in this province believe it's critically important to keep our system affordable, to keep it available to students. We also know that the cost of education continues to go up, so we're always looking for opportunities to improve the system.

I am pleased to say today that we're planning a full review of student finance. That will include everything from the access to the future fund, which helps to fund some of our matching dollars for scholarships, right through to the student loan fund and everything in between. You know, we have made some significant changes in the last few years. Our loan system, our finance system, of today doesn't look anything like it did 15 or 20 years ago. We've increased annual loan limits. We've increased living allowances. We've removed some of the silly rules around what kind of vehicles you drive, and some of that.

With this review we want to really drill down because what I think shows there is a problem is that only 30 per cent of our students take out a student loan. Only 30 per cent. I truly believe that there are students out there in Alberta today that aren't in postsecondary because either, one, they couldn't get a loan or, two, their families or themselves had a fear of going into debt, a fear of going to school and building up a debt and coming out carrying a large debt load.

Those are really legitimate fears for our students, so it is important that we review the system to ensure that the loans that they can get are easy to get, that the interest rates are low, that the payment rates are fair, that there are proper remissions available to students for a number of different reasons, that grants and bursaries – you know, we've got the Rutherford scholarship, the Jason Lang scholarship. These are wonderful projects, but the students come to me and say: we'd like more programs like that. This year we added the new opportunity for students to volunteer in the not-for-profit sector to gain valuable experience and to also gain scholarships for their next year of education. We are moving in that way, but I think we can do much, much better.

One of the areas that does keep coming up – the Member for Calgary-Mackay brought it up, and we will be reviewing it as part of this review – is around part-time students and especially graduate students. They simply either cannot get the loans that they need, or under the regulations that exist now if a graduate student gets a loan, they have to start paying back on it immediately. There is no waiting until you finish school. So it becomes very onerous or difficult. On one hand we're trying to attract graduate students, the brightest and the best, to come to Alberta to study and to be here, yet we create financing systems that don't support those graduate students.

In some provinces there is actual direct funding for graduate students. As well, there are different loan programs for graduate students. In British Columbia, for example, they even offer PNP placements for graduate students coming to study in British

Columbia. These are important things to look at as part of a holistic plan for our funding system for our young people.

Another interesting thing in Alberta: we talk about students not going from high school into postsecondaries, yet we have a very educated population. One of the ideas brought forward was that maybe people move here that are educated. That's some of it, but the average age in our postsecondary institutions is 28. Twenty-eight years of age. That means that people are leaving high school, going to work, maybe even starting a family, and then determining through that process that the job, the career, that they really want requires them to go back to school.

So on top of these important issues we need to look at ways to streamline education systems for people that are in the workplace. We're going to have to look at things like online apprenticeship training so that an apprentice that's working doesn't have to leave his home and his family, leave his job for eight weeks, travel to another community to take his apprenticeship training. We're going to look at unique things like that. Alberta consistently in apprenticeship punches well above our weight. With 10 per cent of the Canadian population, we train 20 per cent of the apprentices. Those numbers don't show up in our postsecondary numbers. We train a lot of apprentices in Alberta because we need a lot of apprentices in Alberta.

I'm very supportive of the system, but we need to make it better. We need to review this, and I thank the Member for Calgary-Mackay for bringing it forward, for inviting the students to come here and talk about it and hear about this important issue because, truly, we are going to review that system, and we are going to make it better.

Thank you.

5:20

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have a list of speakers here. After the minister there will be the members for Calgary-Varsity, Bonnyville-Cold Lake, Lesser Slave Lake, Calgary-Nose Hill, and Edmonton-Ellerslie. Is that right? Now you know your turn.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by first thanking the Member for Calgary-Mackay for bringing forward Motion 506, which states:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to review the procedures and rules that determine postsecondary student funding to ensure that student funding meets the diverse and evolving needs of students in the 21st century.

This is an extremely important discussion. I don't wish to repeat a number of the points that have been made by previous speakers, but I would like to bring forward some observations.

