



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Fifth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 13, 2012

Issue 16

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

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

Fifth Session

Kowalski, Hon. Ken, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, Speaker  
Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort, Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Zwozdesky, Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek, Deputy Chair of Committees

Ady, Cindy, Calgary-Shaw (PC)	Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL), Official Opposition Whip
Allred, Ken, St. Albert (PC)	Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC)
Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)	Knight, Mel, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)
Anderson, Rob, Airdrie-Chestermere (W), Wildrose Opposition House Leader	Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)
Benito, Carl, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)	Liepert, Hon. Ron, Calgary-West (PC)
Berger, Hon. Evan, Livingstone-Macleod (PC)	Lindsay, Fred, Stony Plain (PC)
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)	Lukaszuk, Hon. Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Montrose (PC)	Lund, Ty, Rocky Mountain House (PC)
Blackett, Lindsay, Calgary-North West (PC)	MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (AL)
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL), Official Opposition Deputy Leader, Official Opposition House Leader	Marz, Richard, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (PC)
Boutilier, Guy C., Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)	Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND), Leader of the ND Opposition
Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Nose Hill (PC)	McFarland, Barry, Little Bow (PC)
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)	McQueen, Hon. Diana, Drayton Valley-Calmar (PC)
Campbell, Robin, West Yellowhead (PC), Government Whip	Mitzel, Len, Cypress-Medicine Hat (PC)
Chase, Harry B., Calgary-Varsity (AL)	Morton, Hon. F.L., Foothills-Rocky View (PC)
Dallas, Hon. Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)	Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND), ND Opposition House Leader
Danyluk, Hon. Ray, Lac La Biche-St. Paul (PC)	Oberle, Hon. Frank, Peace River (PC)
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)	Olson, Hon. Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC), Deputy Government House Leader
Denis, Hon. Jonathan, QC, Calgary-Egmont (PC), Deputy Government House Leader	Ouellette, Luke, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (PC)
Doerksen, Arno, Strathmore-Brooks (PC)	Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (PC)
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Evans, Iris, Sherwood Park (PC)	Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC), Premier
Fawcett, Kyle, Calgary-North Hill (PC)	Renner, Rob, Medicine Hat (PC)
Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (W), Wildrose Opposition Whip	Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)	Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon (PC)
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace (PC)	Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)
Griffiths, Hon. Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)	Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)
Groeneveld, George, Highwood (PC)	Sherman, Dr. Raj, Edmonton-Meadowlark (AL), Leader of the Official Opposition
Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC), Government House Leader	Snelgrove, Lloyd, Vermilion-Lloydminster (Ind)
Hayden, Hon. Jack, Drumheller-Stettler (PC)	Stelmach, Ed, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC)
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)	Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Hinman, Paul, Calgary-Glenmore (W), Wildrose Opposition Deputy Leader	Taft, Dr. Kevin, Edmonton-Riverview (AL), Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Horne, Hon. Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC), Deputy Government House Leader	Tarchuk, Janis, Banff-Cochrane (PC)
Horner, Hon. Doug, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert (PC)	Taylor, Dave, Calgary-Currie (AB)
Jablonski, Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC)	VanderBurg, Hon. George, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (PC)
Jacobs, Broyce, Cardston-Taber-Warner (PC)	Vandermeer, Tony, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (PC)
Johnson, Hon. Jeff, Athabasca-Redwater (PC)	Weadick, Hon. Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC), Deputy Government House Leader
Johnston, Art, Calgary-Hays (PC)	Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)
	Woo-Paw, Teresa, Calgary-Mackay (PC)
	Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)

**Party standings:**

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

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Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Philip Massolin, Committee Research Co-ordinator	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Liz Sim, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>
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Doug Horner	Deputy Premier, President of Treasury Board and Enterprise
Dave Hancock	Minister of Human Services
Ted Morton	Minister of Energy
Verlyn Olson	Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Fred Horne	Minister of Health and Wellness
Ron Liepert	Minister of Finance
Thomas Lukaszuk	Minister of Education, Political Minister for Edmonton
Diana McQueen	Minister of Environment and Water
Jonathan Denis	Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security
Cal Dallas	Minister of Intergovernmental, International and Aboriginal Relations, Political Minister for Central Alberta
Evan Berger	Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Political Minister for Southern Alberta
Frank Oberle	Minister of Sustainable Resource Development
George VanderBurg	Minister of Seniors
Ray Danyluk	Minister of Transportation
Jeff Johnson	Minister of Infrastructure, Political Minister for Northern Alberta
Doug Griffiths	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Greg Weadick	Minister of Advanced Education and Technology
Jack Hayden	Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Heather Klimchuk	Minister of Culture and Community Services
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Naresh Bhardwaj	Health and Wellness
Alana DeLong	Seniors
Arno Doerksen	Human Services
Kyle Fawcett	Treasury Board and Enterprise
Art Johnston	Executive Council
Barry McFarland	Agriculture and Rural Development
Len Mitzel	Transportation
Dave Rodney	Health and Wellness
David Xiao	Energy

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

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

Chair: Ms Tarchuk  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Elniski

Anderson  
DeLong  
Groeneveld  
Johnston  
MacDonald  
Quest  
Taft

**Standing Committee on Community Development**

Chair: Mrs. Jablonski  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Chase

Amery  
Blakeman  
Boutilier  
Calahasen  
Goudreau  
Groeneveld  
Lindsay  
Snelgrove  
Taylor  
Vandermeer

**Standing Committee on Education**

Chair: Ms Pastoor  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Hehr

Anderson  
Benito  
Brown  
Cao  
Chase  
Leskiw  
Marz  
Notley  
Sarich  
Tarchuk

**Standing Committee on Energy**

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Webber  
Xiao

**Standing Committee on Finance**

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Blakeman  
Brown  
Evans  
Hinman  
Lindsay  
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Marz  
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Quest

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Elniski  
Evans  
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**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

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Boutilier Lindsay  
Calahasen McFarland  
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**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Bhardwaj  
Blakett  
DeLong  
Doerksen  
Forsyth  
Notley  
Rodney  
Rogers  
Swann  
Woo-Paw

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2012

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Give to each member of this Legislature a strong and abiding sense of the great responsibilities laid upon us. Give us a deep and thorough understanding of the needs of the people we serve. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a particular honour and pleasure of mine today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly three guests who are seated in your gallery. They're members of the AAMD and C. They had a meeting with our rural caucus, and many urban colleagues came along, and we had a fantastic discussion. They are great partners in helping to build a stronger rural Alberta and better communities. I'd ask them to rise: Tom Burton from the MD of Greenview; Soren Odegard from the county of Two Hills; and the president of AAMD and C, a constituent of mine and a personal friend, Mr. Bob Barss from the MD of Wainwright. I'd ask all members to give them the warm welcome.

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, it's a real thrill today to stand up and introduce to this Assembly a friend of Alberta, a woman who spent 16 years in the Ontario Legislature, eight as a member of the opposition and the last eight years, before she retired in October, as Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Sandra Papatello was famous for building partnerships, not only getting clusters of Ontario businesses to come and work in Alberta, but she came to all of our national buyer/seller forums and arranged several partnerships. She continues to do that today as a member of the federal panel to review aerospace and is working for a number of Alberta-based companies.

With her today is her new colleague. She's now director of PWC, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and has one of their leading national managers out here today, Brian McLean. I'd ask my two guests to please stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the great privilege to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 70 visitors, 61 in the members' gallery and nine in the public gallery. These are students from Gateway Christian school in Red Deer-North, and they're fascinated and curious about their government. I spoke to the students earlier, and one young man told me that he likes guns and wants to be a member of the military, another told me that he would like to design and build his own car like Ford or Lexus, and another one said that he was interested in being the Premier of the province. In the members' gallery are the students of Gateway Christian school with their teachers, Mrs. Klaaske deKoning and Mr. Jim Driedger,

and their parent helpers Karrie-Anne Brewster, Carolyn Lodewyk, Art Vriend, Mrs. Beatrice Vriend, and Mrs. Zara Wattenbarger. Would you please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, you know how much I adore and listen carefully to the seniors in the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre. Today in the public gallery we have with us a very wise group of seniors from Edmonton-Centre, and these are the people who attend the Minerva centre for senior studies, which is housed inside of MacEwan University. This includes, in fact, a high school teacher of mine, so I'm just thrilled that they're here today and that Janet was able to be their guide because she was another teacher, at Strathcona high school. I would ask them all to please rise and accept the riotous welcome of my colleagues.

**The Speaker:** Well, I was really hoping we could avoid riots this afternoon.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Liepert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a group of hard-working Albertans from the workforce development and engagement division of corporate human resources and the Deputy Premier's department. He's off fighting on behalf of Alberta businesses in Ottawa today, so it's my pleasure to introduce Catherine Dupuis, Lauren Hobson, Diana Steele, Melanie Lacher, and Joanne Christiansen. They're seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. I'd ask them to rise and be recognized by the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you and on behalf of the hon. the Premier to all members of the Assembly the winners of our most recent Premier's awards for healthy workplaces. This group of Albertans is being recognized today for making the health of their employees a top priority in their workplace. From wellness programs to on-site fitness facilities and educational programs these employers have made health and wellness easily accessible to their employees and are committed to making Alberta healthier.

These guests are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask each of them to rise as I call their names to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Nichole Collins and Gabriela Husch from Athabasca University, Lorraine Zoskey and Michelle Parker from the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Central Region Community Board, Susan Adam and Ray Pisani from Alberta Blue Cross, Heather Stickle from Hyatt Calgary, Lorna Milkovich and Krista Rechner from the Red Deer primary care network, and Fran Pedersen and Tom Burton from the municipal district of Greenview. Please join me in extending a very warm welcome on behalf of the Assembly.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two Albertans who have made outstanding contributions to this province and its ecological heritage. Present today are Dr. Howard Tennant and Dr. Ron Wallace. Dr. Tennant is a former president

and vice-chancellor of Lethbridge University. He currently sits on the governing boards of many public and private organizations, including the National Research Council. Dr. Tennant also served as co-chair of the Alberta Environmental Monitoring Panel.

Dr. Ron Wallace is an aquatic ecologist whose 35 years of work on issues related to the oil sands have been widely published and recognized with an Emerald award. In addition to lending his experience to World Bank development projects in Russia and Venezuela, he has served as a board member of Wildlife Habitat Canada and as the former executive director of the Northwest Territories Water Board.

I am very happy to have these two members here. They will be joining us shortly – I see that they're not here yet – but I'd still like to ask people to give them the resounding welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Melissa Yurdiga, one of my constituents from Athabasca-Redwater. She's the daughter of our hard-working reeve, David Yurdiga. She's a NAIT student working towards a bachelor of business administration in accounting. Obviously, she's got her mother's brains and good looks, as you can tell, too. In addition, Melissa is the project manager for Hand over Hunger, Students in Free Enterprise, which she's going to brief me about after session.

She's accompanied by Liam Zahara, who's a NAIT student and is studying business administration. I'd ask Melissa and Liam to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Mr. Matt Pechey, my assistant in Calgary-Mackay, and Barbara Letendre, my assistant in the Legislature office. Matt was previously with the federal government, Mount Royal University, and children's services. Barbara is a long-term employee of the government, and she's gorgeous and most capable. She told me to tone down my descriptions. She's been working with me since last fall. I'm most fortunate to have these very knowledgeable, experienced people providing great support to my office and to the constituents of Calgary-Mackay. I'd ask that they both rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly a friend and constituent of mine, Mr. Joe Demko. Mr. Demko is a trustee of the St. Albert Protestant separate school district No. 6. He is also a former superintendent of the Protestant district and taught in St. Albert for many years. I'd ask Joe if he would please stand and ask the members of the Assembly to give him the traditional warm welcome.

**1:40**

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions today. The first set I'd like to introduce is two guests, Gail Cumming and Trina Firth. Trina has worked as a social worker for 30 years, receiving awards and commendations in the process.

Since being injured on the job, she has been subjected to video surveillance by the WCB, which was then used as a foundation for misleading statements to third parties by the WCB. Gail Cumming, who came with her, is a workers' advocate who's been working with a growing number of injured workers in circumstances similar to Trina's. She is here today to bring attention to the increasing incidence of worker intimidation by the WCB through the unjustified and intrusive use of video surveillance. I would now ask Gail and Trina to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Do you have another one?

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a second set. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two members of my team at the constituency office in Old Strathcona. Hannah Goa has been working as a constituency assistant since May 2010. I'm repeatedly approached by constituents throughout the riding of Strathcona who thank me for the incredibly effective and caring advocacy that Hannah has provided to them since she's been in the office. Jaime Phillips is our . . .

**The Speaker:** Hold on, Member. You're being disturbed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Would you kindly retreat.

**Dr. Swann:** My apologies.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Jaime Phillips is our current field placement student from Grant MacEwan. I've been very impressed with the quality of her work, her maturity, and the enthusiasm that she brings to the office every time she is there. I would now ask both Hannah and Jaime to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Dr. Peter Rodd and his son Alexander. Dr. Rodd began his medical career in the Canadian Forces as a medical officer and flight surgeon. He then served for almost 15 years as a family doctor. From there he provided care to patients in the forensic services at Alberta Hospital Edmonton and in the community. Dr. Rodd has a proven record of strong and vocal advocacy in an effort to put his patients first. He's the new Wildrose candidate in Edmonton-Manning, and we are thrilled to have him. With that, I would like to ask him and his son to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

### Impaired Driving

**Ms Pastoor:** Mr. Speaker, today I voice my support of the former Bill 26, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2011, that strengthens the government's approach to impaired driving. I am disappointed that the issue has been politicized by those who should know better.

It is not just my voice but other voices as well such as the member who proposed the piece of legislation where drivers who blow more than a .05 blood-alcohol level would have their drivers' licences suspended for 24 hours. She noted that drivers

are impaired well before they hit .08 and that moving to .05 will work in keeping drinking drivers off the road.

Another voice supporting the increase to enforce a .05 blood-alcohol content said in this Assembly that a .05 limit will keep drunk drivers off the road, making our roads safer for all Albertans.

Yet another voice in May 2008 in this Assembly said that in his experience Albertans were not so much concerned about enforcing our drinking and driving laws as they were worried about how to punish repeat offenders. “[Even if] they haven’t hurt somebody or killed somebody . . . it’s just a matter of time,” he said. Mr. Speaker, this member asked whether this government could find ways to “make drinking and driving a very unattractive option . . . especially for repeat offenders.” The member in question noted correctly that the government of Alberta does control the driver’s licence portion of the law and asked if the government could take action on that front.

Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased to say that we have. Starting at .05, our approach makes drinking and driving a very unattractive option through escalating penalties for repeat offenders.

Lending their voices of support to Alberta’s impaired driving strategy are the members for Calgary-Fish Creek, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, and Airdrie-Chestermere, and we do thank them for their support.

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

#### **Integrity in Government Leadership**

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Premier likes to talk about real-life leadership. It’s her election campaign slogan. It’s plastered on the side of her campaign bus. Apparently she wants people to believe that she’s experienced in the real world.

I have a problem with that, Mr. Speaker, because nothing that I have seen from this Premier bears any semblance to real life or leadership, for that matter. Great leaders lead by example and keep their word. Leadership isn’t giving yourself a 30 per cent pay hike and then freezing public wages for two years. Leadership isn’t refusing to give it back. Real life isn’t making the laws and then living above them as we’ve seen with the illegal donation scandal and the subsequent investigations into the PC party. Leadership isn’t making a promise for a public health inquiry or fixed election dates and then breaking those promises when you’re looking square into the eyes of Albertans and declaring that you stand by your word. That’s not real life. That’s wonderland. That’s certainly not leadership.

If the Premier wants a real lesson in real-life leadership, she can look to folks like Sergio Marchionne, who when his company, Chrysler, began taking on water, stepped up and led by example. He declined his own annual CEO salary and bonuses while the company attempted to get back on track.

I’ve got news for the Premier. Her party, her government, and our province are taking on water. They’ve run five successive budget deficits. Spending and waste are out of control. Our savings accounts are nearly gone. But instead of showing leadership, real-life leadership, that she likes to talk about, this Premier and cabinet continue to accept the outrageous pay raises that they gave themselves. In real life, in real Alberta people can’t just decide to make more money or break their word because they feel like it

Madam Premier, please show some integrity and real leadership. Call a full public inquiry where health officials and ministers will have to testify under oath. That’s real leadership.

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

#### **National Buyer/Seller Forum**

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise today to speak about a very important event happening later this year. From October 2 to 4 the National Buyer/Seller Forum will take place in Edmonton. Our government is pleased to be a partner in putting on this worthwhile event. Each year this forum provides an incredible opportunity for business leaders from across Canada to play a part in shaping the future of our energy industry. What a great way to showcase Alberta. This forum is an excellent opportunity to showcase local and national businesses such as Acklands-Grainger and Commercial Solutions, major suppliers located in Nisku in my constituency.

The theme of this year’s forum, Green Opportunities through Innovative Partnerships, is truly indicative of the direction Alberta’s and Canada’s energy sectors have been taking.

Mr. Speaker, just a few years ago seven oil sands producers formed the Oil Sands Tailings Consortium, through which they now share tailings research and technology to help improve reclamation efforts and reduce the environmental impact of the oil sands.

In addition, earlier this year 12 major oil sands companies signed on to Canada’s Oil Sands Innovation Alliance, which will look for ways to collaborate on environmental research, including new methods of carbon capture and land reclamation. These are just a couple of examples of how partnerships between key players can make a major difference in propelling ideas and technology forward.

Mr. Speaker, the National Buyer/Seller Forum adds yet another layer to these important partnerships by helping to connect oil sands producers, the buyers, with equipment suppliers, manufacturers, and drilling transportation companies, the sellers. Bringing all of these players together into one place creates a collaborative environment in which new ideas are formed which will further strengthen Alberta’s energy sector and attract investment to Alberta and Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the National Buyer/Seller Forum is truly a unique and important networking opportunity. I encourage anyone interested in the energy and oil sands sector to attend and, more importantly, spend some money in our capital region.

Thank you.

1:50

#### **Oral Question Period**

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

#### **Donations to Leadership Campaigns**

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and the PCs talk about independence, transparency, and accountability while they carry on with backroom deals and warlord politics. The journey of former AHS board chair Ken Hughes is well known, and now we learn that in the PC leadership race a former AHS board member, the current acting chair, Cathy Roozen, personally donated \$5,000 to the Premier’s leadership bid and together with her spouse doled out a whopping \$27,000. How can Albertans trust that the AHS board and AHS are independent of this government when these kinds of donations are being made and accepted?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, the wonderful thing about the rules that we set out for our party is that we have complete transparency with respect to people when they decide to make contributions. I think what Albertans are concerned about is that when they don't have the information, they don't know what people's views might be.

We have a very strong chair at Alberta Health Services and very strong members on that board who have their own role with respect to corporate governance and understand what their legal obligations are.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier is right. They're transparent. The more you donate, you'll get a job.

Given that the Southern family and the companies that they control donated at least \$128,000 to the recent PC leadership campaign and given that the ATCO Group of companies are such large players in the electricity market, again to the Premier: how can you claim that accepting 128 grand does not jeopardize the independence of this government's policy on electricity deregulation, which ultimately is forcing Albertans to pay higher bills?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I'll say again that the important piece here is that we are completely transparent with respect to where everyone stands. We had an independent panel that made recommendations with respect to transmission, which then was supported as a result of decisions that were made by the AESO, AUC. This is important because what we are saying is that we are completely clear and open with everyone with respect to exactly where everyone stands on these issues.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, this Premier is completely transparent. The more you pay, the more you get in contracts.

Given the Premier's recent transmission policy flip-flops and the fact that both the Premier and the Minister of Energy also received substantial donations totalling \$20,000 from TransAlta during their leadership campaigns, to the Premier: whose interests are this Premier and the PC government really serving, the corporations making huge profits from higher costs or the people of Alberta who are paying through the nose for those bills? Whose interests, Premier? Those who fund you, or those who elect you?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, there is a wonderful opportunity in this province to continue to grow this economy. The AESO said it, this government has said it, and an independent transmission panel said it. We expect billions of dollars in investment to be made in this province with respect to the extraction of our natural resources, whether it's oil and gas, agriculture, or forestry. We certainly need the transmission, we need the electricity, and we have been very clear that we've supported that approach from the beginning. There is nothing that is unclear. There has been no change of policy, and we're proud of the policy.

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

#### Long-term Care for Seniors

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Growing the economy is exactly what this Premier is doing on the backs of our seniors. From Delivery Matters, a fact sheet put out by the Parkland Institute, national and international research clearly shows that in the delivery of health care, especially long-term care, the for-profit model leads to lower staffing levels, inferior quality of care. For example, bathing was skipped 10 per cent of the time; feeding, 20 per cent.

Residents were six times more likely to be bedridden, and those people were more drowsy, less socially engaged, ate less, and had more bed ulcers. Why, despite overwhelming evidence, does the Premier insist on defending profit instead of caring for our seniors?

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the report that the hon. member quotes from is a report that covered the period of 2006 to 2009. Without addressing the specific allegations that the hon. member made, I can tell you that today, in 2012, every resident has a registered nurse, an occupational therapist, or a social worker or a case manager. There is increased access to 24/7 home-care registered nurses. Nurse practitioners have been introduced and are managing medical needs. New strategies have been developed to reduce emergency department visits.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, let's bring this minister down to Planet Earth and down to the province of Alberta. Given that the Health Quality Council's Long Term Care Family Experience Survey, released January 2012, found that "on average, publicly operated facilities obtained significantly higher overall ratings compared to private and voluntary . . . operated facilities," again to the Premier: why is this PC government treating the health, safety, and well-being of our seniors with such flagrant, heartless disregard?

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Mr. Speaker, you know, I take offence at the comments being made. It seems like it's a drive-by smear operation. I went to many, many facilities in this province. Take a look at Extencare Eaux Claires. Go and ask the residents. See the smiling faces. Talk to the families. How about going down to AgeCare in Strathmore? People are very well taken care of in private settings. I would say very, very clearly that I'm proud of the facilities we have. The people that deserve great, great service are our seniors.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, I take offence. The only smear here is a smear in the diapers of our seniors who are neglected in long-term care.

To the Premier. Yesterday you accused all of the opposition parties in this House of scaring seniors into not supporting your government. Can you please explain to me, given the overwhelming evidence and the human outcry from our seniors, who want to be cared for, fed, and taken out of bed, who is really scaring our seniors and who is smearing them? Come on, Premier. Stand up and answer the question.

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I stand in this House day after day, and I listen to this hon. member go on and on about how there are seniors in this province that are starving, that aren't getting health care, that do not have appropriate housing, and that simply isn't true. That is my evidence of this direct hon. member's comments in this House with respect to the quality of life of seniors. This is a government that is committed to a publicly funded health care system, accommodation, and choice for all seniors and an improved quality of life so that seniors can live their lives with respect.

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



### Donations to Leadership Campaigns

(continued)

**Mr. MacDonald:** The financial statements of the Deputy Premier in the recent PC leadership race were prepared to comply with the requirements of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. An individual campaign donation was not to exceed \$30,000. To the Premier: why did the Deputy Premier in the leadership campaign accept a \$35,000 donation from one individual, which is clearly \$5,000 more than what the limit was set at?

**The Speaker:** I'm not sure how this applies to the question period, hon. member. Proceed with your next question, please.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is in regard to the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, which is, again, a statute that the Premier had under her control when she was Justice minister.

Again, given that donations should not come from any corporation that does not have business in Alberta, who sent the Deputy Premier's campaign two money orders worth \$15,000 in total from RBC Trust Bahamas?

**The Speaker:** The same reply, hon. member. Proceed.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier has placed Gary Mar in the penalty box on an unpaid leave because of concerns over leadership campaign fundraising, will the Premier now do the same to the Deputy Premier for exceeding the donation limit from an individual by \$5,000 and cashing money orders worth \$15,000 in total from RBC Trust Bahamas?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I am first of all not going to confirm any of the allegations that this hon. member has made. This is not part of what I would consider to be appropriate business for this House.

But with respect to the last question, Mr. Speaker, the reason that the trade representative in Hong Kong has been put on a leave of absence without pay is directly with respect to his employment contract with the government of Alberta as a result of the code of conduct that we expect all employees to observe.

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

### Alleged Intimidation of Physicians

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today Dr. Peter Rodd came forward with his own personal account of being bullied and intimidated by Alberta Health Services. Dr. Rodd, a psychiatrist, worked with forensic patients at Alberta Hospital Edmonton. Many of these patients were dangerous and, in his medical opinion, too risky to be released into the community. But, as usual, his advocacy efforts to keep these dangerous patients at Alberta Hospital were met with threats to his job and intimidation. To the Premier: why can't you see that your broken promise to hold a judicial inquiry into patient advocacy is seriously harming the health and safety of all Albertans?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment to hold an independent judicial inquiry with respect to queue-jumping. We have kept that commitment.

With respect to these allegations I'm not at all surprised that a Wildrose candidate would be making these allegations about doctor intimidation, Mr. Speaker.

2:00

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** A 420-page report about doctor intimidation. Read it.

Thank you. Again to the Premier: given that physicians have told the Health Quality Council that they need whistle-blower protection if they're ever going to speak out, when are you going to table whistle-blower legislation? There is a mysterious Bill 7 that appears to be on the Order Paper. Could that be it?

**Ms Redford:** There is a Health Quality Council report that did talk about doctor intimidation. This government has accepted that report. It has accepted the recommendations made in that report, and this government will actually find solutions to fix health care as opposed to the discussions that we seem to have in this House from the hon. members on the opposite side.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Premier, you're a disappointment to Alberta doctors and their patients.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier. Given that Dr. Rodd came forward today and confirmed what the Health Quality Council has already said, that patient advocacy in Alberta has been compromised by political interference in the system, what more proof do you need? By not calling the public inquiry that you promised, is that what you're trying to accomplish, stop physicians from coming forward?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, the proof is in the report that was presented by the Health Quality Council; we are not disputing that.

The way to fix health care in Alberta is not to politicize this issue by having people at one point talk about doctor intimidation and then 20 minutes later announce that they're a candidate for a political party. That does not fix health care in Alberta, but we will.

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

### Long-term Care for Seniors

(continued)

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A study by researchers at three Alberta universities has found that the health of people in supportive living is at greater risk than those in long-term care facilities. Lack of appropriate staffing in supportive living means that people are twice as likely to end up in ERs or be hospitalized. Will the Premier explain why this government is reducing the number of long-term care spaces despite a severe shortage and despite better health outcomes for seniors in long-term care?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, the study that the hon. member refers to is based on data from 2006 to 2009. As I said in answer to an earlier question this afternoon, a lot has happened since then. This government is committed to an approach to continuing care that offers seniors a range of affordable housing spaces and brings the health care to them, and we're having a lot of success with that.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. The facts speak otherwise, Mr. Speaker. Given that the for-profit involvement in supportive living is much greater than in long-term care and that people are

having to stay in supportive living for a wide range of health services that would keep them from needing hospitalization, will the Premier commit to end the handover of care for seniors to the friends in the for-profit sector who donate to her leadership and the PC Party and, instead, put the health needs of seniors first?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, continuing care in this province, whether it's provided by government, by the not-for-profit sector, or by the private sector, is all regulated exactly the same way. This government has very strict continuing care accommodation standards in place and very strict continuing care health standards in place. They are applied equally across the board. They are enforced rigorously by inspectors. On top of that, we have long-term care accommodation rate protection to ensure that nobody pays more than they can afford.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that this government is cutting long-term care in this province despite promising a significant increase in the last election and is building assisted living facilities instead and given that those in assisted living are more likely to end up in the ER, why won't the Premier admit that its seniors' care strategy isn't intended to actually help seniors but, instead, the private interests that back the PC Party? This is to the Premier.

**Ms Redford:** This government's policy is designed to support seniors so that they can live in dignity with choice in the last years of their life. One of the things that we have found out, Mr. Speaker, from seniors in Alberta is that they want to have choice with respect to accommodation. We have a system that is regulated that allows for different models of delivery to a standard that's consistent across the province and ensures that there is public health care available for every senior living in any type of accommodation.

### Bitumen Upgrading

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, the government talks a good game when it comes to raising the fortunes of our First Nations communities and upgrading and refining more bitumen here in Alberta. That's why I'm shocked that the Alberta First Nations energy project, a project that could have employed our First Nations citizens and built our provincial coffers, has been shelved. To the Minister of Energy: why is this project being moth-balled?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, we in this government are committed to diversifying the economy and to ensuring that we're investing in value-added for the good of all Albertans. We know that that has tremendous opportunities for Albertans and Alberta taxpayers across the province. Unfortunately, this particular project was a project that, when we assessed the benefit and the risk, just didn't make sense for Alberta taxpayers. We're not opposed to doing more, but we won't do this project.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the economics of this Alberta First Nations energy project compare more favourably than the North West energy project, why are we not proceeding with this project given that we went ahead with North West?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to answer that question. At its similar stage of where we approved North West, they had already secured the land, they had already secured regulatory approval, and they'd already secured a major partner with years of

experience in the oil sands, CNRL. The current project that he's referring to has none of those, and as the Premier said, at this particular point in time the risks clearly outweigh the benefits.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, my spidey sense is tingling on this, Mr. Speaker, in that politics rather than business acumen may be at play here given that this project could have been shelved because high-level PC Party operatives worked directly for competitors of this First Nations project. Has it been shelved for politics and not business?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I can see that the habit of making unfounded allegations by the Official Opposition leader is spreading to the rest of the caucus.

There's absolutely no competition between these two different projects. North West is already approved, as I said. Teedrum was very early in the process. As far as the two pipelines, they're totally different, and we support both of them. Northern Gateway is going to ship bitumen. Kinder Morgan is going to support refined products. We support both of them very strongly.

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

### Impaired Driving

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans support getting tough on drunk drivers. However, there are some who seemingly want to make it a political issue and ignore the lives that would be saved and injuries prevented through Alberta's new drunk-driving law. Some of the most vocal critics have been a few particular members in this House, which is odd considering they advocated for getting tough on drunk drivers the way we are doing with Bill 26. My first two questions are to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. One of the areas focused on by the new law is tougher penalties for those who have a blood-alcohol content between .05 and .08. How does that line up with what the opposition members want?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Far be it for me to quote myself. I'm going to go to *Hansard*: "I hope this bill will start the process to move to a .05 legal limit." I recognize that drunk driving is not a partisan issue, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for her past support.

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

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. That is just one quote from one member. Was there any other support shown for the blood-alcohol limit of .05?

**Mr. Denis:** Mr. Speaker, once again, I'm going to let *Hansard* do the talking. The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo stated in reference to a private member's bill cracking down on drunk drivers: "We should be doing everything we can to make it harder for drunk drivers to offend and to get [drunk] drivers whose judgment is impaired by alcohol off the road." That includes the danger zone between .05 and .08. Thank you to that member as well.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** My second supplemental question is to the Minister of Transportation. Given that the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere was concerned about repeat drinking-and-driving offenders, quote, if they haven't hurt or killed anybody, it's just a

matter of time, end quote, how does the province's new legislation deal with repeat offenders?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, this law very much targets repeat offenders. We are doing all we can to make the roads safer through education, enforcement, tougher penalties, ignition interlock, and other measures. This is good legislation, and we're doing the right thing to get Albertans home safely.

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

## 2:10 School Infrastructure Funding

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day the deplorable state of our school infrastructure in Alberta continues to be of great concern. Across the province boards are forced to move students between schools while parents fight to save their neighbourhood schools. To the Minister of Infrastructure: why isn't this government co-operating with the cities, the school boards, and other government ministries to revive and save inner-city schools?

**Mr. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, I think this ministry and this government is co-operating with all of the possible stakeholders to do the best that we can with the infrastructure and the budget that we've got in this province. We've got great examples of working together. For example, in Lac La Biche we're building schools and bolting those onto the community centre so that we can make use of the common areas like the field house and the library. We don't have to double-bill those and bill those to the taxpayer, and we can use that money to build additional spaces in some other community.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again: given that school boards across the province have maintenance deficits of over a billion dollars and half of our schools are more than 50 years old, what is this government doing to fix old schools, not just build new ones?

**Mr. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, there are numerous modernizations going on across the province. We need to keep working with the Minister of Education and all the school boards and all the stakeholders, and we're committed to doing that. I would love to build more schools. I would love to renovate more schools for the minister. The reality is that there's a certain budget that we work with. We roll about a hundred million dollars a year through to school boards to do maintenance, and they set those priorities locally. We'll continue to work with them and make those dollars go as far as possible.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The problem is that the students are going into substandard schools.

To the minister again: why is your government not fighting to keep older schools open by finding creative ways to use them to their full potential such as making them community hubs and leasing space to community groups and Alberta Health, for example?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, let's not forget the most important aspect of it all, and that's the children's education. At the end of the day schools are there to serve our children. Decisions are made on whether schools are opened or closed based on the quality of the educational programs that are being offered. Yes, school boards from time to time have to make difficult decisions to close schools, but those decisions are made in the best interests of the children. When population is so low that teachers no longer can deliver valuable educational programs, those tough decisions have to be made, and they are being made.

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

## Resource Revenue Projections

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A large portion of Alberta's finances is derived from oil and gas revenue. Some of my constituents have expressed some uncertainty with regard to how those numbers are derived. This was recently highlighted in a column by U of C Professor Jack Mintz in an article in the *National Post*. My question is to the Minister of Finance with regard to revenue forecasts he has presented. Has there been third-party validation of the numbers used to project revenue for the province with regard to oil and gas revenues?

**Mr. Liepert:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, with due respect, I think time will tell, but I don't think Dr. Mintz will be proven correct. Our forecasts are consistent with the growing Alberta economy. We've got growth that is twice the national average.

Now, three major Canadian banks in their assessments have praised Alberta's budget for having the strongest economic outlook in the country. A few weeks ago I tabled a document from RBC which said: "The government has left itself a solid cushion by using relatively conservative assumptions for key economic variables." I would say that that's a good third-party assessment.

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

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents are also interested in some of the mechanisms used to derive the revenue numbers. While that may be complicated to some extent, could the Minister of Finance expand on what mechanisms are used to derive the projections for oil and gas revenue?

**Mr. Liepert:** First of all, it's really in the Department of Energy. What the forecasters in the Department of Energy do is take the average of all the international forecast prices. I've stated this on a number of occasions in this House, Mr. Speaker. We then sit down individually with industry. We look at their production levels over the next three years and do the math. We then take a look in our Finance department at the increased revenues through both corporate and personal income tax.

We also have another situation, Mr. Speaker, which I won't go into details about now but I think might follow in the supplementary.

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

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third question is with regard to the projections out to 2014-15 of nearly a 150 per cent increase with regard to bitumen royalties to close to \$10 billion. Can the Minister of Energy explain some of the rationale that's gone into those projections, please?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I can. There are three factors that go into bitumen royalties – price, volume, and the royalty regime – and they're all going up. The price of bitumen is predicted to rise. Again, as the Finance minister indicated, our projections are consistent with private-sector ones. The second one is the quantity. Production out of the oil sands is predicted to grow 14 per cent this year, 8 per cent next year, and almost 9 per cent the year after. Most importantly, the royalty itself, the postpayout, is two and a half to three times more. It's a bigger slice of a bigger pie.

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

### Long-term Care for Seniors (continued)

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Families desperately searching for the appropriate level of care for their aging loved ones no longer able to live independently face a mind-boggling series of loosely legislated government care options from supportive living to long-term care. A report coauthored by epidemiologists from the U of A and U of C points out that the health risk is double for residents in supportive living facilities than in long-term care. To the Minister of Seniors: do you consider this risk acceptable?

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Mr. Speaker, the one thing that I want you to know and all Albertans to know is that the safety and the care of our seniors is very, very important to me. I've stressed over and over in this House that if someone is unsure, a family member or an MLA advocating on behalf of a senior in a situation where it's unsafe or at risk, I want it reported, and I want it reported now. It's 1.888.357.9339: write that down. Report it, please. You have an obligation.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's policy: load 'em and lock 'em.

Given that over half the residents in supportive living facilities were medically unstable and nearly 60 per cent have been diagnosed with dementia, how is your ministry guaranteeing that the residents and their caregivers are safe?

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Mr. Speaker, it's very, very clear that in our ministry we set the accommodation standards. We do the inspections. Seven hundred and twenty-eight facilities were inspected last year. Very high compliance.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Again to the minister: do you consider it either ethical or economical that residents in supportive living pay higher fees, face additional costs for health-related supplies and services, and that family caregivers are forced to close the gap in inadequate service provision?

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Mr. Speaker, once again I want to say that through our programs in seniors care and housing we have lots of options, and I stand by those options whether they be delivered through foundations, whether they be delivered through private care, or whether they be delivered through government care. All of those options and many more, including home care, are very, very important to our seniors.

Thank you, sir.

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

### Skilled Labour Supply

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Alberta businesses, some of them very close to home in places like Leduc and Nisku in my constituency, find themselves victims of Alberta's success. They can't find skilled workers. To the Minister of Human Services: what is the government doing to help Alberta companies find workers to keep crucial Alberta projects on schedule?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are several fronts on which we operate. Obviously, Alberta's unemployment rate is among the lowest in the country, in fact tied for the lowest at 5 per cent. Our participation rate is among the highest in the country at 73.7 per cent. But we still want to target those Albertans who can be better employed, so we have processes in place to encourage the untapped labour pool in terms of aboriginal people, seniors, older workers, youth, who have higher unemployment rates than the average. The youth unemployment rate is at 8 per cent, for example. So first we look to Albertans, then we look to Canadians, and then we look internationally.

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Human Services: given that businesses are the ones on the front line of this labour shortage, they know best what they need, so why does it seem that our government strategies are working in isolation? Do we know best?

**Mr. Hancock:** I would agree with the hon. member that the front line, the people who are hiring people in this province, do know best, but I would disagree with him that we're operating in isolation. We've been meeting with business, with industry, with labour, talking about how we can work on recruiting the types of people we need and how we can work with the federal government to encourage them, for example, to increase the cap on the provincial nominee program and with other changes in the immigration program so that we can get those people we need from the international market.

2:20

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's prosperity depends on having enough skilled labour to keep our economy moving, my final question is to the same minister. Businesses are calling for more immigration to Alberta to address their labour market needs. What are we doing to convince the federal government that this is a high priority?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first I should say that our immigration unit works very closely with the federal government's immigration unit to make sure that we're working towards the same end. We work very closely together, but we have been working to try and convince the federal government that we should look at the provincial nominee program numbers and we need to look at streamlining some of the other efforts.

I can say that the Minister of Intergovernmental, International and Aboriginal Relations met recently with the federal minister and had a very good meeting with him. In fact, just recently we've heard some announcements from the federal government in that

area. Our Deputy Premier is in Ottawa today meeting with the federal Alberta caucus . . .

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

### **Alleged Intimidation of Physicians**

*(continued)*

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, this morning Dr. Peter Rodd, a psychiatrist and former flight surgeon for the Canadian Forces, shared that because he had objected to certain dangerous mentally ill patients being released into the community before they were ready, he was threatened with the loss of his job and blackmailed by AHS officials. Dr. Rodd has been as specific about the details as he can without risking a lawsuit and joins the Alberta Medical Association in demanding the protection and immunity afforded by a full public inquiry. To the minister: why will you not call a public inquiry into the rampant bullying and intimidation in our health care system?

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the Premier explained again earlier in question period today, an inquiry has been called into queue-jumping, and to the extent that physician intimidation was a factor in that, it will be considered by the inquiry.

With respect to the physician who spoke to the media earlier today, I have no direct information about the facts of his particular case. What I would say, Mr. Speaker, is that under the Health Quality Council review there was an opportunity under section 9 of the Alberta Evidence Act for that physician and any others to tell their stories.

**Mr. Anderson:** He was scared to death about coming to the Health Quality Council. That's why he didn't come.

Given that Dr. Rodd has noted that Alberta Health Services, after learning of his intent to run for the Wildrose Party, is delaying sending him his paperwork necessary to continue practising medicine in Alberta and given that he has been informed that the needed paperwork is finished and was ready to be released to him last week but is now delayed and given that the doctor has received several job offers from out of province but would much rather remain here in Alberta to treat patients in Alberta, Minister, will you please undertake to ask Alberta Health Services to release the paperwork he is waiting on so that this doctor can treat Alberta patients?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, there are processes within Alberta Health Services for any physician to follow who has a concern. With respect to the organization of medical staff, those procedures may be found in the medical staff bylaws. They include dispute resolution processes that I would expect could address this particular situation.

**Mr. Anderson:** Is it any wonder why doctors feel so intimidated in this province, Mr. Speaker?

Given that the Health Quality Council report, dozens of media reports, and now the story of Dr. Rodd clearly show that a culture of fear and intimidation is literally rampant in our health care system, will the minister do the right thing and call a full public inquiry on it so that we can not only hold accountable those involved in the bullying and intimidation but, even more importantly, provide Albertans with the health care they need instead of allowing them to suffer unnecessarily while you worry more about your political well-being rather than the well-being of Albertans?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, speaking of politics, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that this government has absolutely no interest in the candidacy or lack thereof of anyone running for any of the other caucuses. We leave that to them and to their internal processes, whatever they may happen to be.