When it comes to postsecondary representation by elected MLAs, I find it rather interesting that four of the eight members that represent the Liberal caucus represent significant institutions in the province of Alberta. My colleague from Edmonton-Riverview is the elected representative for the University of Alberta. My colleague from Edmonton-Centre is the elected representative for Grant MacEwan, which has recently become a university. In Calgary the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology is represented by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I'm extremely proud of the fact that for the last two terms I have been the elected representative for Calgary-Varsity, which takes its name from the University of Calgary, which is a key contributor to the Calgary-Varsity constituency.

I would like to echo the investment comments that the Member for Edmonton-Riverview made about education being an investment rather than a liability or a cost item. For every dollar

that's invested in postsecondary education we have a threefold return. That return is obvious because the person who graduates from university finds themselves in a higher earning echelon. As a result of that, we continue to receive the benefits not only of their intelligence, their intellect, but also of their economic productivity as it relates to our province's well-being.

Ralph Klein did an interesting circumstance. In the late '90s he savagely cut postsecondary funding. He decided that the way to save money was to cut at the highest level, the highest cost of postsecondary. What Mr. Klein did as well as freezing and reducing the budgets for health care was take it a step further and reduce the number of medical seats available at university. He drove doctors and nurses out of this province. From that time on we have been trying to recruit them back or provide them with an education.

Now, Ralph Klein in a bit of a yin-yang circumstance in 2003 temporarily, basically for a year, froze tuition. That was back, as I say, in 2003, and that type of freeze hasn't occurred since. The cost of tuition has steadily climbed since that time, and it makes it prohibitive for a number of students to engage in postsecondary education.

The problems with postsecondary begin with our current education system which from an aboriginal point of view sees fewer than 50 per cent of aboriginal students graduating from high school. Only 25 per cent of ESL students who enter high school and continue in their studies in a period of three to four to five years actually enter postsecondary. So we're losing out on a terrific number of individuals. We encourage immigration to this country. Then what do we do? We put up a wall. We don't provide the ESL funding support within the public system, and we discourage ESL students from pursuing postsecondary academic career choices. This has to be changed. While this is only a government motion, which is a suggested direction – I appreciate the fact – I'm hoping, that a review will actually take place.

Now, the government has made a series of bad decisions. I've mentioned one from former Premier Ralph Klein. When the decision was made – and I believe it was in 2007 – to take any discussion of tuition increases out of legislation and put it behind the closed-door regulation of whoever was the current minister of postsecondary, I believe that the democratic opportunity for students and their representatives to voice concerns was lost. It became a unilateral, omnipotent, omniscient decision by whoever was the current minister.

Similarly, we have seen a series of other poor decisions made, in my opinion. For example, decreasing the number of bursaries and grants and scholarships in favour of increasing the indebtedness of students by increasing the loan provisions I think was a very negative move. We're saying to students, "Yes, under certain special circumstances we'll let you get yourself further into debt," but the rate of forgiveness has not appreciably increased on those debts.

When it comes to recognition of doctors who receive their training outside of this country, the government reduced the number of spaces for foreign-trained doctors to upgrade from 60 to 40. Both the U of C and the U of A last year were forced to reduce the number of seats for Alberta high school graduates to pursue postsecondary medical training. This is hardly the way to go in a province where family doctors are at a great shortage.

The concerns that continue to be large for a number of students are that loans are tied to a student's family's economic circumstance rather than to the students themselves. While that separation does not exist, the problem intensifies. In other words, if a family is economically well off, the student, regardless of their relationship within that family, is penalized and not able to



potentially receive the loan that would allow them to attend the postsecondary institution or faculty of their choice.

The failure of this government to recognize how important postsecondary education is as an investment shows up every September when 25 per cent of eligible students who can afford the tuition and have received the grades are turned away. The government attempts to sort of assuage the circumstance or massage it by suggesting: well, chances are the student applied to three institutions and was turned away by two of them and was finally accepted by the third. If you look at the number of students who were turned away at the institutions, regardless of whether it's a technical or an academic or whether it's distance learning, that figure of 25 per cent rejection regularly turns up.