With respect to the physician in question, as I mentioned earlier, there was an opportunity under the Health Quality Council of Alberta review. In addition to the protection of the Alberta Evidence Act, every physician who took part was offered, in writing, a presigned waiver from Alberta Health Services releasing that physician from any third-party contract that they may have had.

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

### **Water Allocation**

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. If one is trying to figure out what water licences are being approved, the water allocation system in Alberta is definitely not transparent. The minister can both approve or stop a transfer of an allocation of Crown water without public review or consultation. The Alberta WaterPortal website does not show licences held in Alberta except in the South Saskatchewan basin, where there are no new licences, and in many cases the director of water management can approve water licences without any public review or consultation. To the minister . . .

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question, but unfortunately the preamble was so long that I didn't get to hear the question.

**Ms Blakeman:** I'll try again just so that the minister is good and sure she can hear it. Can the minister confirm that over 239 permanent water allocations have been approved over the last month?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure of the exact numbers that have been approved over the last month, but our government and our Department of Environment and Water ensure that when any allocations are given, it goes through a process, and they are very good at going through that process.

**Ms Blakeman:** They seem to be very good at it, going through it very fast.

To the same minister: why is the government making it easier to organize transfers of water licences in the South Saskatchewan basin, with all the details available on the WaterPortal, rather than concentrating on the conservation of water in that drought-stricken area?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to finish off with the last question, our department is very efficient, and that's why they get a lot of work done.

With regard to this one here, certainly, we work with the closed basin in the South Saskatchewan basin. We increase conservation and actually encourage conservation. When we look to the irrigation districts, just for an example, who are large users in the south basin, they have looked at conservation and have really had

a large amount of conservation in that area. We always look first for conservation, for sharing of water. We continue to do that throughout the province but particularly in the south.

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

### Environmental Monitoring

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Alberta recently announced a joint oil sands monitoring program with the federal government and today announced the creation of an interim working group to report back to government on how to ensure that the system has independent, credible oversight. My question is to the Minister of Environment and Water. Is this interim report just an extension of the Alberta Environmental Monitoring Panel since that panel already called for independent oversight?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure proud today. I earlier introduced a couple of guests that are working on this working group with us. Dr. Tennant and Dr. Wallace have joined us here, and certainly we're very proud. With their help we're now moving into the next phase of our work to bolster environmental monitoring in the province and develop independent, science-credible oversight. We must ensure that it is independent oversight, that it is effective and efficient, and that the policy and compliance remain with government.

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

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. How many more panels and committees need to be established before we see real results?

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, hon. member. We have seen results. The joint monitoring plan was announced in February with the federal Minister of Environment and myself. We moved to do that quickly, as I said before, to make sure that we do not lose the spring monitoring season. We've made sure that we've added additional dollars within my budget of Environment and Water, and industry as well has committed to dollars for this. The stakeholder group that we have appointed will report back to me by June 30.

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

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental is to the same minister. Why doesn't the government just set up an independent commission?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are looking at significantly changing the way that we do business. As the chair of the working group said in this morning's news conference, this is a very complex and challenging task, akin to stapling Jell-O to the wall. We want to build the best system, which is why we are taking a careful, deliberate look at all the options. We must ensure that we build effective, transparent, science-credible, independent oversight.

The Premier visited in Washington earlier last week, and certainly they look to us . . .

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

### Family Care Clinics

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Primary care networks increase patient access and satisfaction with family physicians. They decrease the strain on the province's over-crowded emergency system. Yet rather than support consistently this area of primary care, this government has decided to reinvent the wheel. To the minister: what is the difference between a family care clinic and a primary care network that's worth \$15 million and will serve 30,000 people as opposed to the almost 3 million people served by . . .

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

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is interested in providing a range of primary health care delivery models that meet the unique needs of individual communities across Alberta. To that end, as the hon. member points out, Alberta's primary care networks have done tremendous work over the last eight years. Through agreement with the Alberta Medical Association and Alberta Health Services this government as recently as a couple of weeks ago has indicated its willingness to provide additional financial support. Family care clinics are yet another model that will be of assistance in serving unique needs in communities, and we're happy to . . .

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

2:30

**Dr. Swann:** Well, let me try the question again since he continues to evade it. What is a family care clinic, and how does it differ from a primary care network?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a family care clinic is another option for providing primary health care services. It includes, as do primary care networks, the opportunity to deliver care through multidisciplinary teams. It includes the ability to train health professionals through preceptorships offered in the family care clinics. It has the potential to include direct access to a variety of health care professionals, including nonphysician professionals like nurse practitioners, and it has the potential to serve targeted needs, particularly in areas of the province that have a lower socioeconomic status.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: why have physicians and physician representatives been shut out of the discussions around the development of family care clinics?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. Physicians have been consulted and are being consulted in the development of these family care clinic pilot projects. The Alberta Medical Association as an organization is a member of an advisory committee that is assisting with advice on implementing and evaluating these projects across the province. So physicians clearly are involved in this, and we continue to build on their involvement in the future in both improvements for family care clinics and our primary care networks.

### Evanston Community Transportation Access

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, residents of the community of Evanston in northwest Calgary are concerned about the fact that there's only one road in or out of the community, and as a result access is a

major concern for them. In the case of an accident or bad weather residents are facing long lines and congestion, and they're having delays getting in and out of the community, which may cause safety concerns. My questions are all for the Minister of Transportation. Why does this fast-growing community in northwest Calgary only have one route of access?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The safety of residents is a priority for my ministry. The city of Calgary allows a certain amount of growth, of development before an additional access is necessary. We continue to work with the city of Calgary in regard to the growth of the communities around the Stoney Trail. More importantly, we very much stay in contact with the city at all times.

**Dr. Brown:** Well, will the minister advise what his department can do specifically to address the transportation access issue in Evanston to make sure that there are no safety concerns there?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The province will look at any proposal that involves, of course, the participation of input from the city and input from the developer. As the community grows, there is an interchange on 14th Street. Like all new communities, both the city and the developer are key in planning.

**Dr. Brown:** Can the minister advise when we can expect the interchange at the corner of Stoney Trail and 14th Street to be completed so that the residents of Evanston can have better access?

**Mr. Danyluk:** As stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, the city determines when the second interchange is required, but to the hon. member I do want to stress that the interchange is in the plans for both the ring road and the community. You know, that particular interchange is in the plans, and when the development is large enough, then it will be built. We will always continue to ensure that our roads that include access to communities are safe.

### Provincial Tax Policy

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta is probably the wealthiest place on Earth, but here we have a structural deficit that is covered off by the unsustainable use of our fossil fuel revenues just to pay today's bills. Since 1987 this government has spent all of the over \$225 billion it has brought in from this one-time revenue source. To the Minister of Finance: do you believe it's fair to future generations and to the future prosperity of this province to spend all of this revenue as it comes in?

**The Speaker:** Personal opinion.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member needs to be corrected. I don't have the numbers in front of me; 1987, I think, was the year that he used. I can say that in the last six years the government of Alberta has invested some \$20 billion to \$30 billion in infrastructure. That's infrastructure that wouldn't be there today. I'd ask this hon. member whether or not he's suggesting we shouldn't have spent that money, whether he wants to go tell his constituents in Calgary-Buffalo that there should be no ring road around Calgary, whether there should be no south

Calgary hospital, whether there should not be schools in new neighbourhoods. I ask him if he wants to take that into the street.

**Mr. Hehr:** I'm not suggesting that at all, Mr. Speaker, but what I'm going to say is that given that we have a flat tax which sees a millionaire executive pay the same rate of taxation as his secretary and that we are the only jurisdiction in Canada that follows this practice, can the minister not see that this policy has contributed to our inability to save for the future and leads this government to spending all of this resource revenue as it comes in?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, as we approach the provincial election soon here, it's becoming very clear where various political parties stand. We have this particular political party, which is advocating increased taxes. We have a group over there that masquerades as a political party that is saying that we should cut 2 and a half billion dollars out of our infrastructure. This political party is standing on its record, one that sees the strongest growth in Canada, the best place to live, work, and raise children.

**Mr. Hehr:** Given that Albertans want predictable and sustainable funding and a savings plan for the future, would it not be a conservative principle to adopt a tax policy that asks citizens to pay for what they use rather than prejudicing our future generations and future savings plan by selling off one barrel at a time to pay today's bills?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, the economic philosophies of this government are pretty clear. We don't tax any more than we have to. We watch our spending and ensure that we get good value for our dollars, and I've just mentioned a whole bunch of areas where we have invested in infrastructure. I think that within a very short period of time we'll ask Albertans to pass judgment on whether they want a government – well, they won't be government – whether they want a few MLAs who want to tax more, whether they want a few MLAs who want to cut all infrastructure spending, or whether they want a government that wants to deliver what Albertans are asking to have delivered.

### A. Blair McPherson School

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, parents with young children who live in Tamarack and the Meadows in my area, including some of the surrounding areas, absolutely love their new school, A. Blair McPherson, and all of their teachers. In fact, this school has become so popular that it is bursting at the seams, and come September, they will be desperate for new space. They will probably have to allocate nonclassroom teaching space in order to accommodate all the students. This is not a good situation, so I have some questions for the Minister of Education. Since I already brought this matter to your attention earlier, what can I tell my constituents today about their desperate need for at least two modular classrooms?

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a success story that we should be happy with that a school is built, and obviously the parents and children are satisfied with the school that they have. That school, actually, is drawing students from quite a large area. I also appreciate that parents are concerned about overcapacity. What the hon. member can tell the parents is that not only have I discussed this issue with the member at length, but I have also had the pleasure of meeting with the school board, with the

superintendent, with the trustees, and the chair and discussed that very same situation in great detail with them.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Speaker, A. Blair McPherson school is so new that they don't even have a playground at this school yet, nor do they have a community league with whom they can partner. What would you suggest they do to acquire a much-needed playground space for their particular school and the 800 young students who need one?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, I wanted to go further with my first answer. The hon. member can also tell the parents of the children at McPherson that I looked at the capital plan, and I already communicated to the trustees and the chair that they will be receiving two additional portables to accommodate more students in that particular school and decant some of that frustration that is happening.

Relative to playgrounds, Mr. Speaker, in our 10-point plan, as you know, we are looking at a model of constructing new schools so that children will not only be receiving a K to grade 9 or a K to 6 school but also a playground that comes along with it.

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** I'm done. That's it.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, that concludes the question-and-answer period for today: 18 members, 106 responses and questions.

We'll continue with the Routine in just a few seconds from now.

2:40

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

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

#### Donations to Leadership Campaigns

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. Five of the six PC leadership candidates released their list of contributions last Friday. This list, this long list, is a list of very generous donors. Power companies top the list. The Southern family and companies they control donated at least \$128,000; TransAlta, \$50,000. They certainly can afford to be generous when the price of electricity is as high as it is. Cathy Roozen, who has become interim chair of the Alberta Health Services Board, donated \$5,000 to the Premier's leadership campaign. Another family donated \$100,000: \$40,000 in donations to the Premier, \$30,000 to Mr. Mar, and \$30,000 to the current Minister of Energy. Another donation to these three candidates also totalled \$100,000 when you add it all up.

You have land developers. You have landlords. You have liquor store owners. You have casino operators, energy companies, law firms. They're all part of this list, and fortunately it is part of the public record. I would encourage citizens to please go online and check this list for themselves.

Do we need new laws for leadership campaigns? That is a good question. Is the generous donation cap of \$30,000 too high? Should democracy be sold to the highest bidder?

In conclusion, I think we need to pay heed to the remarks from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who is absolutely right in suggesting and indicating that democracy is not for sale at any price.

Thank you.

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

### Culture Forum 2012

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 24 and 25 almost 400 community leaders from across Alberta gathered in Red Deer for Culture Forum 2012. Represented were all facets of the broad cultural spectrum of this province, including the arts, heritage, recreation, creative industries, and the multicultural and nonprofit sectors. These community leaders came together in the first-ever crossdisciplinary discussion on Alberta culture to share ideas and experiences and to work together to formulate a strategy that will sustain and grow our cultural community.

Among those taking part were youth delegates from across the province, young people bringing their own unique perspective and their own unique vision of a vibrant cultural future. Also heard was the input from the corporate sector, which has sought and continues to seek new opportunities in support of Alberta culture.

Mr. Speaker, in survey after survey the message from Albertans is clear. Culture matters. It matters to those who deliver community-based recreational and social programs and services, and it matters to the children, families, and the most vulnerable Albertans who benefit from those efforts. It matters to the artists, performers, and technicians, and it also matters to those who applaud the efforts and are inspired by their works. It certainly matters to those who work tirelessly to conserve our heritage sites.

Mr. Speaker, culture connects our people, our communities, and our province, and that is why we are seeking ideas and input from all Albertans through the Culture Forum 2012 online survey. Albertans are encouraged to participate in the survey until March 28 by visiting the Culture and Community Services website at [www.culture.alberta.ca](http://www.culture.alberta.ca).

Mr. Speaker, I also encourage all Members of this Legislative Assembly to take part and to encourage their constituents to let their voices be heard on the future of culture in Alberta. Thank you to the Premier and our minister for having the foresight and for their efforts to make this happen.

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

#### Retrospective on the Past Year

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is it, my last member's statement. Guess I'd better make it count. Guess I should try to say something profound, but I've got nothing because nothing profound has happened in this place in over a year.

We sat for 47 days last year. Even on a four-day week, that's still less than 12 weeks out of 52. The old leader announced he was leaving, and then it took the natural governing party nine months to choose a new leader. In between hardly anything of note was accomplished in or anywhere near this place. Since then what's been delivered by this government has consistently fallen well short of what the Premier promised: a fixed election range instead of a fixed election date; an independent, judge-led inquiry into this narrow little question of whether queue-jumping is happening in the health system today instead of the wide-ranging inquiry that the Premier led us to believe she would call.

As example after example of this government's arrogance and intimidation of and indifference to the people it serves have come to light over the past several weeks, all we've seen is crisis management where we should be seeing a commitment to real change and action. That's what the Premier led us to believe she would deliver if she was chosen to lead her party and this government, real change: really going through that tired, old, calcified government, cleaning house and bringing in a new



culture and a new way of behaving and a commitment to be bold and innovative.

Mr. Speaker, nothing has changed, and it can't as long as this government is in power because like the Tin Man in Oz after 40 years the thing has rusted solid, only Dorothy can't get it to move again no matter how much she uses the oil can. Who knows? Maybe she doesn't even want to.

At the end of *The Hunt for Red October*, one of my favourite movies, Captain Ramius turns to our hero, Jack Ryan, and says: a little revolution from time to time is a good thing, don't you think, Ryan? We have an election coming soon and with it the opportunity for a little revolution of our own.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling five copies of Bill 210, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2000, which I spoke of in my member's statement today.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for St. Albert, you have a tabling?

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of a document entitled An Argument for the Elimination of Adverse Possession in Alberta Made before the Committee on Private Bills and Motions. This is a document dated November 28, 2011, authored by myself. It lists all the citations that I used in the debates both on Motion 507 in the last session and any citations on Bill 204 in this session.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of tablings. My first is a further 20 Castle e-mails out of the hundreds I've received from the following out-of-province and out-of-country individuals who say that they are considering not visiting Alberta unless the logging of the Castle wilderness is stopped: Nancy Searing, Jane Culmer, Holly Marchuk, Jeanne Buzek, Christopher Deane, Karen Clark, Denise Day, Bernadette Keenan, Douglas MacLachlan, Mervi Rantala, Fritz Lehmborg, Nancy Goldsberry, Dallas Emard, Marina Sommer, Danielle Hallam, Heidi Stewart, Terry Newcombe, Nicole Boon, George Milligan, and Marilyn Hunter.

My second set of tablings, that the hon. Minister of Education appears so anxious to hear, comes as e-mails and letters from the following 20 individuals who are concerned about the proposed logging in the west Bragg Creek area, and they are requesting a complete, facilitated, and accessible public consultation: Sharon Henderson, Mike Stuart, John Drew, Breanne Moyer, Troy Delfs, Courtney Adams, Laurie Weidenhamer, Doone Watson, Gaynor Hoyne, Mike Wattam, Terry Markey, Samantha and Len Fleckney, Kris Marsh, Carl Johns, Katherine Brushaber, Claire Markey, Delsey Harvey, Steven Knudsen, and Martin Blades.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Strathcona, do you have a tabling?

**Ms Notley:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a petition signed by 546 people calling for a renal dialysis satellite unit at the Athabasca health care centre. They say that there are 17 to 20 patients who are forced to travel to Edmonton for dialysis three times a week, that family members must miss work, and patients' health is jeopardized by the travel. The signatures were collected by Dia

Hurren, Patricia Hurren-Hannah, Heath Hurren, Ben VanderBurg, Carla Weich, and Arlene Brost, all of whom visited the Assembly last week to drop off the petition.

2:50

### Orders of the Day

#### Committee of Supply

[Mr. Zwodzesky in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I'd like to now call to order the Committee of Supply.

### Main Estimates 2012-13

#### Human Services

**The Deputy Chair:** I would now invite the hon. Minister of Human Services to proceed with his opening remarks. We'll explain the procedure thereafter.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a privilege to be here this afternoon to discuss the 2012-13 budget estimates for the Ministry of Human Services.

Joining me today on the floor of the House is Deputy Minister Steve MacDonald. I just want to take a moment to say thank you to Steve because the Ministry of Human Services is a rather large ministry, and he has a rather large job and is doing it supremely well. We're joined here today by assistant deputy ministers Gord Johnston, Karen Ferguson, Susan Taylor, Alex Stewart, and Lana Lougheed. Of course, they are only several of the assistant deputy ministers who assist Steve in his duties.

We are joined by a number of other ministry staff – I won't name them all – who are with us in the members' gallery. I want to thank each and every one of you for the opportunity I've had to work with you over the last five months and for the service that you provide to Albertans and for Albertans. I have to say that this is a very dedicated group of people, and they represent a very significantly dedicated group of people in our department.

I won't spend any time talking about numbers because we have the budget tables in front of us, but I do think it's important to talk a bit about the mission and the story of our new ministry since it's the first time we're appearing before the committee. Human Services, as it's appropriately named, is all about people. The programs that are delivered by our 5,200 staff – that's 23 per cent of the Alberta civil service – touch the lives of your constituents every day. We keep children safe, help people get off the street, assist families so their children get a solid start, help individuals to be safe at work, and provide opportunities for people to gain the skills they need to get better jobs.

Our goals are to ensure that the right supports are available at the right time to Albertans who need them so that they can live in human dignity and have the opportunity to maximize their potential.

Under separate ministries our programs did a good job of assisting people. However, Albertans signalled to our Premier that they wanted change in the way government works. They wanted to have government departments work more cohesively together; they wanted easier access to all the services they need, in one stop where possible; and they wanted us to use our resources, both financial and human, more effectively, with a singular focus of achieving positive outcomes for people.

Bringing Alberta's people supports together under the Ministry of Human Services is helping us accomplish the change that

Albertans want. In fact, Mr. Chairman, that is the motto for our department at the moment: Better Together.

Every day we're working to align our policies to better coordinate and improve programs that provide the safety, the jobs, and the opportunities to help people, families, individuals, and communities succeed. For example, our employment and services delivery staff are working side by side with child and family services caseworkers to support at-risk youth as they transition to adulthood. They're helping youth who may be facing a number of obstacles like unemployment, mental health issues, and disabilities, which require comprehensive supports.

Another example is easier access to financial support, now available to pregnant and parenting teens attending the Louise Dean and Braemar schools in Calgary and Edmonton respectively. In fact, Mr. Chairman, that's one of my favourite stories. We've been trying for a number of years now to get those supports aligned so that those young women at the schools can focus on their schooling and not worry about the financial issues and the child care issues and the other issues. It's taken a long time to put that together. When the Ministry of Human Services came together, we were able to complete that, to settle those contracts, and make sure that the funding is there for those children to continue their schooling. With income support and child care in one ministry, we're able to provide a new funding model that gives those teens the right supports at the right time and helps them achieve success in life.

Alberta is blessed with tremendous opportunity and a very bright future. At the same time we face complex social challenges and pressures that need to be addressed: a rapidly growing population and shifting demographics, family violence, poverty, homelessness, and a projected labour shortage. But Budget 2012 represents a strong investment in people that will help us protect vulnerable children, individuals, and families and support them in times of need; promote fair, safe, healthy, and inclusive workplaces and a skilled labour force; and continue working with partners to create opportunities that help Albertans succeed. Total ministry funding is \$2.6 billion, an increase of \$132 million from 2011.

We are the legal guardians of 8,700 children in provincial care. An additional investment of \$75 million in child intervention will help strengthen families' ability to care for their children in their homes or place children in a safe environment until their home situation improves. Our budget will support more permanent homes for children in care through adoption and private guardianship and provide additional assistance to Alberta's 2,400 foster families. This includes foster parents like our own Legislature's Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Gordon Munk and his wife, Cecilia, two of Alberta's amazing foster parents. Gordon and his wife have helped over 250 kids in their home over the past 35 years. They currently care for three children, one of whom just won a Great Kids award as one of 16 inspiring young leaders from across our province. That is the job that our foster parents do.

Funding for foster care support is increasing by \$11.4 million, allowing us to enhance supports for children in care who have family-based placements and helping us to continue support for foster parent mentoring and aboriginal caregiver training initiatives. We work closely with the Alberta Foster Parent Association to determine the best way to help foster families such as the Munks meet the needs of the children in care.

We also rely on contracted agencies to provide important services to vulnerable children and families. We are providing funding to support a 5 per cent wage increase and a \$1,500 lump-sum payment for their staff to help agencies recruit and retain

qualified employees in a tightening labour market. This follows the \$1,500 lump sum to agency staff that was provided last September. Budget 2012 also outlines a commitment to additional agency funding to 2014-15, and we will work closely with our partner agencies to maximize this investment in the coming years.

On the homeless front since 2009 more than 4,800 Albertans have been housed through Alberta's plan to end homelessness. This includes Gordon, who ended up on the street because of a drug and alcohol addiction. His wife left him and took their child. His life fell apart. Eventually, he entered a detox facility, and then through help from the Housing First program he was able to get a place to live along with the support that he needed to stabilize his life. Today he is a different person. He reunited with his family and is in the second year of a four-year psychology program at university. His dream is to help others by becoming a drug and alcohol counsellor. He is succeeding. He is giving and will continue to give back to his community. Increased investment of \$69 million in outreach support and services will help 1,800 more homeless Albertans like Gordon secure and maintain permanent housing.

**3:00**

One of the Premier's commitments during her leadership campaign was to provide the maximum child care subsidy to families making \$50,000 or less. Increased funding in Budget 2012 fulfills this promise with an increase of \$21 million for child care. We expect to provide more than 26,000 subsidies to low- and middle-income families this year, which will help more moms and dads who want to support their families by entering the workforce, which in turn strengthens our economy.

Funding for the family support for children with disabilities program is also increasing. An additional \$12.6 million will help us to assist even more families so that they can raise their child at home and participate in community life. As of September 11 our monthly caseload for the program was about 8,500 children and youth with disabilities.

In an ongoing effort to build and educate tomorrow's workforce, we have budgeted \$451 million for income supports, which will increase benefit rates by an average of 5 per cent. We expect to provide benefits to 34,000 Alberta households this year. This strengthens support for people who are looking for a job, training so they can get a job, or are temporarily unable to work, which is very important with Alberta's projected labour shortage of 114,000 workers by 2021.

In 2010-11 about 32,600 immigrants came to Alberta from around the world. With more than \$54 million in funding this year we will continue to support immigrants as they settle into their communities and join our workforce.

Funding for the workplace standards program is increased by \$4.4 million. This is a tremendously important area as our employment standards contact centre receives 130,000 calls annually. This investment will help us strengthen inspections and investigations so that workers are treated fairly in the workplace and go home safe and healthy at the end of their day.

We have a number of important priorities moving forward, including those in the Premier's mandate letter, working with Albertans to continue to develop a social policy framework, which will guide how social policy and programs are redesigned and aligned to better achieve outcomes for Albertans.

We also continue to build on significant steps to strengthen the child intervention system, including creating the Child and Family Services Council for Quality Assurance, independent experts who

will make recommendations about how services could be improved.

We'll also strengthen our important partnerships with the aboriginal communities to support them in addressing complex challenges, including overrepresentation of aboriginal children and youth in care, higher incidence of family violence, and unemployment. It's the primary focus of our newly created aboriginal policy and initiatives division.

We have extremely passionate, intelligent staff on the front lines, who help Albertans directly along with those who provide support behind the scenes. We recognize that to truly improve our services for Albertans, positive change must continue within our organization as well. A big part of this is a culture of collaboration. We have and will continue to give staff opportunities to share their ideas about what, why, and how we are doing things and ways that we can continue to work better together.

We are committed to achieving better outcomes for Albertans and ensuring our investment of their tax dollars is truly making a positive difference. Together, I am confident that we will be there when Albertans need us to help them persevere through difficult times, give them opportunities to reach their potential, and contribute to Alberta's success.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Members, for the next hour we have the Official Opposition that can go back and forth with the minister. I don't know what your preference is, but if you would indicate so, we will chair it accordingly.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would appreciate the opportunity to go back and forth and welcome the staff for Human Services. I look forward to a productive few hours talking about this important ministry. I'll go by section. Perhaps that would be the most constructive way to proceed.

Just by way of preamble I think it's very interesting and very creative that all these human services have been brought together. It's not unprecedented. It's clear that many of the issues that you relate to have a lot of commonality. In fact, there needs to be a very good interrelationship between all the ministries that have now come together. You've eliminated some silos. You've opened some opportunities for communication. I guess the danger is that when anything gets too big, some of the small fry get lost, some of the most vulnerable. Of course, in many of our lives children have to take the number one position there.

In that context, perhaps, I'll begin with some questions around children and children's services. I've had some individuals certainly contact me, individual cases the minister has heard from. I won't be springing any new ones on him, but some raise questions about policy and about whether we have the right balance in terms of protecting children and families and maintaining them as long as possible in their most optimal environment.

Effective April 1 the household income that qualifies families to receive the maximum child care subsidy will increase from \$35,000 to \$50,000. This will allow additional low- and middle-income families to receive new or increased funding to offset the cost of accessing child care, which is a positive development; that is, of course, if they are able to find the child care space.

My understanding is that only about one-fifth of our young parents that are working – that is, about 70 per cent of the mothers that have children of child care age – can get access to child care services. Given that Alberta is experiencing a baby boom and continues to grow at a rapid pace, can the minister explain why the

government opted to increase funding for child care by \$17 million but hasn't funded any new child care spaces for two fiscal years?

Another question relates to the subsidy boost and the question about whether this subsidy boost had anything to do with the coming election. The timing of it, obviously, raises questions.

Does the minister genuinely believe that we have enough child spaces in Alberta at this time? According to an August 27 report from CBC, again I repeat: about 70 per cent of working mothers have children from newborn to five years of age. About 20 per cent of those children have access to daycare space. I'd appreciate hearing some comments about that.

When the creating child care choices plan concluded at the end of fiscal 2010-11, the former minister of children and youth services said in a *Herald* story that Alberta now has upwards of 90,000 child care spaces. Can the minister provide an update on these figures for child care spaces? Several recent media reports have suggested that some had to close, and there may not be the same number at all since a year ago, when this report was concluded.

While I support the decision to increase wages for contracted agency staff, is the minister prepared to acknowledge that daycare centres are also really struggling to find and retain trained staff because of the hard work and the low wage?

A growing problem in Alberta's large urban centres is that new neighbourhoods aren't being built to have a child care centre included in them. What, if anything, is the minister and the department doing to address the urban planning issue here?

Can the minister comment on media reports that some Calgary parents are having to pay for daycare months, more than months, in advance just to hold a spot for their child when the child is ready to need it or is born? Some are actually booking daycare spots while they're in early pregnancy, I understand. Does the minister consider this acceptable? If not, why isn't more being done to address the growing wait-lists that exist at many of the city's child care facilities?

I guess the other area that for me has been pressing as a medical officer is the standards in child care settings and the regularity of inspections, the rigour of inspections. I'd be interested to hear some comment about the standards which we are now expecting and whether they've changed since I was in practice about 10 years ago. That would be a good place to start.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's so appropriate that we're starting with children as I continue to wear on my lapel, ever since I was sworn in as Minister of Education and now continue through Human Services, a pin which says Children First. I think it speaks to the fact that we can't lose sight of children regardless of the size of the department. We've got to focus on every child having the opportunity to meet and maximize their potential, and that's certainly what we're working towards doing.

The hon. member started on the daycare area, and I think there are a number of very positive things that I can respond to. First of all, he's saying that 1 in 5 parents are waiting for a child care space. The information that I would have is that there's an 80 per cent occupancy rate across the daycare system. Now, the problem may well be not in the question of whether we have sufficient spaces in the system but whether they're in the right places. That's always a challenge, obviously.

I know in my own constituency, for example, when we opened four new schools – if the Minister of Education is here, I'd just remind him that they're now full and that we need modulars – the first calls I got were from parents saying, "We have to leave our neighbourhood to get daycare spaces and out of school care spaces," and "How do we relay it back to the schools?" There's some work that we can do in assisting to co-locate and to make sure that there are daycare spaces in those neighbourhoods. But overall on a system-wide level there has been significant progress.

3:10

In fact, during three years of the creating child care choices plan approximately 29,000 new spaces were created as a result primarily of the investment that was made at the provincial level in encouraging those spaces to be opened. Nine thousand spaces closed, addressing the hon. member's question about closing spaces, so there was a net gain of 20,000 in that period. From April 1 to December 31, 2011, 4,602 spaces were opened, and 2,483 spaces closed, resulting in a net increase of 2,119 spaces. I can't guarantee this, but I would suspect that the closing of spaces is related to the changing demographics in areas, and that it's basically a shifting of spaces from one place to another.

I would suggest that while it's not all nirvana, there's obviously work to be done. In fact, we're seeing that being picked up in the community both by the not-for-profit and by the private sector, and that's evidenced by the fact that last year, as I said, from April 1 to December 31 so many spaces were opened without the benefit of the program that we had in place in previous years. So I think that that is actually happening. The take-up, as I say, of both the not-for-profit and the for-profit is in fact working.

With respect to urban planning issues I understand what the hon. member is saying. We had issues, for example, in Calgary where it was difficult to co-locate a child care facility on property that was zoned for schooling, for example. That's a continuing issue that needs to be addressed. That needs to be addressed both by the local communities, though, in terms of them talking to their local councillors about how they want to move forward, and we do need to address that as we plan for growth and, particularly, plan for new schools. As I said, in my neighbourhood it's very, very clearly an issue. You can put new schools in place, but if parents have to drive past them to drop their younger children off or if they need before and after school care, you haven't necessarily solved the problem.

The issue of Calgary parents and waiting lists and those sorts of things I think really are addressed by that question. Growth will happen to meet those needs, and it is happening in the system. We're in the process of completing an analysis of the implementation of an online wait-list registry for parents and child care service providers, and that will give us better data with respect to where the demand level is, which will assist providers in determining where they would like to locate and operate.

With respect to the question on accreditation I think we can be very proud of the fact that we have a very significant accreditation process in this province. Some people have decried that it's voluntary, but it's a voluntary process. About 96.5 per cent of daycares have reached that accreditation process. So I think there are very significant changes in the accreditation standards and a sincere effort on behalf of daycare providers to reach those accreditation standards. Of course, that sincere effort is complemented by the fact that we have wage top-up funding for those staff that reach accreditation standards. So \$74.4 million is subsidizing daycare wages for those staff who are getting the appropriate levels of accreditation. I think that deals with most of the questions.

There was one question about the rigour of inspection. We have revised our child care inspection list. We have implemented policies and procedures on documenting inspection results and have developed training plans. So I think it's safe to say that we are significantly dealing with the question of standards, are achieving those standards, and are inspecting to make sure that daycares are safe, caring places for our youngest citizens.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, it still puzzles many of us why we would make such an important inspection voluntary. I hope the minister will look at that issue and give Albertans assurances that at some point we're going to see mandatory inspection as a standard. It's always been a puzzle to me that we would leave it up to individual daycares whether they choose or not choose to have inspections and accreditation.

Moving to child intervention, the total budget for child intervention increased 11 per cent over the last fiscal year, adding 30 new child intervention supervisor positions. Your last press release stated that funding for the 30 new positions will come from the \$53 million increase to the child intervention services budget. Given that on June 30, 2011, the office of statistics indicated that the monthly average for children and youth receiving intervention services fell each year between 2008 and 2010, can you explain the rationale for increasing supervisory positions for a declining population? Given the stories that I've heard about the stresses on the front line, why would these not be the priority if indeed there are more complicated families – and I don't doubt that there are many more complicated families – to deal with? I guess I have serious questions about whether supervision is needed as much as front-line, intensive casework.

Is the boost to the child intervention budget an acknowledgement that we've been asking too much from front-line workers for too long and that the province hasn't been adequately supporting our staff in this work in a very difficult and challenging field? I'll have some more questions to do with your surveys over the last few years that reflect some stresses and strains in the system, particularly for children and youth.

Given that many of the 30 new child intervention positions are expected to be filled by promoting front-line child intervention workers, is the minister concerned that Alberta may be temporarily left with a core of front-line staff who are inexperienced and who don't have the necessary qualities to deal effectively on the front line?

[Dr. Brown in the chair]

Finally, a commonly held belief of parents who find themselves involved in the child welfare system is that child intervention workers are paid a bonus for every child apprehension they make. I don't believe that that's the case, but I needed to raise it for the record.

While I'm on the issue of child intervention, I'm sure the minister would be familiar with the name Phil Murphy, who's been at many of our doors asking for a serious commitment to a 16-year-old child who has mental illness, has drug addiction, has been involved in prostitution. He has given me permission to use her name on the floor – he is at the end of his rope – but she hasn't, so I can't use her name. I guess the question is: how well are we working between the ministries of the Solicitor General, Human Services, and Health? I have had both him and one other father approach me about what they felt were inefficient, ineffective actions in a potentially life-threatening situation, something I agreed to raise.

Clearly, there is a mental health component here. The physicians may have failed in some ways in taking action based on their powers under the Mental Health Act. It appears that the daughter is now in an unsafe home situation, and that's the question that, I guess, you folks have to assess. You have to make the call, and you have to take the hits if it isn't the right call. He cited the B.C. investigation of a father who killed three of his children, and he cited the lack of integration and the lack of supports that he was getting. I don't know that case, but he felt it was very relevant to his own.

Another apparent policy within your department is that child services – at least, he has this impression; I don't know – cannot communicate actively with estranged parents except in the case where they have been charged with something. That's a confusing issue to me. I know you have dealt with this in your office. He is not satisfied, so I feel compelled to at least get clear in my own mind what some of your policies are in relation to communicating about a child to the parents when the parents are estranged from the child.

Finally, one of the areas relating to these services is that this child has been in care and out of care, and I think many of us would like to know: what kind of evaluation are you doing on these institutional care settings to establish the degree to which they are assessing appropriately, deciding appropriately when and how to discharge, and what kind of support services will be wrapped around that minor – and I'm talking about minors now – when they are discharged from an institution? I'd be interested to hear any of your comments.

3:20

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Chairman, two things need to be said. First of all, it absolutely boggles the mind that the hon. member – and I know he's a gentleman, and I know he's trying to dispense with a rumour. But bonuses for apprehension? Give your head a shake. That could not possibly be right in any reasonable person's world, and it's not right in our world.

Secondly, I would caution the hon. member. He's referred to a specific individual and a specific family on the floor of the House, but I don't believe he has the permission of the daughter involved to identify her in that way, and it's not appropriate. I know it's sometimes constraining for the discussion of policy, but we do have to keep it at a policy level. I appreciate that sometimes it's useful to have specific examples, but we have to be cautious because people have rights.

In fact, this department and this government cannot just simply go out and apprehend somebody because a parent or some other person believes they ought to be, believes that they're a danger, because there's been a family breakdown, if there has been a family breakdown, in a certain circumstance. That's not sufficient to interfere with the civil liberties of an individual. I know previous members from that side of the House that I've had the opportunity to work with over the years stood very strongly on the concept of civil liberties and the individual rights that people have and that we should not be interfering with individual rights. I cannot just decide that I want to do something, and neither can people on the front lines of the child welfare system.

We can apprehend when we believe that someone is being harmed. We can apprehend when we believe that someone needs protection. Under the Mental Health Act, which comes under Health, an individual, a child or otherwise, can be apprehended under what I think is called a form 10 if that person is likely to be a danger to themselves or to others. The apprehension, of course, requires certification by two appropriate medical professionals as to whether that apprehension can stand, whether a person can against their will be taken into custody for treatment.

Another way in which you can take a child into custody for treatment is under the PCHAD Act, but that, again, requires a court approval and an appropriate process. People's rights, whether they're children or adults, are important, and we can't just interfere in those rights because we have intensive and caring and, yes, loving desires by a parent to do what they believe is right for that individual. There is balance that has to be undertaken.

I can assure the hon. member that the people who work in children's services, the people, certainly, that I have had the privilege of working with over the last five months in this area, take their responsibility very seriously to protect children, to work with families where they can and to repatriate children to their families, to help support families so that they can support children. If that's not possible, they work to find another safe place for a child, where they can live and grow and maximize their potential. You can't always be working in a command way. You have to build relationships. You have to work with children at all ages but particularly when they're essentially coming up to be young adults.

I think it's very important to understand that many of the cases that the hon. member deals with or hears about are not foreign to us. They are cases where there has been intensive intervention, intensive collaboration and co-operation working with them.

Again, I would end where I started, to say that if there are further this afternoon, I would trust that the hon. member would not give out personal information which serves to identify a child who undoubtedly has not given the permission and to label them in the various ways that you did with respect to activities that that child may or may not have undertaken. That's just inappropriate.

Now, the hon. member started with a comment about voluntary inspections. Inspections are not voluntary. Inspections happen when scheduled to happen. Accreditation is a process that's working very well in this province. We have a very high standard, and we're incenting that standard. We're very happy with the level. In fact, I don't think that if you mandated it, you'd get a higher level of accreditation. You know, there's always the argument of whether you legislate things or whether you achieve it in a different way. What's happening right now in Alberta with respect to accreditation and standards is at a pretty high level, and I think that most provinces would be proud to be where we are.

The hon. member referred to 30 new supervisor positions. The hon. member may recall that there was an expert panel that was convened to investigate a very serious situation in Calgary, and that panel reported just about a year ago. One of the recommendations of that panel was that front-line workers need more support, so what we have moved ahead with to do, because of the complexities and the demands of the front-line child intervention work, is to work in teams, with supervisors who act as mentors, as advisors, as supporters with a team of front-line workers. This is very much a team-based approach. Although we're calling these 30 supervisors, those will be our most experienced people, who can then assist the front-line workers by working with them in a team-based approach so that you're not out there by yourself with very complex cases, so you know you are surrounded by a team of good people who can help.

In that vein I would have to say that the AVIRT team, that's been set up in Calgary and now in Edmonton, brings not just the front-line social workers and child care workers together; it brings the police and other support people so that they can truly build a team around each child in need.

The hiring of the 30 supervisors is a very important step forward to help build the strength of our front-line teams. They will be supported. I can assure the hon. member that if any of those people – and I'm sure some of them will be – are directly

from front-line staff, we will be hiring the people necessary to fill in those positions. We're going to make sure that we have supervisors and teams that have the qualities and the ability and the experience necessary to provide that strength to the front line that is necessary as our caseloads continue to grow. And they are continuing to grow. The hon. member referred to a decreasing caseload, but the caseloads are growing, albeit I think only by about 4 per cent last year in our intervention services. They also, of course, are very complex, so it's necessary to have that kind of front-line support.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was simply referring to the data from the office of statistics that suggested that 2008 had 13,000, that 2009-10 had 12,400, and that 2011 had 12,300 cases for intervention.

With respect to staff survey and staff morale a number of surveys have been held over the last four years. I congratulate the department of children and youth services for assessing them over the years and making those reports public. There are some serious signs of morale problems within at least the children and youth ministry in the past, and I think they have to be seen as connected to the quality of care and the effectiveness of our budgets. If morale among the staff is not what it should be, you're neither going to attract nor retain staff.

I'm referring to perhaps three highlights that I pulled out of the survey from 2010, where only 49 per cent agreed with the statement, "Innovation is valued in your work"; 44 per cent agreed that their organization provides the support they need to adapt to changes in their job and work environment; and 46 per cent agreed that ministries and departments are working together to achieve the goals and priorities of the government of Alberta.

That may be part of what stimulated the changes that we've seen, but I wonder if and when you're going to do another assessment and whether, in fact, a survey was done – it hasn't been reported, that I know of – in 2011. If and when you do the next survey, will you be repeating the same questions so that they can be compared? I think that would be a very valuable contribution.