Another mistake the government made was its failure to follow through with its urban campus concept, and that was very evident in what could have been a university-centred East Village development. There was a plan to have Bow Valley College, Mount Royal, the University of Calgary all connected in an urban campus. [Mr. Chase's speaking time expired]

5:30

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

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today and join debate on Motion 506, brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay. This motion proposes a review of procedures and rules that guide postsecondary student funding. We all know how important postsecondary education is for the future of this province. We're also well aware of some of the social, academic, and financial challenges facing students when pursuing a degree, diploma, or certificate. It is our role as leaders to make sure that these obstacles, financial or otherwise, can be overcome.

Mr. Speaker, as anyone who has ever attended a postsecondary institution can attest, numerous opportunities can arise during the course of one's studies. One such opportunity is the chance to study abroad. Unfortunately, the reality is that internationalizing one's education can be expensive, and many could not afford it without financial assistance. Ensuring that Alberta students have opportunities to study abroad is very important. It helps them develop a skill that will prepare them to cope with globalizing the world. This falls in line with Alberta's international strategy. For the record Alberta's international strategy is the Alberta government's commitment to pursue global advocacy, advance Alberta's international relations, and strengthen Alberta's reputation abroad to create opportunity for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, the list of benefits of international education is very long, so today I will only speak to some of them. One of the foremost reasons for travelling to a foreign country for a semester or two is the opportunity to learn to improve one's proficiency in a second language. As anyone who is learning a second language can confirm, only so much can be accomplished inside a classroom. Using the acquired language in day-to-day activities, on the other hand, vastly improves one's ability to speak it.

Another major reason to go abroad is the opportunity to get out of one's comfort zone and experience a different culture or way of life. It can challenge students to adopt new and diverse ways of thinking and bring fresh ideas back to Alberta. As well, understanding local cultural sensitivities is crucial to international relations at any level. Failing to do so can result in diminishing exchanges with foreign entities, preventing fruitful business relations to emerge, therefore limiting opportunities for Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, studying abroad is also a great way to meet new people, many of whom will become leaders in their own

communities and countries. In fact, as international businessmen and businesswomen can attest, forging durable relationships is the most difficult part of doing business abroad. Socializing with people informally in a university or college environment is therefore a great stepping stone for future business partnerships or scientific research exchanges.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the problem with those international opportunities is not a lack of motivation on the students' part or the amount of paperwork required to make it happen. The issue for students is funding. Perhaps a number of avenues could be explored to help these students afford the added cost to their education when pursuing an exchange program. Giving them an opportunity to be part of the global community at a young age will only give them a better sense of what awaits them in the future, and what awaits them is an increasingly competitive world that generates an abundance of opportunities for those who understand how to seize them. Perhaps it's time to review our postsecondary education funding scheme to better reflect the needs of our globally minded students.

I will conclude my comments by thanking the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay for her work on this motion. I encourage all members to continue this debate and think about what can be done to ensure that our education system continues to be the best and most accessible one in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to also support Motion 506, proposed by my colleague from Calgary-Mackay. I'd like to thank her for bringing that motion. Motion 506 encourages the government to review rules for postsecondary scholarship and bursary eligibility so that we look at the evolving needs of the student body that we have in the province today. We do need to take some action regarding the participation rate of Alberta's youth in postsecondary education and training, whether it be universities, colleges, or technical institutes. Our participation rates are too low.