3:30

Another concern that I've heard expressed is the standards for employees for child care and social workers. It sounds like it's variable and that in some cases you don't have qualified social workers to do some of the work. How do you decide, and what consistent standard do you have to hire people? What is your turnover rate? Can you give any indication of just how much of a turnover you have in the child and youth care sector? What do you see as having changed since becoming Human Services to help the retention of workers, to give them greater job satisfaction, a career ladder, continuing education, all of the things that tend to provide greater job satisfaction and retention?

With respect to the outcome-based services and intervention services – I forgot to ask this one in the last section – government appears to be moving to a new delivery model with outcome-based services. It seems valid and valuable. Many are private agencies that are being contracted to do more and more of the facework with clients, but the expenditure is hard to find in the budget. Can you give any indication of the proportion of those front-line, face-to-face workers that are now contracted out as opposed to managed within?

Many of the agencies lack the capacity to do the work that government employees do, and I guess the question is whether we are not developing the capacity in-house. What's the reason for that? How consistent can these services be if they're contracted out?

I'll leave those questions, then.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the question around staff morale is a very interesting one to explore. What we are trying to accomplish by bringing together the Ministry of Human Services is to create a ministry where the work can be done, as we say, better together. There's a much higher degree of opportunity for people to be able to work with someone else very easily to achieve the outcomes that are necessary for the particular Albertan or Albertans that they're working for.

Whether it's in child services or whether it's in family support services or whether it's in income supports or those areas, it's the ability to come together like we've done with respect to the Terra foundation and Braemar school and to say: instead of a young mother having to come over here for income supports and go over there for child care support and go someplace else for transportation dollars and find it too difficult and not bother to continue with their schooling, we bring that together and find a way to do that so that we focus on making sure that each one of those children – I'll call them children – has the opportunity to be successful at school, which is the most important outcome piece for us, so that they can raise their children and have their children be successful. That's what's really happening.

When that happens, when you see those success stories, when you can take home with you on a daily basis that you've done something that's really assisting someone, that is empowering. That is really going to improve morale, I believe. We'll know this fall, I think, when there'll be another survey, and we'll know whether morale has improved. I can tell you from what I've seen already the excitement that we have in this department from people who feel empowered to use their judgment and skills and ability, not just follow rules, to achieve outcomes.

You talk about outcome-based service delivery, to be able to say to someone: "Let's look at what we're trying to achieve. Let's use our judgment and skills to achieve that. If there's a dumb rule in the way, let us know why you didn't follow the rule so that we can monitor that to determine whether or not that helped you achieve the outcome." Then we can either say, "Well, no; this rule or guideline has a reason," or we can say, "Let's change that, because others should know that that's not an effective process."

We know that people are complex beings, and you cannot write a set of checklists and rules and standards that work in every circumstance. So we say to people on the front line: we trust your judgment. We are hiring some of the best people. We have standards; we're not hiring just anybody. There certainly are standards and qualifications that people have to have before they're recruited to the position. As I said, we're supporting them now with additional supervisors who have a higher level of experience and service and capacity and who can be role models and mentors for them. We're freeing people up not just in the children's services area but in the income supports area and all across the department to use their judgment and skill and ability to achieve outcomes.

When we're talking about the question of outcome-based services, please don't equate outcome-based services in the same breath as hiring private services. Certainly, there are private services in some circumstances that are being employed, primarily by child and family services authorities, in the context of what we're talking here about. I think about 58 per cent of the front-line staff are actually ministry employees; 53 per cent are staff in the CFSAs. I'm not sure offhand how many of the people that would be doing that from the CFSAs would be contracted to other agencies, but even those other agencies are not always necessarily private, for-profit agencies. Some of them are contracted services, not-for-profit agencies.

Regardless, that has nothing to do with the outcome-based service delivery piece. That's not about privatization or about outsourcing. That's about focusing on every single challenge we have and saying: what is the outcome we're trying to achieve for Albertans? Fundamentally, that's what the social policy framework discussion is about: coming to a policy framework which outlines what kind of a society we want to have; what it takes for humans to live in dignity; what are the things that as a society we want to support; and what are the roles of individuals, of family, of community, and, yes, of municipal, provincial, and federal governments in achieving those things. Then how do we review our programs to say: are they designed to help achieve those outcomes?

I personally believe that we are doing well now, and I think that we will see that staff morale is going to be very high. I've been out to a number of locations with staff. In fact, I was flipping pancakes last Thursday morning as part of Social Work Week, saying thank you to some of our front-line staff, and I got into some exciting conversations with individuals there about what they're doing and how they feel about what they're doing and how they feel about a minister who says that there are two parameters, the Bible on one side and the Criminal Code on the other. It has to be legal, and it has to be ethical and moral.

Within that, we expect you to use judgment. Rules are for when brains run out. We want to achieve outcomes, and that's an important piece to say to people, that innovation is important. Doing things that make sense in the context of the people that you're working with is important, but it's also important to make sure that we know what's being done so that we can assess the results and determine if people are using their own judgment and are not achieving outcomes. Then we have to work with them in terms of improving skills and abilities. If they are using their own judgment and they are achieving outcomes, we have to look and say: do some of our program guidelines need to be changed?

[Mr. Zwozdesky in the chair]

We should be getting away from a context where somebody is not able to get the help they need because for some reason they don't fit a specific guideline. That, I think, frees up staff to achieve much better results, to feel empowered, and to not just follow dumb rules. Outcome-based service delivery is being modelled across the province in a number of areas, and the first phase in the process of that seems to be working very well. We're certainly looking forward to empowering staff so that they can be innovative, creative, and, most of all, use appropriate judgment in dealing with the circumstances that they're facing.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I would be remiss if I didn't raise issues around WCB at this point. As I'm sure the minister has heard, there are some serious problems in the WCB. It appears that the balance is being lost between the interests of the worker and the interests of this organization we call the WCB. In some cases, I would say, both the worker and the employer are the losers in this.

I've had a number of communications from people who have formerly worked with WCB and felt they could no longer support the efforts of the WCB to act on behalf of individual claimants. Some concerns relate to the Millard Health rehabilitation centre and the adverse incentives to get people into that and the extra charges that are created once individuals are referred to that centre, sometimes inappropriately. Another has to do with the average duration of programs at the Millard Health centre.

3:40

Another concern raised is about the kickback to WCB, the benefits when they use the Millard Health centre. In some cases they're able to argue it on paper very well, but the end result is no different from the point of view of the individual receiving it, with surcharges of up to 260 per cent.

You may have heard some of these concerns expressed by some of the advocates for workers. There's a bonus and incentive program for treatment providers that is inappropriate and in many cases no accountability to that bonus and surcharge system. I guess there are so many issues there that I'm sure you would have some comments about where you can make some improvements in the balance between incentives for the WCB as an organization and those who run the organization, those who benefit from being in the organization.

Another area is the appeal process, a lot of concerns from workers who have been injured, ill, have to leave the country for whatever reason, and have only one year in which to sustain an appeal for injuries. Especially in a complicated case, it may be totally inappropriate to have a one-year restriction on appeals for WCB.

There are a range of issues that have been raised in detail, which I could outline in a letter to you, but it needs reform.

**Mr. Hancock:** I think it would be quite appropriate for the hon. member to outline any of the concerns that he might have about WCB in a letter or to work with me to arrange an appropriate time. Of course, WCB estimates are not before us, WCB being an independent body which assesses its employers and raises its money that way. It's not in my budget. In fact, the only piece in my budget relative to WCB would be the amount which is transferred from the WCB to us for the operation of the Appeals Commission.

But I would say this about the WCB. I've had discussions with the WCB board chair and its members of the board and with the CEO about the mantra of the WCB, that it's there to support injured workers, to get them back to work as quickly as possible and to support them when they can't go back to work at the same level they were at. That's its mandate. That's its motto. That's what it needs to do. That's what it should be focusing on.

The interesting part about the WCB is that as MLAs we often act as ombudsmen. People come to us for help when they get into trouble. I've often said that 25 per cent of our work as MLAs seems to be as ombudsmen for WCB claimants and 25 per cent for maintenance enforcement. But I have to say that over the past year or two that has not been the case. I have not had that level of complaint about the WCB. In fact, all of the statistics would show that it's actually performing very well and achieving very high levels of satisfaction rates with its clientele, injured workers. In fact, since I've become minister of this department, I have to say that I think we've had – I'll look for a nod up there – less than 10 complaints or issues raised with our office by MLAs or outside with respect to WCB. So the evidence would suggest that it is working well for most workers most of the time, and the satisfaction rate seems to be particularly high.

I will assure this hon. member that I will continue to look for board members for this independent organization who understand the motto, that injured workers should be supported in getting back to work as quickly as possible and provided income supports in the event that they can't go back to the same standard of work.

I would suggest to the hon. member relative to his concerns about WCB that he can communicate them to me, and I'd be happy to either sit down with the WCB and review those concerns

or otherwise meet with him to discuss those concerns. But the estimates are not in our estimates book.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. I was going to raise something as well with respect to the estimates, but I think you've provided sufficient clarity, so we'll just move on.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would also be remiss in not raising some issues around farm workers at this time. It seems that there has been a systematic discrimination related to paid farm workers ever since the '60s in this province, and it appears in many ways that it's serving one group of interests over another.

Not only does occupational health and safety not apply to paid farm workers even in industrial farming operations; the labour code doesn't apply. WCB isn't necessarily present for injured workers. There's no standard for child labour, as we talked about in question period today. Farm workers can legally be carried in the back of a pickup truck, whether on farms or on highways. It's clear that this is an area where Alberta stands out and not in a very favourable light across the country.

Unfortunately, the beneficiaries are the big operations that can save money on the backs of injured workers, that can in some ways see themselves profiting from child labour, from injured workers, and from individuals who actually die and get no compensation. I could readily reference one woman from Black Diamond who continues to go to the appeal courts of Ottawa to receive some kind of compensation five years after losing her husband on such an operation.

The irony here, of course, is that the industrial operation carries a huge legal liability by not having WCB, which indemnifies them, by not having occupational health and safety standards, and by potentially being taken for millions of dollars with some of these. Yet we have a government here that seems totally resistant to looking at moving into the 21st century in terms of labour code and compensation and, primarily, occupational health and safety. We lose between 18 and 25 individuals a year, and we have hundreds and hundreds of injuries where if we had higher standards, if we had enforcement, if we had some reasonable 20th-century standards on some of these industrial operations in particular, we would see some change.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but if we could get back to the estimates; there's nothing in the estimates that I've seen . . .

**Dr. Swann:** Why is there nothing in the estimates relating to changing the status of farm workers?

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. There's a good question. Hon. minister, would you wish to respond?

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is not a new issue, as the hon. member has mentioned. You mentioned the irony of the fact that farmers could face huge liability issues and not have coverage. I would remind him that they can get coverage if they want. There is a voluntary subscription process, so farmers facing that issue could certainly opt in. One of the issues – and I understand the minister of agriculture addressed some of these issues in his estimates last night – is the fact that a lot of paid employees in terms of farm situations . . . [interjection] I'll wait until he's prepared to listen.

**The Deputy Chair:** Please give the floor to the minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** One of the real issues is designing a system which makes it easier for people to opt into that type of coverage. If you have temporary workers as opposed to full-time long-term employees, full-time long-term employees would be easier to deal with with an organization like the Workers' Compensation Board. One of the barriers to success may well be that if you have people who only work for short periods of time, to bring them in and take them out adds a real set of difficulties.

We can look at those sorts of things and say: "Is there a better way? Is there some other way of providing that kind of insurance? Would that be appropriate?" That may well be something worth looking at.

Certainly, the question of businesses as opposed to farms, the family farms, is something that one could look at and have an interesting discussion around how we could do that.

**Dr. Swann:** You've been looking at it for 20 years.

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, I've only been here for 15; I've got my 15-year pin. I don't know; I can't speak to the 20.

But I'd say this: there was a council which the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development put together to deal with this. As he's indicated, they've recently provided him with a report, and we've committed to sit down between the two ministries and work on that report, take a look at it. One thing that's very clear is that farmers have not wanted to be part of that regulatory process, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't look at some of the aspects and say: how can we do a better job? Obviously, injured workers, whether they're on the farm or off the farm, are certainly not something we want in this province, and we certainly don't want people to die with respect to work-related accidents.

3:50

Now, I would say to the hon. member, because he has raised this a number of times particularly relative to children, that one should not aggregate all those statistics. People do die on farms. Sometimes they fall through ice on ponds. Sometimes they die riding horses. Those are, one would say, home-related accidents rather than work-related accidents, but they seem to be lumped into the same statistics that the hon. member was referring to the other day.

There is work to be done, certainly, in terms of education, in terms of focusing on incidents relative to agricultural operations and perhaps in determining what type of operation it is and what type of work it is and how we can do a better job of providing opportunities for farmers to get the kind of support that they might need by way of insurance support. But that's certainly a work in progress.

Some of the statistics I looked at indicate that we are not substantively different – and I stand to be corrected on that; I'm going to have a look at this again – than other jurisdictions in the country which do have mandatory coverage. So I'm not sure it's the mandatory coverage piece that really will help us when it comes to the outcomes we want, which are fewer accidents and fewer deaths in agricultural operations.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, I guess the question then would be: why do we require that of all other workplaces if it doesn't make a difference? Why are we spending millions of dollars in this province on occupational health and safety standards in virtually every other workplace?

A couple of questions quickly about wages. Budget 2012 will see staff from contracted agencies who work with vulnerable children, youth, and families and with those with developmental disabilities get a 5 per cent wage increase and a \$1,500 lump-sum



payment. What type of hourly wage will this translate into for the average employee of one of these agencies, and will they be earning more than, say, someone who works at Tim Hortons? Given that the staff from these contracted agencies are already woefully underpaid, does the minister really think that boosting wages 5 per cent is going to be sufficient to keep people from leaving for higher paying jobs?

In relation to that I noticed that supports for independence or Alberta Works went up only 5 per cent after three years, since 2008. So the supports for people who are in dire need only went up 5 per cent, which, again, is inconsistent with what we have committed to ourselves, where MLAs get cost-of-living and inflation increases every year. Why wouldn't we give our most vulnerable people at least an indexed increase in their income each year?

But getting back to staff, what was the government's rationale for addressing the wages of contracted agency staff specifically? We know that staff morale has been low. I heard no comment on how that's being addressed. Certainly one of the areas is income.

The joint Human Services-Seniors release in February 2012 mentions that the "Budget 2012 also outlines a commitment to additional agency funding" for 2013 to 2015. What is the commitment that you identified between those three years for additional agency funding? Given that staff from contracted agencies who work with children and families had their wages increased in 2007, the same year that wages were boosted for staff working in licensed daycare centres, why are the latter being excluded from the province's generosity this year?

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. minister, just a reminder that we have about nine minutes left in this portion.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you.

Well, I'll end with the last portion with respect to the daycare workers. Daycare workers are being subsidized in a different stream to get accreditation, so as they move up their accreditation, there is income support provided. That would be one of the explanations there.

I appreciate the hon. member's interest in the wage gap but would indicate to him that we are working very closely with contracted agencies and others with respect to how to appropriately deal with this issue over time. Certainly, a 5 per cent increase plus the \$1,500 bonus this year and the \$1,500 bonus last year will go some way toward dealing with the wage disparity issue. But we do not want to create a different problem by increasing wages, and that's one of the things we're finding in discussions with our collaborative agencies. They want to work with us on how to apply their resources.

We have \$25.7 million this year, which will assist with the wage issue, but we also have \$50 million next year and \$83.3 million in the following year to deal with this issue. We are working directly with the agencies involved, discussing with them how to appropriately utilize those resources in whatever way makes sense for them with respect to their staff. That's pretty important because we do not want to just simply put the money into a wage packet.

Particularly, one of the issues is that not all the people that are involved in those sectors are actually contracted by government, so you create, then, a wage disparity within an organization relative to who's paid and who's not or between two organizations, one of which is contracted and one of which is voluntary.

**Dr. Swann:** I don't understand that.

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, suffice to say, then, that there are a significant number of issues that have to be addressed there. Those issues are being raised by our partners in the process. We're sitting down and working with them through those issues to make sure that while we move towards achieving the overall policy objective of equity, we're not discombobulating the organizations in that process. I can assure the hon. member that that's a very important commitment of ours, to bring that disparity down and do it in a way that makes sense for the individuals involved.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Hon. member, we have about six minutes remaining in this portion.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

Well, again, I'd like to hear more comment about the staff morale issue. I haven't heard any serious response about how things are going to change as a result of some of the declining morale that was indicated in the surveys. I know you can't say specifically if you haven't done a survey, but what have you put in place to deal with what appears to be a very serious morale problem, at least within the child and family services area?

With respect to the social policy framework the mandate letter to the minister instructed him to lead the development of a social policy framework, and I think it's very timely and important for Albertans to be part of that discussion. The minister references the policy framework in broad, vague terms but has yet to tell Albertans in plain language what it's all supposed to mean. I've heard it referred to as an integrated strategy, a comprehensive review, a public consultation, a transition to outcome-based service delivery, and lots of seemingly disparate issues. Can the minister explain what the social policy framework is, how long its development is expected to take, and what might happen as a result of the framework? What other ministries are involved in the initiative?

We've long advocated on this side of the House for a provincial school lunch program. Is that even on the map? It seems a pretty basic thing, that we ensure that all children at schools be nourished in order to learn. It's going to benefit everyone. I wonder if that's a practical application of some of the social policy review. Was the minister suggesting that a provincial school lunch program might actually be possible if, during the development of the social policy framework, Albertans do tell government they want this?

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thought I'd addressed the issue of morale, but let me just say this. We're working very, very hard to ensure that the staff in our ministry, regardless of what sector of the ministry, are engaged and empowered to do their jobs. That in and of itself, we believe, will really work towards improved morale. People will feel valued in what they do, for their skills, their judgment, and their ability and will be able to do their work unencumbered by silly rules. You cannot write rules for every situation. I think that's something that detracts from the staff morale issue: when you feel that you're not able to actually carry out your job the way you want to. Well, we're changing that dynamic and saying: "We want to rely on your skill and your judgment and your ability. We want you to go in and help achieve the outcomes for those children or for those families, and we're going to support you in doing that." That's an incredible dynamic.

4:00

In fact, the deputy minister has made a personal mission of meeting with staff across the province in engagement sessions and learning and listening to the staff in terms of how we could do things better together and engaging them in the design of the ministry on a basis that really takes into account the learned experiences of the staff on the ground relative to what we need to do. I believe that will do a lot towards the staff morale.

We're looking at how we can better provide for learning opportunities to enhance staff training and ability where they want it, where they need it. I think that will go a long way. I can't tell you that staff morale is up or is going up, but I can tell you that from all the feedback that I've gotten – and I've made it a practice in every ministry that I've been in to go and talk to front-line staff and hear from them what's going on – what I'm hearing is that people are really excited about working better together, about being able to collaborate closely with the other people that they need, and about being empowered to use their judgment and skill to achieve the outcomes we want.

I'm quite convinced. I had some trepidation when the Premier called me to take on this portfolio. In fact, I ran immediately to my computer to see what was going to be involved. Thank goodness it isn't all of the things that were on there. I'm very much convinced now, having had the opportunity to work with the people involved, that we are actually going to achieve some very significant improvements in how we support Albertans to achieve their potential. I'm excited about that. I believe morale is going to go up. I believe it's already up.

Social policy framework is probably the most important piece of work we could undertake in government at this point in time. We've got great economic outlooks. We've got a tax and an economic structure, infrastructure support. All those things are in place. We've got an education system that's considered to be the best in the English-speaking world. It's one of the best in the world. We've got, certainly, issues in all areas that you have to deal with, but between health and education and the economic side things are going very well in this province.

The social. We have a lot of good social agency in this province, but what we don't have is a social policy framework which truly addresses what kind of a society we want to have, what it means to live in human dignity, what kind of supports there need to be for individuals and families to be able to achieve that. How do we ensure that every child has the opportunity, that in fact every Albertan has the opportunity to meet and maximize their own personal potential so that they can take care of themselves and their families and contribute back to their communities? A social policy framework brings that together and says: what are the outcomes that we're wanting to achieve as a society, and what are the roles and responsibilities in achieving that? Then we'll go back to check our program delivery piece to say: are our programs actually achieving those outcomes? Are we working together in the appropriate way, whether it's within the department or across departments?

You asked about the ministries involved: Health; Education; Seniors; Culture; Solicitor General; Justice; Intergovernmental, International and Aboriginal Relations; Tourism; Executive Council. They are all a part. We've pulled a pod together. We are working with that group of ministries internally on a fast-track basis at a high-priority level. We have a deputy minister's committee. We put a high priority on this, and I'd be happy to get back on the timeline.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Okay. The next 20 minutes are dedicated to the third party, and I would assume that you might want to go back and forth. The chair is pleased to recognize the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Boutilier:** To the chair, I wouldn't assume anything when I speak. On this note, last night I was actually using my 10 minutes. Actually, with the minister last night I wasn't getting real value for the dialogue going back and forth, so I used my 10 minutes. But in light of the fact that this minister and I joined the same government at the time, 15 years ago, I will go by your assumption, and I will try the dialogue. If I find the value of the dialogue is not proceeding, then I'll change that in the next hour or so.

With that, to the minister, congratulations on your new ministry. First and foremost, in looking at the plethora of your responsibilities and seeing the people that you have with you today, I think of the millions of dollars that are being spent. I'd like to know: would you like to be called Minister or Dave? I'd prefer to be called Guy, so feel free not to have to call me hon. member. You can just call me Guy.

**Mr. Hancock:** I'd love to do that, but I think the rules of the House preclude it.

**The Deputy Chair:** The rules would not allow it.

**Mr. Hancock:** I need to call you either hon. member or the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**The Deputy Chair:** Let's proceed with the normal decorum, please, hon. member.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Well, I'm glad to see he would love to do that.

He did mention in his opening remarks and concluding remarks that there were some things when he looked at the ministry when the Premier called him to in fact take over this responsibility, which really, I believe – correct me if I'm wrong – was three ministries. Prior, it would have been children's services, with the hon. member from Calgary; then also the minister of housing, I believe, who is sitting on the front bench today; and then also the minister of employment. I believe those were the other three ministries that were combined. Is that correct, Minister?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, actually, I suppose we certainly have all of children and youth services and all of employment and immigration. We have the program portion of the former housing ministry and certainly the responsibility for the program regarding homelessness, and we have Alberta Supports, which used to be in the Seniors portfolio.

**Mr. Boutilier:** With that, you said that you had some concerns when you first saw the ministry. From what the Premier talked to you about in that private conversation inviting you into cabinet to do this, you said that you had some concerns. What were the concerns based on the plethora of responsibilities in the new combined four ministries? What were your concerns? You had mentioned that you had some.

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Chairman, I won't go into the details of what went through my mind at the moment, but my biggest concern was whether or not we would have the opportunity to look at it from a holistic basis and say: you know, is this just going to be running programs, or is this going to be an opportunity to reshape

how we think about our society and how we think about the role of government in supporting individuals to be successful? Will I have the opportunity in my mandate letter to talk about a social policy framework in the fullness of that context?

I have to tell you, Mr. Chairman, that I was absolutely delighted to be able to sit down first of all with the Premier and then with the leadership staff in the department to explore what the opportunities were, to be able to focus on how we bring together all of the social agency that's done within government, working collaboratively, because it's not all in our department – of course, Seniors has AISH and PDD, and there are other areas that certainly impact, and the social determinants of health, for example, are important – and to be able to bring together those departments and provide a leadership role and talk about the social policy framework, which sets a common understanding among Albertans of what's important to us in terms of our society and human dignity.

**Mr. Boutilier:** I guess we'll never be able to get to the inner voice of the discussion you had when the Premier called you. I was trying to get to your inner voice, to what you were thinking was concerning you about this new ministry that's combined. I'm disappointed that you didn't share with us what that inner voice was actually saying to you about what your concern was.

That being the case, the people that are with you today, I'm assuming, are assistant deputy ministers or deputy ministers. Is that correct? I would welcome the opportunity of the experience that they bring in helping Albertans. It's quite a plethora. I'm very proud to say that my colleague, who was the second minister of children's services, Calgary-Fish Creek, as minister of children's services has been certainly a wealth of information.

I'd like to be able to say that at the level that they are at and having been a minister for almost eight years and understanding the levels of bureaucracy, I'd really welcome – and I'm sure you would – you to share with me a story in terms of this budget and how it has helped someone and from each of the members of your team that are here on how they have helped someone directly, be it a family, be it an adopted family, be it someone with autism, be it someone in family and community supports, be it someone who is dealing with the WCB.

I would really like and I think Albertans would welcome the opportunity for every one of your team to talk about something that really makes you want to come back to work the next day. One of my greatest concerns as a minister was that sometimes I used to love – and I'm sure this minister does, and I'll ask this question – being able to meet with people on the front line and even at a director level or an executive director level or as an assistant deputy and then a deputy, and then it comes to you. I'd really welcome the opportunity.

**4:10**

In terms of the dollars we're spending, do you have people on the front line coming into your office, or is it always screened through the variety of levels of bureaucracy to get to you? For instance, an AR is an action request. Does it have to go through the deputy? Does it have to go to the assistant deputy, then the executive director, then the director, and then to someone in the front line, or in fact can you pick up the phone and talk to someone directly? What I'm really inviting today in a very polite way is a story where each of the senior members of your team has been able to make a difference in someone's life. I would welcome that, based on the dollars we're spending.

### **Chair's Ruling Relevance**

**The Deputy Chair:** Just before you go ahead, hon. minister, I know that we're here technically debating the estimates, and there has been a tradition of latitude to allow comments on the fiscal plan in general and on the three-year business plan, as you're well aware, but I don't know how these stories that have been requested from you might fit in to all of that. I look forward to seeing how you tie that all in with the estimates, which is what we're supposed to be here debating.

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would presume that the hon. member opposite would be the one who would be asking about the estimates and that I would be the one who would be telling the stories of success. I will engage in that process because I think it's very important to talk about the success, about the real difference, that the money that's spent – and there's the tie to the estimates – in this budget actually does real things for real people, to help people be successful in this province.

### **Debate Continued**

**Mr. Hancock:** I said earlier in my remarks that I've made it a practice in every department that I've been in to drop in on location and talk to people who are at the front end. I had the opportunity to go to Calgary a month or two ago and to sit down with some of the social worker team in one of the Calgary offices, the child and family services authority in Calgary, and hear about how they are now working together in an AVIRT team with the police, with professionals in health, with other necessary collaborations in the community to be there immediately for any child at risk.

If a child shows up at the hospital with injuries, there can be an alert, and there can be immediate action, and that's progress. One of the problems we do have and one of the mandates that I have from the Premier is on communication, in sharing information appropriately between the people who need to have it. We've got some real excitement now about the partnerships that are being created. We've had those opportunities to see those partnerships. I was on a cabinet tour – you might remember a cabinet tour – in late January, and I had the opportunity to drop in to offices in Lac La Biche. I wasn't actually in the offices, but I was meeting with people from the office. I was in the Provincial Building talking to some of our front-line workers about how they are now feeling empowered.

I'll use an example. We have a rule that says that they can provide up to \$2,500 for an individual to achieve some education/training goals, and one of those goals is to achieve a class 3 driver's licence. What the individual said to me was, "If you've got a class 1 driver's licence, you can get a job here." I've worked with individuals and have said to them that if you can get your potential employer to sponsor \$1,000, we'll sponsor the \$2,500 because the class 1 driver's licence course process requires \$3,500. He said, "Am I going to get in trouble for breaking the rules? You said that we could do that." I said: "No. That's a perfect example of an outcome-based result."

I talked about the Terra foundation and Braemar school, and Louise Dean school in Calgary is the same way. We went out to the school with the Premier at the beginning of March to see what's happening there, and there are some very exciting things. These are children having children, and their only success is going to be if they can successfully complete their education. Quite frankly, there were barriers to those successes. You had to go for

income support over here. You couldn't actually apply for income support when you were pregnant; you had to wait until you had your child. You didn't know where you were going to go to live. You didn't know about child care. There were barriers to success.

We were able to work with the Terra foundation and say: how about if we provide you with the resources, and you work with these young moms and potential young moms and work those things out with respect to housing and transportation and child care and income support? They're doing it now.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, you have about eight and a half minutes left.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly appreciate your enthusiasm. I also thank you for recognizing, of course, my colleague the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, who I believe was key in working with people in children's services to start Amber Alert, which is something that I know she's still very proud of.

I would ask, in terms of the dollars that are being spent in the ministry in a variety of, you know, sections, does the minister take time as he assesses the dollars being spent as we are in budget debates to reflect on a weekly basis of what the successes are? How have we helped Albertans, be it someone in family and community supports or be it children as you described – and the story, I think, is a very good one – or be it someone in WCB? I'm just trying to understand the inner workings of the ministry relative to how connected the minister is with the front lines.

I'll wait till you finish the conversation because I know it's difficult to . . .

**Mr. Hancock:** I've got my ear on you.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Oh, do you? Okay. I wasn't sure. You do things in stereo?

**Mr. Hancock:** Yes.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Oh, okay.

I wanted just to be absolutely certain that in accounting for the dollars, there is a real sense of – do you as a minister, from the variety of ministries that both you and I have been in, feel really connected to the front line of what is taking place in Alberta and the dollars that are being spent? In fact, I would welcome you personally to share a story of where you feel good about this ministry and what has happened, be it from what you might have heard from one of the front-line people. I'm really interested, genuinely, in a story like that so that we can see the real value and outcome, saying: hey, this really is good value and is helping. I welcome that story.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. minister, to respond.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I will tell the hon. member a story, and this one is a personal one as an MLA and now as a minister. In my own constituency a young lady, 12 years old, had an aneurysm. The family has been dealing with the issues that that creates for them and the love that they have for their child for the last four years. The young lady is now 16, had her sixteenth birthday just in the last week.

Most people in that circumstance wouldn't have survived, but this young lady has an incredible amount of resilience, and she's working through that. She is now able to be mobile, albeit with some assistance. She's back at school, albeit only for periods of

time. In fact, she started high school this year. She was able to go to one period a day, and now she's up to two periods. Actually, I think as of recently she's up to three periods a day that she can go to school. She's getting some of her speech back and, as I said, she's getting some physical mobility back.

On Saturday night I was at a fundraiser called Build a Bedroom for Bethany. Because she can't access the second floor of her house and she's living on the main floor of the house in essentially the family area, the community has come together to raise money to build a bedroom for Bethany, to add onto the house. We don't have a program for adding onto people's private residences, but I can tell you that through our supports for FSCD, family support for children with disabilities, there have been so many ways in which we've been able to work together, between Education and children's services, to support a family in that sort of a circumstance.

You can imagine what happens to a family when they have that kind of a real tragedy happen, when they've got an alive and vibrant young lady and all of a sudden an aneurysm just falls her like that. So it's important to be able to work with families who face those challenges. They face some incredible challenges in their life, and we can't take that away. We can't replace that. But what we can do is be there to support in various ways with the assistance that they need, whether it's the occupational health and therapies, the various places. We've got some of the best facilities in the country, if you take a look there at the Glenrose, to help with rehabilitation and that sort of thing. That's how a community can come together to support, and government can be there with a lot of support areas.

**4:20**

I can tell you another story about another young man that I know who's going to graduate from grade 12 this year. This young man was in foster care, and then he moved to kinship care. He is really succeeding. He's succeeding because of teachers and others who worked to support him through the school system. He's succeeding because of the system in our department that has supported him in the various living relationships that he needed. I believe he's on his own now. He's going to graduate high school this year. He's going to go to university, and he's probably going to have an advancing futures bursary for youth in care to go there.

We have 610 youth from provincial care receiving advancing futures bursaries to help them go to postsecondary education. That's how Alberta society through their government can support these children and their families to be successful. That's exciting.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, and I appreciate your story. I'm sure all members, Mr. Chair, appreciate that story. I sincerely say that.

As we talk about stories, clearly, in helping such a magnitude of Albertans – really, it is quite a collective of a variety of different Albertans that you deal with – I would encourage you as minister and the dollars that are spent to continue to focus in on those stories. Really, no matter what we deal with in policy, be it fiscal or whatever, at the end of the day it really is about those individual stories. We can talk in here. I recall on that side talking about: I want to assure all Albertans. But when we come down to it, we want to really talk about Martha and Henry and their children and what their stories are. What you just did there I applaud, and in fact, I welcome even more.

The image that Albertans believe of the ministry sometimes perhaps is more perception than it is of what is really taking place. I do know that there is a lot of good that goes on. I will say this. From family and community support services, from friends of ours that we know that have been directly, positively impacted, I

want to let you know that I think Alberta has a very good reputation by comparison to other provinces across Canada. I know that there are other members that also have said that. I say that that's good.

With that, I want to move on to a couple of things that I'd like to ask. Number one is on the financial dollars, if we can get back to the hard, cold facts. Did your ministry pay bonuses last year? I think the rule was that there were no bonuses. Is that correct? I believe there were no bonuses.

Number two, how much do you pay the CEO of the WCB, workers' compensation. He is the CEO. He reports to a board but ultimately falls under your purview as the minister. I'd really like to know what that is.

Also, just one final question that I would like to ask. The WCB president and CEO: have they received bonuses in the last year, and what would they be?

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** You have about 20 seconds left right now.

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Chairman, as I indicated, while it's my responsibility, the CEO of the WCB is the equivalent of a deputy minister – in essence, I have three deputies in this department: the chair of the labour board and the CEO of workers' compensation and the deputy minister that handles all the rest of the stuff. I just quickly would say that the hon. member can go to the annual report of the WCB. That's where their financials are, not on my statements. He can look and see what the chair and the CEO made.

**The Deputy Chair:** In case it didn't get noted, there's an annual report, the minister has indicated, for WCB, and there's information there for the member.

All right. We are proceeding to the next section with the fourth party. Twenty minutes are allocated. I would ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to just indicate: do you wish to go rapid-fire with the minister for 20 minutes?

**Ms Notley:** Indeed. Yeah.

**The Deputy Chair:** Indeed. All right. Proceed.

**Ms Notley:** Okay. We'll see how well it goes. I know this minister cares about his ministry and likes to talk about it and often will become very descriptive in his conversation about it, when sometimes maybe I'm looking for very specific answers. There are many things I want to go through. Of course, as I've mentioned this before, this setting, being in the actual Assembly, probably exaggerates that tendency a little bit from our otherwise more back-and-forth conversation. If periodically I get up and start talking while you're talking, it's absolutely not because I don't think everything you're saying is very interesting; it's because I'm acutely aware that we're debating a \$2.6 billion budget in three hours, and there's a lot of stuff to go over.

I'd like to start, I guess, by just commenting on both the good and the bad around the reorganization of this ministry. I'm concerned that labour and employment standards and health and safety have been wrapped into this ministry. I think it's too much. I think we have some problems, significant problems, in that area in this province both in terms of establishing a balanced labour relations environment and also in terms of providing for real and genuine rights for working people in our province, and I am very concerned that it's been sort of swept into other extremely important areas. I'd rather see that separated out, but I'll get to that section.

What I'm going to ask you about and talk about first is the issue of income support and how that relates in a general sense to the issue of children and families, enhancement and those kinds of issues. I'll start with a more open-ended question, although I'm going to start with a specific description.

I'm glad that income support is now back with children and families. I used to think it was really kind of obnoxious the way we separated out children and families from income support because there was a lot of political support for spending resources on children, maybe not as much as I'd like but, you know, some, but somehow the parent who needed financial support, that was just sort of the dirty little secret, and it slowly got pushed off farther and farther into the closet, and we never had the two together. The fact that they are together now is good because, obviously, fundamental to successful child protection is the alleviation of poverty and dealing with those challenges.

I want to describe a situation that would exist under the current rules and regulations around what I understand your ministry does. If you have a single mom who has two children and she is expected to work, my understanding is that under your guidelines she would be paid \$953 a month, and that's a combination of the core benefit and her private housing accommodation benefit. She would be paid \$953 a month.

Now, if your single mom with the two children experienced what are referred to as barriers to employment, she would then be paid a little bit more. About \$1,050 a month, we'll say. Those barriers include things like chronic illness, mental health issues, long-term disability, those kinds of things where the diagnoses are not quite so clear as to get them through the AISH hoop, but clearly they have significant medical issues.

You've got your moderately disabled single mom with two kids. One's three, and one's four. She receives about \$1,050. Then, thanks to the federal government, they would also receive a further \$461 a month through the national child benefit supplement, I believe. Then you've got your single mom with your two kids who's basically trying to live on \$1,300 a month, and she's expected to look for work.

Let's then look at your child care subsidy policy. Your child care subsidy policy would subsidize her to a maximum of \$546 a month for each preschooler, and the average cost of sending that preschooler to child care is roughly \$756 per month, according to your own press releases. In essence, she's got a child care bill of about \$400 a month. So we're back to the situation where mom is expected to look for work. Her national child benefit supplement has been completely exhausted by her need to get child care. She is trying to raise two children while looking for work on \$953 a month.

I want to ask the minister how reasonable it is that you believe that that mother and those kids are going to be successful, that those kids are going to go to school well fed, that they're going to have the opportunity to learn like every other child living in a family that averages \$75,000 a year in this province, whether that mom is realistically going to succeed in finding employment, whether she's going to be able to pay her heating bills, and where that money comes from? So when your child protection worker gets there and the kids are at risk and they're in clothes that don't keep them warm and there are holes in their boots and it's minus 40 out because we live in Edmonton, what do we do?

4:30

These are three things that have all now come together in your ministry, so I want to hear how you deal with that. Also, I don't want to hear about a strategy that you're going to write two or three years down the road with lots of consultation; I want to hear

how you're going to deal with it right now. Then I'd like for you, if you could please, to tell me how many families there are in Alberta right now in that situation.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. minister to respond.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just because the hon. member raised at the beginning about how passionate I get and how long-winded I can be – that wasn't her language, but that's what it equated to – how many minutes are left in the first 20-minute exchange?

**The Deputy Chair:** You have 13 minutes and 20 seconds.

**Mr. Hancock:** There was a lot of detail in that question, and I understand what the hon. member is getting at. I don't believe the numbers are accurate in terms of what she's talking about. According to the numbers – and they are subject to being corrected because we're looking very quickly here – a single employable adult with two children would have a combined benefit of about \$1,600. That's \$1,030 in income support plus \$333 in national child benefit and \$237 in child tax benefit, so it's at \$1,600.

The reality of what we're talking about is that when you have an individual who is in a circumstance where they are having trouble making ends meet, they need to come to Alberta Works to deal with their income issues. Of course, on the child care side, for the daycare and out of school care rates, the subsidy is going up to \$628 a month for one to 18 months or \$546, which, as I understand it, is just slightly below the rate that we might have, for example, at the YMCA child care in the city here.

What you're really talking about is how we are empowering the staff at Alberta Works to sit down with that young lady and say: "We understand there might be some issues, there might be some challenges getting the bills paid this month. What are we looking at longer term? How can we assist you with what you need to get into the right kind of place and space where you need to be to be able to have that quality of life with your children?"

We're not going to make nirvana by any stretch of the imagination, but we are seriously charged with helping each individual in that type of a circumstance to work through it and to get to a better place if they can. Do they need some assistance to perhaps improve their skills to get a better paying job? Well, we can work with that.

The bottom line is that it's not just about saying: "Okay. This is a single person with two children, and they have these kinds of bills, so we should write them a cheque." It's about sitting down and working with that person to say, "How can we work together to help you achieve a better place and to help you with the challenges that you face with your children?" and those sorts of issues.

While I understand what you're saying about amounts, certainly part of our overall process, which you don't want me to get into, is to determine exactly those things. What is the level that a person needs to earn to be able to live in dignity? What are the types of supports that we need to have? We will go through and review all of those.

Right now I'm satisfied that we can say that that individual can approach an Alberta Works office at any time and say, "Here's my challenge; can you help me?" and they are empowered to sit down and say: "Okay; what can we do to help that individual work through the challenges that they have?" whether it's challenges with paying the rent, whether it's challenges with respect to finding an appropriate daycare, or whether it's challenges with

respect to improving their skills and abilities so that they can get a better paying job.

How many people are there in that position in Alberta? Well, right now we have 36,094 people who are either people expected to work or working or people with barriers to full employment. Of those, 20,000 of them would be what we would call expected to work, so they don't have significant barriers to employment other than perhaps their personal circumstances. So that's how many families. Now, how many of those would be single parents with two children I can't tell you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. Well, a couple of comments on that. I think what would be really important – and the benefit of having these ministries merge together is that that's absolutely what you should be able to tell me – is how many of those people that are living at roughly half the low-income cut-off, as identified by most antipoverty organizations, have children in those households.

**Mr. Hancock:** I'd like to be able to get the hon. member that information, but I think that even with a binder this thick, Mr. Chairman, it would be presumptuous of her to understand that I might have that specific number at my fingertips at this moment.