Mr. Speaker, over the past number of years there's been a changing demographic in the student population. The average age of postsecondary students is on the rise. That means that a lot of students that are leaving high school are going out for other opportunities, employment opportunities perhaps, and postponing their education. There are some economic opportunities when the unemployment rate is low and when the wages are high. Sometimes it's attractive for students to leave high school and go straight into the workforce. Now, those kinds of students are of an older age, are more likely to be living on their own. They're more likely to be working to support themselves. Also, I think it's worthy to note that approximately 30 per cent of the Alberta student population study only on a part-time basis, so they may not have access to scholarships and bursary options that full-time students do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some might argue that higher tuition fees are a barrier to increasing our participation rates, as I mentioned, which we need to work on. There's certainly some truth in that proposition. To meet the challenge of that barrier, a lot of programs are available. Our government and most institutions provide programs to help students through scholarships, but scholarships only reward those students with very high academic performance regardless of their financial need. There are also programs like bursaries, where governments and most institutions also recognize the need to support students who may not have the financial resources to pursue their postsecondary education or

training. But I would submit that these also may not be taken care of in their entirety. They may not fall within all of the academic requirements. Those that may qualify for bursaries: there are many, many thousands of students who are deprived of opportunities still by reason of unaffordability of postsecondary education and training.

In this connection I want to make a comment, and that is that the way that we award scholarships and bursaries may not correlate with the prospects of academic success in all cases. Generally speaking, postsecondary institutions are ranking their admissions based on their high school academic performance. They use this tool because it's a tool that they have available, and it's the best tool, probably, that they do have available and one of the only ones that they have available.

I had the very good fortune to work alongside a gentleman by the name of Dr. Peter Krueger, who was a very distinguished and well-respected professor and academic administrator. He explained that academic performance in high school is not a reliable predictor of academic performance in university. The reason is that these institutions are different. A high school is a different place from a university or a college or even a technical institute. There are many mediocre high school students, Mr. Speaker – mediocre students – that will make excellent university students. When they get into that academic milieu, a lot of them catch fire in the free atmosphere of a college and a university where they can pursue something that truly interests them and do something which inspires them. I believe that we have to find a way to allow those students to excel in a field of their choice.

5:40

Today, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that a lot of the departments and faculties require very, very high marks in order to gain admission: 85, 90, 95 per cent. As I said, that's used as a criterion for admission, but it's not necessarily giving us an indicator of all of those individuals who might be capable of excelling in those fields. I'm not suggesting that every department or faculty should accommodate everybody that comes along regardless of their academic standing, but I believe that we need to concentrate on having a window to allow students to enter into that postsecondary milieu, where they can gain some experience and where we can give them an opportunity to flourish.

For that reason I'm suggesting that for your first year of general studies, where you can take a sampling of a number of different courses, for example, I think that the hon. minister would be well advised to allow for another type of admission policy whereby we could allow people with a lower academic standing in high school to have an opportunity to flourish in that postsecondary environment.

My recommendation, Mr. Speaker. Allowing these very, very high academic standards to be the criterion for entry into various programs is all well and good, but we really need to look at supporting those individuals in a way that allows them financially to get into the institution. We also need to look at the marks which are required in order to get into that first year of postsecondary education. I think that if we do those two things, then our participation rates will respond accordingly, and I think we'll be on our path to going from the lower ranks, the lower echelons, of provinces in terms of our participation rate into the upper echelons.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to join the debate?

Seeing none, I shall call on the sponsor of the motion, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay, to close the debate.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I brought this motion forward to encourage a review of the procedures, criteria, and rules that guide postsecondary funding. I'd just like to say that I'm very much gratified that this motion reiterated the government of Alberta's commitment to an accessible, affordable, and high-quality postsecondary system through the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology and hearing the strong commitment and support to our students in the postsecondary system by so many members of this House. I'm also honoured to have the presence of the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville here this afternoon, and I hope that he's in support of my motion.

I'd just like to close by saying that I'm most pleased to learn from the hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology today that his ministry will conduct a full review of student finance, especially part-time students and graduate students. I'd just like to thank all the hon. members who shared their valuable opinions this afternoon for their participation, and I thank you for the time.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 506 carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have voted here, I would move that the House stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:45 p.m. to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

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