**Ms Notley:** Again, I guess my point is that I would hope that that would be a priority number for you to identify because we're not going to deal with this multigenerational growth of children at risk if we don't deal with poverty right up front. My point, as I see that the minister understands, is that any child growing up in a household with that kind of income is going to have to be superhuman to break out of that. It's not going to be just a typical child or, God forbid, a child with special needs. It's going to have to be a superhuman child that breaks out of that situation that the current funding levels have put them in.

In terms of what the minister says about the numbers, the numbers that I quoted were right out of your press release in terms of average costs of child care. I used your updated child care subsidy numbers as a result of the increase that is included in this budget, and I'm reading off your website, that gives the core/accommodation rates. They don't talk there about the discretion of an income support worker, which is interesting. It would certainly be something that we would like to get.

I'll tell you something that was interesting. I don't know if the minister is aware of this, but you said: "Well, that mother" – and we'll say that it's a mother because in 90 per cent of the cases it is – "could just go in and talk to her income support worker and be told how we could figure out this problem." In fact, they can't do that. They have to make an appointment, and they have to get in line to make the appointment. Then after they've gotten in line to make the appointment, if they happen to get in line early enough, they have to come back another day.

The actual gatekeeping processes that are in place right now in your income support offices are extremely challenging for people, and they push people out. I'm certainly not suggesting that this minister was in charge of it, but I would suggest that there was a time when there was a concern about the number of people on income support. Some people suggested that perhaps those barriers to access to income support programs might well have been designed to result in the reduction of people applying.

Having said that, let me just get directly to the budget. In terms of income support there are some planned reductions, particularly with respect to line items 2.3 and 2.4, and those were the two line items that I was talking about. I'm concerned about what – I'm

sorry. For line item 2.4, income support to people with barriers to full employment, there is actually an expected increase, which is slight, and then there is an expected decrease with line item 2.3, which is income support to people expected to work or working. I'm wondering where those numbers come from, if it's a change in benefits. Was there an increase in benefits? Are you anticipating a reduction in the number of people applying for benefits, or what's the case there?

Associated with that, line items 2.9 and 2.10 both anticipate going down at a rate much greater than their associated line items of 2.3 and 2.4. There I'm talking about health benefits to people who are eligible for income support, either for the go to work or the barriers to work programs. I'm wondering why the changes to the budget for those eligible for health benefits are different than the changes to the budget for the income for that same group of people. Does that make sense? Okay.

4:40

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the first part, with respect to the lineups and appointments, I can't say that I've been to every Alberta Works office, but I've certainly been out to Alberta Works offices. I, quite frankly, have been impressed, both with the north Edmonton one and the one in south Edmonton that I visited, with the way they're set up to welcome people in a reception area, if you will, and then a counsellor will sit down with the individual involved and then get them tied into a counsellor.

I didn't observe the lineups or the appointments that the hon. member is talking about. I must have been there at just precisely the right time of day, I suppose. I can understand that if there are a lot of people who appear at the same time, there might be a need to make appointments. I don't think that there's anything inappropriate with that. Most of us have to make appointments for various things that we do in our lives. There are not sufficient resources in any world to have immediate access for everybody who needs everything all at the same time. I mean, there will be times, I'm sure, when there's a need to either take some time to wait or to get into a line or to make appointments.

I can honestly say that the two places that I was at were in active operation. The counsellors were working, the people were coming in, and I was very impressed with the set-up. In fact, I was surprised at how well set up they were and how they were actually working towards what we were hoping that they would be working towards, and that is bringing together the various resources, taking a look at individuals as a whole person, and saying: what is it that we need to do to help you be successful? You know, it's not simply a matter of: can you pay your rent next month? It's a question of: "How are we going to work with you to achieve success in the longer term? And, yes, we can help with the immediate-term issues."

With respect to lines 2.3 and 2.4, line 2.3, the income support to people expected to work or working, is in fact going down by about – what's that? – \$13 million this year. There's an increase of 5 per cent to the rates, but there's an expected reduction of about 2,000 people in terms of those who will need support. That is probably as an amazing result of the fact that our economy is so good in Alberta, as a result of the policies of this government and the preparation that we've made to be ready to come out of the recession which has hit the global marketplace, that there are actually jobs that people can do. There are a lot of people focused on how we can assist people to get the jobs that they're capable of and to get the necessary skills and ability to move to jobs that they aspire to.

That's a very important part of working together with Advanced Education, with Education, with others in the system to make sure that we can get people and support them as they get to where they want to be and how they can use their potential. So we are actually expecting a reduction of about 2,000 people in the expected to work caseload.

There is an increase anticipated in the barriers to full employment caseload, so that balances that off a little bit. We have a \$9 million increase in that particular area.

Now, with respect to the health benefits that's simply an expectation of saving money on generic drug costs. The hon. member will be aware that there are a lot of drugs achieving their – I don't know what you'd call it. They're running out of their protected status, if you will. There are a lot of generic drugs coming on the market, and it's anticipated that our drug costs will go down because of that and because of the work that's being done in health to lower generic drug costs generally.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, we have about one minute left, not quite.

**Ms Notley:** Okay. Well, that's great. I'm obviously going to have to try and, hopefully, get another opportunity to question the minister.

On the issue of child care I'm just going to pepper a few questions at you, and maybe we can talk about it when I get a chance again. Your ministry has given the average cost of child care in Alberta for preschoolers. I'm wondering if you can provide us with information on the average cost per child that's in the zero to 18 month age, the 18 month to 36 month age, and then the 36 month to K age groups because, certainly, I know from personal experience that there tend to be significant differences.

As well, I'm wondering if . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Perhaps there will be an opportunity to come back.

The next 20 minutes, hon. members, is set aside for any members from any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent members should they wish to speak.

If not, then we'll open the floor up to any other member. The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. You have been trying to be very informative so far. My questions are around the homelessness support. A new entity named the interagency council on homelessness appears in the Human Services budget estimates for 2012-13, page 157, line item 7.2, which presumably replaces the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness. I know that the Premier's November 3, 2011, mandate letter to the minister instructed him to create this new entity, but no specifics were provided beyond that.

Since the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness is absent from Budget 2012, can the minister please confirm that it has been or is being disbanded or will be replaced by the interagency council on homelessness? If so, what is the mandate of the interagency council on homelessness, and how will that differ from the role of the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness? Is this more than just a name change?

What is the composition of the council going to be? Will it be comprised of representatives from the province's seven community-based homelessness management bodies and the respective homeless serving agencies? Will it include any former board members from the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness to facilitate continuity? Is the council already

operational, or are we in the midst of transition from the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness to the new agency?

If the council is not yet fully operational, when is it expected to be? What impact, if any, will creating a new provincial homelessness agency really have when Alberta's seven community-based homelessness management bodies are all pursuing their own local plans for ending homelessness and are expected to achieve that goal ahead of the province's 2019 target?

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad we're going to be talking about the homelessness part of the ministry this afternoon. I think it's a very important story. It's a very important success story. I had the privilege just last week of being at the ROOPH awards. I would be challenged to say what ROOPH actually stands for. It has something to do with putting roofs over people's heads, but it's actually R-O-O-P-H. It's an acronym for something.

Anyway, the ROOPH awards recognize people who make outstanding contributions to homelessness and housing. Actually, one of the awards went to a gentleman who had previously been homeless and who had been through the collaborative processes of our department and social agencies and municipalities, had been able to go through detoxification to get his life together, and is now giving back in that area, Mr. Chairman. So a very good story.

I see the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo coming back and wanting stories. That was a very compelling story.

One of the other compelling stories that day was the fact that they gave an award to our former Premier, the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, for his leadership and this government's leadership on the homelessness issue. The 10-year plan to end homelessness and the leadership that the then Premier provided were recognized and awarded from this community agency. It wasn't something from government. It wasn't self-applause. It was community agencies in Edmonton recognizing, and that same member will be recognized nationally with an award for Alberta's emphasis on homelessness. With respect to the national award I can say that the nomination came from people who worked within the department and others who recognized that that leadership was so important on ending homelessness.

I'm really pleased I had the opportunity to get that on the record and to acknowledge the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and the work that he did and the leadership that he provided, which is recognized not just by members of his caucus and government but by all of our collaborative partners across the system of municipalities and social agencies.

With respect to the interagency council on homelessness our Premier promised last year that we would take homelessness from a provincial perspective to the next level. The secretariat has done an excellent job, and I think there are seven community organizations across the province, seven municipalities who work with community agencies to have homelessness action plans in their communities. They've worked collaboratively with the secretariat, the secretariat being in charge of developing and initiating and providing the impetus for the provincial action on homelessness, the 10-year provincial homelessness plan.

4:50

That secretariat has done good work. Its role right now, its current role, is actually one of monitoring implementation and reporting on annual progress. They do good work, but we need to take this to next level. So the Premier indicated that what we wanted to do was transition from a secretariat on homelessness, whose job was

monitoring, to an interagency council on homelessness, whose job would be to work collaboratively together with all of the seven partnering municipalities and the social agencies involved to make sure that we keep the pressure on. We can't let up now. Even with the success of finding homes for 4,800 people and the services to support them in those homes and to work with them to achieve success for them, we still have more work to do. We need to take it to the next level.

We're in the process of transitioning. There's been a lot of work done. We've completed consultations with over 225 stakeholders, Mr. Chairman, including secretariat members, community partners from various sectors in Fort McMurray, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Calgary, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer. We're not taking this lightly. We're taking it very seriously, and we're doing it very conscientiously. We're working toward an enhanced collaborative approach to moving from the first phase of providing housing to end homelessness to a phase which includes a focus on preventing homelessness and providing specialized supports to targeted groups. That's very important.

First of all, we want to ensure that we can eliminate to the extent possible through our social policy framework and other processes the conditions which exist which allow the situation of people falling into homelessness so that we don't have the homelessness problem but also to understand that a certain segment of the homeless population will require support for most of their life. They've got significant comorbidities. They've got alcohol and addiction problems, they've got significant mental issues, perhaps, and they're going to need support. While we can try to eliminate homelessness with this 10-year plan, about 20 per cent of the people involved are going to need wraparound services and supports so that they can live in the community in a nonhomeless state, if I can put it that way.

The budget reflects numbers. It reflects that we'll be carrying forward support for the interagency council on homelessness instead of a secretariat on homelessness. The exact nature of how that council is made up has not been concluded yet, but we are working with agencies in terms of how to set up the governance structure on that in a very important way.

We have in the budget, of course, an amount for emergency and transitional shelter support, and the hon. member might have noticed that that went down modestly, and I say that went down modestly because, actually, the take-up of shelter spaces has gone down, which is a clear result of people being housed and less need for the emergency and transitional shelter.

The outreach supports, Mr. Chairman, are going up significantly. They're going up 28 per cent. That's a recognition of moving to this next phase. While we need to continue to work on getting people into housing and off the street and into a situation where they have a home, the housing first model, we also need to increase the supportive piece because you not only need to provide the wraparound services for those people that you're bringing into it, but you need to sustain the services for the 20 per cent that are going to need long-term support services.

So, Mr. Chairman, I think it's a very important area. It's one where I'm very proud of the fact that I was able to be there when our former Premier was recognized for the leadership role that he as Premier and we as a government have played in this homelessness area and the success that's been achieved to date and the model that we're developing, which is going to continue to build on that success and to achieve the results that we need, which is that we'll end homelessness within 10 years.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you very much.

Hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, continue.



**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. After fulfilling its initial mandate to develop the province's 10-year plan to end homelessness, the role of the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness arguably became somewhat murky. The secretariat's 2009 and 2010 reports to the minister made mention of its monitoring, assessing the implementation of the 10-year plan, regularly reporting to the public on progress, and providing strategic advice and recommendations to the minister, which could include suggesting revision to the plan. However, beyond developing the 10-year plan and producing those two reports, there seems to be little evidence that the secretariat was providing good value for the money. In retrospect can the minister cite even just one example where the secretariat recommended revision to the 10-year plan since it was first unveiled nearly three years ago?

Given that the Calgary Homeless Foundation, which is really at the epicentre of homelessness in Alberta, saw fit to revise and update its 10-year plan at the three-year mark in 2011, does the minister agree that the province would be well advised to do the same? Also, given that the Calgary Homeless Foundation unveiled its June 2011 plan specifically to end youth homelessness in the city and that the demographic is conspicuously absent from Alberta's 10-year plan to end homelessness, will the minister agree that a revision or addition which incorporates this into the province's plan is both appropriate and necessary?

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.  
Hon. minister, to respond.

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Chairman, I can say with a great degree of certainty that the secretariat on homelessness has played an integral role in the initial development of the plan and has played an integral role in the ongoing discussion with our seven partnership organizations across the province relative to updating the plans. They report on an annual basis.

You know, we've moved from before the secretariat on homelessness to a question of sort of managing the homeless in terms of temporary shelters and that sort thing to a dedicated effort to transition homeless people into housing and to provide the necessary wraparound supports. That doesn't come just by sitting around a table as a secretariat. That comes with an integrated, collaborative approach between the municipalities and the province. There have certainly been a lot of resources put into providing housing units but also a lot of resources put into the collaborative support services that are necessary and to focus on how you bring them together to end homelessness. That work has been good work.

Indeed, we are moving to the next level, and we're recognizing the fact that we need to do more than just be monitoring and updating the plan. We need to be action oriented and engaged. The interagency council will bring the players together who are actually front line to help on the governance structure with input from the province and from our ministry and, perhaps, from others. We're working on that governance process, what will actually be involved in that, but the focus will be on how we work together to continue to build on the success to date.

If the hon. member thinks that any of the resources have been wasted in this area, I can assure him that there have not been wasted resources. There's been an incredible amount of focusing of resources because you're always short of resources and you need to get the results. They have got the results, and that's been acknowledged not only provincially but nationally. Alberta has played a leadership role in this area. That's not just the province; that's the province working with municipalities and with the social agencies, coming together and focusing deliberately on a problem,

finding solutions, and achieving success. That is absolutely important.

Now, youth homelessness is obviously a key element and one that has certainly come to the forefront as one of the next pieces to focus on. As the next phase of the implementation of Alberta's plan we're absolutely working on developing a strategy targeted to end and to prevent, not just to deal with the homelessness that exists today but to work on the elements which result in homelessness. That's part of the work that we do, but it's also part of working together with the agency and working with the community support groups that are out there that are seeing these homeless youth as we speak and are helping to encourage them to get off the streets, to find the necessary supports that they need, whether it's to deal with alcohol addiction issues, to deal with family breakdown issues, to deal with drug addiction issues, whatever those challenges are.

We've alluded to some of those earlier in the estimates this afternoon, the need for collaborative work on that area, but one of the important pieces of it is the social agency on the street who is able to be there to provide that first stopping place and then to be able to connect right into the system so that we can zero in on the individual, what their particular barriers to success are, and help to remove those barriers to success.

5:00

I would say to the hon. member that the money that's been spent on the secretariat to date has been money well spent. We do need to transition to the next stage, and that's the interagency council. We're transitioning to the next stage. We don't want to spend unnecessary resources on administration. We want to focus the resources on the front end, but you obviously have to have some resources to build the plan and to develop the collaboration and, indeed, to do the planning framework that's necessary so that the resources that we do have in this area are well targeted and well used and achieve the same kind of result, the same kind of success that we have achieved to date in building towards ending homelessness in this province.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. I was not saying that money was wasted. My question was just: did we get the value for the money? I was not saying that we were wasting money on that, Mr. Minister.

It seems that one key area where both the secretariat and the government have dropped the ball is in the ongoing co-ordination and integration of Alberta's seven community-based homeless management bodies. It was a big deal when we were talking about what is supposed to be the provincially executed plan for ending homelessness. A prime example of this has been the inability of the province to realize strategy 2 of the 10-year plan, which is to establish a provincial electronic information management system and to provide funding for its development.

The Calgary Homeless Foundation, as I'm the sure the minister knows, has opted to develop its own homeless management information system, which is expected to be up and running within two years according to a February 6, 2012, *Calgary Sun* column quoting the CHF president Tim Richter.

Does the introduction of the interagency council on homelessness represent an acknowledgement that efforts to co-ordinate and integrate Alberta's seven community-based homeless management bodies have not always been successful?

Question 2, can the minister explain how the council is going to secure buy-in from Alberta's seven community-based homelessness management bodies in those areas where the secretariat has fallen short? Is the minister willing to admit the reason why the

seven community-based homeless management bodies have not always been keen to co-operate on an initiative such as the electronic information management system is that beyond receiving provincial funding, those bodies wish to make their own decisions and retain local control?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in the development of any successful organization there are always challenges and opportunities, and indeed in this one there have been challenges and opportunities. Those challenges and opportunities, though, have been met with an incredible amount of success in this area. The hon. member refers to a provincial-based information system, and indeed there is a provincial information system, and there's also a Calgary information system. The officials have been working closely together to integrate the data and the information so that they work together.

That's not an unusual approach. You have local organizations who have independence and want to operate in one manner, but I can say that we've been working very closely together and achieving success in that. I can also say that I had the opportunity – I was going to say a few days ago, but it's probably just before Christmas – to sit down with the seven partner agencies and people coming from each of those agencies and had a very good discussion on what the way forward looked like and on how we were going to work together, and there was no reticence at all from the Calgary organization or from any of the other organizations about working together collaboratively to achieve a common success across the province as well as success in their individual areas.

I don't know where the hon. member is getting the information from – I heard him say the front page of some newspaper – but I can say that certainly there are always challenges. I mean, you don't have passionate people working in an area without having some challenges. But those are good challenges and more often than not resulted in good successes. I think the outcomes-based agreements allow us to target the investments where we need them, and we're working very, very well with the agencies now.

The collaborative process I mentioned in terms of setting up the interagency council is meeting with a great deal of enthusiasm. In fact, I would suggest that the individual that the hon. member mentioned from Calgary with respect to the Calgary agency is very much a part of believing that we need to move to the interagency council as the new form of governance in this not as way of denigrating what went before but as a way of building on what went before and moving to the next level. I think there's a great degree of collaboration happening, very much good will, and very good success.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you very much.

The chair is pleased to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much. I'm pleased to be able to have a chance to engage with the minister some more. I'd like to pick up where I left off on the issue of child care. I had asked about sort of the average cost for licensed child care to be broken down by age group. Before the minister has a chance to get up, I was wondering if I could ask just a few more questions on the issue of child care. Then I'll move on to a different subject.

One is: now that you've got employment and immigration as part of your ministry, I would hope or wonder – both, I guess – whether or not you're in a position to do a job of projecting child care needs of Albertans. There was a national agency that was funded out of Ottawa that did a fairly good job of projecting child

care demand on an interjurisdictional basis. Thanks to the not-so-fabulous Stephen Harper government they've lost all their funding, so public access to a lot of the statistical information has now disappeared.

My question is whether your ministry, being in charge of employment and immigration, understanding, of course, that according to some in your government we have a projected human resource shortfall coming forth in the next two years, can assess how many families, either single-parent families or dual-parent families with both parents working, are expected to be here with how many kids. From that, you can basically do an estimate of child care demand, knowing that some people will find a way to get their aunt or their mom to take care of their child. Needless to say, that's an exception, not the rule. So I'm wondering if there's any work being done on that, and if you have any estimates on that basis in terms of going forward.

My next question is about accreditation. I've looked on the website, and maybe I'm looking at the wrong place. I'm looking on the website where it says Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services, and that organization talks about doing this job on behalf of the Alberta government. They talk about having the validators who go out and inspect the accreditations. I'm wondering if there is some place where we can get online access to the reports of the accreditation visits?

I can see a list of who is accredited, but if I click on that place, all it says is that it's a daycare and it's been accredited. It doesn't say anything about what the report was, whether they were one of the ones that were first not successful and then subsequently were successful, what the concerns were, that kind of thing. Given that previous ministers – and I'm sure this minister would never do this – have suggested that parents have a buyer beware sort of obligation when it comes to child care. I wonder if it's possible to get access to that information.

Finally, the minister mentioned in response to a question from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View that there is an 80 per cent occupancy rate in child care and then started to equate that with the school issue, which I doubt is exactly the same. Nonetheless, I'm just wondering if there are any estimates within your ministry on what the empty spaces cost and whether we're seeing that 20 per cent nonoccupancy as being related to geography or whether it's related to them being higher cost positions or what the situation is. Is there an analysis of what that 20 per cent vacancy is caused by?

Associated with that is a request for information on an average wait-list because you know that there are lots of places out there that do have huge wait-lists, and people are waiting to get their kids in there. So I'm wondering if there is any similar data that's been put together on that?

One more question for you on child care. Last year I asked the previous minister how much money publicly traded child care companies had received from the ministry primarily through the accreditation grant funding but if there was any other start-up funding. My understanding is that at this point almost every publicly traded child care corporation has been bought up by one child care corporation called Edleun, which is the one that the ministry referred me to last year in answer to my question. I don't know if that continues to be the only publicly traded child care corporation. I'm getting a bit of a nod over there. I'm wondering if I could hear how much money they received in the last budget year.

5:10

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

Hon. minister, please.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The hon. member was interested in the average monthly fee for age group by type of program. I can indicate that for daycares, for example, for infants under 12 months the average was \$837; 12 months to under 19 months, \$861; toddlers 19 months to under three years, \$768; preschoolers three years to less than 4.5 years, \$728; kindergarten, which is 54 months to less than seven years and not yet attending school and grade 1 to 6, \$700. Family day homes for those various selfsame categories would be \$549, \$587, \$636, \$611, and \$589. Out of school care for the latter two categories, which is kindergarten, 54 months to less than seven years, is \$479; school age, seven years plus attending school, \$368. Those are the numbers with respect to the averages across the province.

With respect to the last question that the hon. member asked, the only publicly traded child care company that I'm aware of that's licensed to offer child care in Alberta is Edleun. It owns 41 licensed child care programs in the province, 25 daycare programs, 16 out of school care programs; in 2010-11, April 1 to March 31, 2011, \$1.8 million accreditation and \$4 million subsidy; in 2011-12, April 1 to December 31, \$1.9 million accreditation and \$4.4 million subsidy.

With respect to the online access to reports I'm given to understand that we don't actually put the reports online. That might be an interesting thing to explore, but you can go through a child care lookup tool, and with the child care lookup tool you can determine whether there were any violations, any problems identified. You can take a look to see what has come out of accreditation reports with respect to our inspections, with respect to whether there have been any violations or concerns raised, and you can use the child care lookup tool to do that. I am interested in the issue of whether accreditation reports could be put on, and if that's something we could do, I'd be interested in looking at that because I do think parents need to know what has happened.

With respect to wait-lists we're doing an analysis of the implementation of an online wait-list registry for parents and child care service providers. We're looking to see how we could implement that. Again, the key is to help parents make appropriate choices for their children, and we're certainly interested to the extent that we can do that. Our first priority for resources, obviously, would be to make sure that people had access.

There was another question in there. Predicting future demand: we don't actually have right now a good demographic analysis model for predicting future demand. It's something that we'll be looking at going forward in terms of how we can replace the information that was there. We do have a number of ways that we can use data that's readily available now. Just as an example, you mentioned people coming to the province. We know that, for example, with 5,000 provincial nominee certificates we get 7,400 people. You can figure out in that, you know, that a certain number of them will be children. So there are ways that we use existing data to help us with that process.

I know in Education we had a very, very good demographic modelling tool, and we can certainly access some of that information. We've had a baby boom in the province, so health has the information for us relative to how many babies have been born over the last five years. We can use some of that to model, but of course there's an extra piece that needs to go in that because not every child that was born is going to need daycare. There's some work that needs to be done on that, but that's an area that's certainly of interest to us to project what we need going forward.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. That's very helpful. There was one question that popped into my head that followed up there right before projection. Oh, yes, a waiting list. I think that's great if you can develop an online waiting list. I think that would be very helpful to parents to be able to sort of bounce around and check where they should go. I'm wondering if you can provide me with any information on child care availability, waiting lists, and/or extra space or shortfall, as far as you know, on a regional basis. That 20 per cent of open spaces: are they all in Edmonton? Are they all in Calgary? Are there parts of the province that have a tremendous shortage of child care versus areas of the province that do not? Again, I'm still wondering if you've done any analysis of that 20 per cent that's not filled, what the description is of those spaces that are not filled. What's their average cost, for instance, and where are they located?

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister to respond, please.

**Mr. Hancock:** Yeah. I'm not sure I can give the hon. member the precise data that she's looking for. I can tell you that of our 25,803 daycare spaces, there's 82 per cent enrolment; of our 19,664 out-of-school care spaces, we have 73 per cent enrolment; of 8,512 family day homes, there's a 75 per cent enrolment; and for 14,834 preschool spaces, an estimated 80 per cent enrolment; so an overall 78 per cent enrolment for the 68,813 spaces.

With respect to regions I can tell you how the spaces are broken down by region. It wouldn't be a surprise to you that region 6, which, I believe, is Edmonton, has 31.5 per cent of all program spaces and that region 3, which, I presume, is Calgary, has 32.6 per cent of the spaces.

I can't tell you off the top the occupancy rates in each of those areas. Region 1 is 6.1 per cent, region 2 is 3.6 per cent, region 4 is 7.8 per cent, and region 5 is 2.9 per cent. The bulk of the spaces, obviously, are in the Edmonton and Calgary regions. I don't have at hand the occupancy rates per region, but I'm being advised that it's pretty consistent across the province in each of those areas at 80 per cent.

You'll appreciate that demographically within those regions there could be very serious shifts in areas. I mean, I know that, again, in my own area there's been huge growth in population. I have 74,000 constituents right now, a huge growth in the south end of my constituency, and there hasn't been a similar growth in daycare spaces. As I mentioned to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, as new schools open and people look at how they're going to do their planning for family and for their life in terms of how they get to and from work and school, et cetera, there's been considerable concern around how you get to school when there's no daycare in the neighbourhood.

So there are issues there. No question about that. The market is responding, as I indicated. When I say the market, I'm not just talking about the private sector. I'm talking about not-for-profit as well. Without government capital subsidy there were 2,000 spaces created over the first eight months of this year, 2,119 net spaces over that period of time. So the market is responding.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much for that information. That's helpful. I look forward to going back and crunching some of those numbers and seeing where to go from there.

I'd like to switch gears quickly – I always say quickly, and it ends up being a bit of a fruitless hope of mine – to the area of child protection, which, as you know, I'm quite concerned about. I'm wondering if I could just start, before we get into a discussion of it tonight – I hope we do get a chance to have a discussion because I think there are some sort of policy-based issues that

warrant a good discussion. Nonetheless, I'm just wondering if I could get some information from you.

I was looking at your annual report from last year. Of course, we saw the number of children who in 2010 to 2011 had been receiving services from your ministry and who had experienced either an injury requiring hospitalization, or there was a fatality. I'm wondering if you can provide me with this most recent year's numbers. I realize that we've not quite gotten to March 31, but if you can give me the information there up to your most recent date possible, that would be very helpful.

In doing that, I'm also wondering if you could just clarify for me whether the term "receiving services" means the following: a child who is under a permanent guardianship order, a child who is under a temporary guardianship order, and a child whose family is in receipt of family enhancement services but remains in the custody of the family. That's my understanding of what receiving services means, but I just would like to be sure that we're comparing apples to apples.

**5:20**

My next question is related to some of your performance measures. In your annual report one of your performance measures is tracking, you know, how many children who have received services do not receive additional services within the 12 months following that. I have two questions arising from that. The first is: when you are looking at the numbers that I just previously asked about, the injuries and the fatalities, do you look at or track how those kids do within the year of not receiving services? For instance, if the fatality occurs of a child who is no longer officially receiving services because the file has been closed but it's still within that 12-month period that is part of your performance measure, are those numbers collected or reported anywhere?

The reason I say that is because it's a very blunt and not the most effective tool of measuring whether the speed with which files are closed is appropriate and effective. One of the reasons I raise that is that it does link up a bit to what some people are worried about as being the outcome of outcome-based services. It may or may not ultimately be the outcome of outcome-based services, but it's one thing to check.

The final thing that I'd like in this area – actually, I'm running out of time, and I suspect that you'll talk to the answer; I'm going to ask you about three more questions – is if you could just provide me with the number of children currently in your ministry that are covered by a permanent guardianship order, the number of children covered by a temporary guardianship order, the number of children who are receiving family enhancement services while still in the home, then how that compares with last year, and as well the number of foster families that you currently have and the number of those which are kinship care families. I'm sorry if the previous member asked that. If they did and you gave that information already, then just tell me. Anyway, the number of foster families and, of that, the subset of those which are kinship care families and whether that represents an increase or decrease from last year.

The final thing, which I hope we can discuss, but I think we're probably going to run out of time, is that I've had people who work in child protection raise to me the concern that essentially the acuity, for lack of a better term and to sound very technical, of the kids who are in care and/or receiving services has increased dramatically. I've had someone say – and this is just a ballpark figure, and by all means tell me if I'm wrong – that 10 years ago we might have had this number of kids that we were serving for this dollar, that what's happened over the last 10 years is that the number of kids we're serving has dropped by almost 50 per cent

but that the number of dollars has almost doubled, that we're putting a lot of money into a very, very challenged group of kids, which is good because we need to – we can't not – but what's happening then is that other kids who might have received less intrusive but meaningful supports from the ministry are no longer getting that support because we're pushed into this situation of being intensely reactive.

I'm wondering if you're able to provide any observation on that, particularly from a statistical point of view, in relation to what I heard, which was that the per capita cost of children receiving services is going up and the number of children is going down. That's a proposition that's been put to me. If I'm wrong, then by all means clarify.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you. We only have about 40 seconds left in this section.

**Mr. Hancock:** Okay. I'll start at the end and then maybe can just send you some of the data because that's easy to send. The last piece is particularly important. Acuity levels are going up, so fewer children, higher acuity levels, more resource intensive – absolutely – but that does not mean that others are being left behind. In fact, one of the things that I was very pleased with when the Premier asked me to take on the role of Minister of Human Services was that she alluded to the fact that I had previous experience in the health portfolio and the Education portfolio and that one of the things we were doing was building a wraparound services model so that we could help children and families before they got into that level of acuity.

I think there are great indications that that's working very well. Yes, the acuity levels are high and the resource-intensive piece is high, but we're also working on the other side with the wraparound services to help the other children before they get to that level.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is next, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Well, thank you very much. In reviewing the financial data, numbers are numbers, and of course this is important. I've seen some increases in some areas, some decreases in other areas. My first question would be: could the minister talk about an area that is concerning him and that has been identified from within his team relative to the numbers that have been presented to him as a minister; specifically, where Albertans could be put, potentially, by you not being able to fulfill your objective and your mandate? Is there any one area that you view within your ministry that you would have loved to have been able to see additional resources placed in to be able to help? That's either dollars or people.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Chairman, yes. That's a tough question. Obviously, in any portfolio there are always more things that you can do. You have to be very prudent with Albertans' resources. I think it's very important for us to have a policy framework so that we understand what the outcomes are and understand the roles and responsibilities, what things should be done by families and by individuals, what things are community issues, how we can as government support families and individuals and communities rather than trying to do things ourselves. But you can always utilize more resources, absolutely.

I'd hesitate to want to segregate out any particular area. Aboriginal children: you know, 67 per cent of our children in care are aboriginal, much higher than in the general population level. Now, that number is skewed a little bit by the fact that the numbers of nonaboriginal children have gone down, so the percentage has gone up, but that just masks the fact that we've got some real issues in helping young aboriginal children to be successful. That's an area that we need to devote some resources to, and quite frankly we need to find a way to get past jurisdictional issues and get right to the nub of helping children and helping children be successful. That's not just a matter of throwing more resources in it. It's obviously a question of how we work better together on that holistic level.

There's no question that, particularly for aboriginal on-reserve children, which are not in our jurisdiction at all – they're Alberta children, and Alberta certainly not only needs to benefit from their success, but we also pay the cost of failure – the social cost of failure is way too high in so many different areas.

I would love to see us be able to have more resources available and a better co-ordination of resources on the mental health side. Certainly, early access to mental health help for children and adults but for children particularly is important. While we've got some very good intervention processes and we're building better collaborative models and wraparound services and working well with Education – and I'm excited about the idea of school nurses, for example. I know we have a few experiences where we have mental health classrooms available, but that's an area where we could actually utilize resources very well.

On the occupational health and safety side I am chagrined by the fact that I get reports on injured workers and people killed in the workplace. Obviously, you cannot put an inspector on every corner – that's not going to do the job – but we do have to find some way to deal with that. I mean, we had, I think, three people who fell off roofs over the last year and had a security rope. They had a security harness, but the rope was too long. That's just unacceptable. It's not a matter, necessarily, of devoting more resources to it although we have hired more occupational health and safety officers last year and this year, and we're going to need to be able to put more emphasis on that side. We have a lot of businesses in this province. We've got a lot of young workers. We've got too high an accident rate, and we have to figure out how to deal with it.

Those are some of the areas where I'd like to have more resources.

5:30

If a page was available, I'd have a page deliver this to the hon. member. I have a whole package of drink coasters on pregnancy and alcohol. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in this province is a real issue; it's an issue right across the country. It's very preventable. I want to send these coasters over to the hon. member because members of his party are distributing coasters on .05. I really believe that if they want to engage in responsible alcohol advocacy, it ought to be where they send coasters which encourage people not to drink when they're pregnant out to the bars and the places that they're sending drink coasters to. Now, that would be a very responsible thing to do. That would save a lot of resources for this province because we have about 450 children born every year with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. It's entirely preventable.

Those children face a lifetime of challenge, and we face a lifetime of challenge from those children because there are so many issues. When I was Minister of Justice, Mr. Chairman, I met with the Chief Judge then, Ernie Walter. He would tell me about

the frustration that courts felt with these children and youth and adults with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in their courts, with no significant thing that they could do in terms of dealing with those issues. Those people just cycle through and through and through and create more issues with respect to it.

There are ways of dealing with them, but they're very cost intensive to help those individuals lead a significant life and make a contribution and to support them in doing that. It would be better if we were able to find a way to prevent it.

I would urge the hon. member to talk to his caucus colleagues, distribute drink coasters that actually can make a difference, and invest in helping to save people from a lifetime of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder rather than encourage people to drink and then perhaps drive.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have to ask the chair about him talking about our coasters. Is that relevant to this particular budget discussion? I'd like to know. Since you've allowed that liberty, I'm going to take advantage of that liberty at this time.

Up to this point I actually thought the hon. member was acting quite ministerial, but then, based on his last comments, he actually started sounding quite political. That being the case, allow me to move on.

Obviously, the minister would like to partner with the Wildrose on coasters. It'd be my pleasure to partner with you on those coasters, for sure, on both coasters, because it is about keeping about our highways and Albertans safe. That is so important.

I'd like to move on for a moment to occupational health and safety, which is part of your responsibility, and in doing so, I want to share with you a story. It's a story from when I first was elected mayor of the oil sands capital city, Fort McMurray. It was back in 1992, when a tragic accident had happened in Alberta. I think it was on Christmas Eve. I don't know if you were aware, but it was an accident – and you don't really have to look for any papers on what the question is that I'm going to be asking – where a municipal worker in the greater Edmonton area had to do a sewer line break and went down into the excavation without the cage. Ultimately the Albertan suffocated.

I want to impart some wisdom, and I welcome his response on this. First of all, does the minister – and let us hope there are no workplace accidents, but statistically there appear to be – personally call the CEO of the company if, in fact, there is an accident or a death? Let's hope there is neither, but if there is, does the minister employ that tactic?

The reason I say that is that back in 1992 as the mayor we had municipal workers, and after seeing what had taken place in another municipality in the greater Edmonton area, I went around as mayor to work sites to see what was going on. In actual fact, there were a few situations where there was violation, in my view, of what our workplace policies were. What I did at the time was suspend the worker that was not following the actual workplace policy that was being violated.

But you know what I also did? I suspended the managers above him. You know why? I'm thinking that if this worker can feel comfortable trying to violate a policy and the actual supervisors are maybe allowing this to happen, why isn't there that type of accountability? No matter what worker is hurt, for there to be a culture where someone could get hurt, my question is: do you call the CEO directly and indicate that there has been a death in a company? It's not a phone call that anyone ever wants to make.

Really, what I found interesting was the culture, that I wasn't just holding the worker accountable; I was holding his bosses accountable, too. I impart that wisdom to you because it was a terrible situation. I would welcome the approach that you're taking as a minister in promoting this type of workplace safety so that you never have to make that call.

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Chairman, I think that's a very interesting approach. The short answer is that, no, I don't make those sort of calls. The longer answer would be that there might be a significant difference in workload between circulating through the sites of the municipality of Fort McMurray and visiting all the workplace sites in the province, even those where there are injuries.

But the point the hon. member is making is a very important one. Workplace safety is the responsibility of the worker, who has the right to say no, to not work in unsafe conditions, and who has an obligation to follow the safety standards that are required. But it's also the responsibility of the employer to make sure that safety standards are followed and that the right equipment is available and that safety standards are first and foremost on the work site. So it's a dual responsibility. There's no question. The point that the hon. member makes is extremely important.

Enforcement isn't the whole answer to anything, but what we are doing is moving forward with two pieces of an enforcement piece: a ticketing process so that an inspector or a peace officer can issue a ticket on-site to a worker who is violating safety regulations so that there is an immediate impact on that individual, drawing it to their attention – of course, they can issue a stop work order, as they do now – and we're looking at the ability to ticket the supervisor or the employer as well, the supervisor perhaps on an individual basis, but also, then, administrative penalties, to be able to look at what an employer may have done or not done and put in place administrative penalties.

One of the problems with immediate impact on the failure to follow safety regulations is that the investigative process and the process of issuing a stop work order, which may or may not have any impact or may have just a limited impact, or doing the necessary investigation to get to the seriousness of a prosecution is problematic. So ticketing penalties and administrative penalties – they're used in other areas; this is not an overly burdensome process – we're going to be bringing forward in the very near future, over the course of the next year, to make sure that we focus in on that.

We've had campaigns on commercial construction, on powered mobile equipment, on young workers, and on residential construction. Just to highlight the frustration in this area, I did an announcement last fall about the results of the residential construction inspection process and the violations that we found and the issues that needed to be dealt with, and it wasn't just a block or two from where that announcement was made that a worker fell off a roof and there was a fatality. What happened was that they had a safety harness, but his rope was too long.

We need to deal with those issues. I'm not dealing with them by phoning the CEO, but I am dealing with them by drawing to the attention of the company in a very dramatic way, with an administrative penalty, and to the workers in a very dramatic way, with a direct impact on their pocketbook, that they have responsibility equally for safety on the work site.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you. Certainly, Mr. Chair, that's free advice. I found it to be significant when as mayor I would call directly the general manager of public works, indicating that we're holding the chain of people involved. I appreciate that.

5:40

I want to move on to another, totally separate topic. As I went back and looked at the four ministries that were combined into this one ministry that you're responsible for, I noticed that the minister's office budget – and I'm not sure how the number came up, with \$903,000 for the minister's budget – has dropped by \$300,000. I find this interesting.

I also find interesting that the deputy minister's budget dropped from \$1.2 million to \$800,000, which is \$400,000. Now, my question is: have you laid people off in doing this, or where was this money actually going? Clearly, I think the minister can agree. Having been in three or four ministries myself, to see a drop from \$900,000 to \$600,000, I have to ask the minister: is this a shell game? Or is the work being done somewhere else, and it's just no longer in your office? Or is the work still being done, and it's no longer in the deputy minister's office? I need, really, to know where hundreds of thousands of dollars have gone.

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Chairman, I'm very chagrined to inform the hon. member that, notwithstanding that we went from two and a half or perhaps three ministers to one, the minister that remains in that portfolio has not had an increase in pay over the last four years.

I mean, there are obviously some salary issues. When you go from several ministers' offices to one minister's office, even though I have incredible support staff, we don't have the same number of support staff that all of the ministers' offices would have had. There are economies of scale. I wouldn't necessarily say that those were layoffs although, you know, certainly some people found employment in other areas as a result of the changes, and those are sort of the normal changes when there are shuffles or changes of ministries. We've reorganized it, obviously, and as I say, we're carrying on the workload with fewer people and with the same salaries.

In the deputy minister's office I'd suggest it's a similar piece. The deputy minister has now, I think, 13 assistant deputy ministers reporting to him. He obviously has some staff to help him with that. He's a man of many talents and abilities, but he still only has 24 hours in the day, so there are lots of staff working with him to achieve these things and to provide the co-ordination that we need. Obviously, there are economies of scale when you take, essentially, three and a half ministries and make it into one.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you. I appreciate that, Mr. Chair.

I would offer the comment, with the latitude of the chair, that as you know that the Wildrose plan when they form the government, if successful, is to go to 16 ministries, which would mean even further consolidation. I would be very interested in the consolidation that took place in your area. The fact is that you can still provide the service?

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. minister, we have about two minutes and 30 seconds.

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, yes, Mr. Chairman. I think we can provide the services. I would point out to the hon. member that in any effective organization you can only have so many priorities at a time. So in terms of ministerial advocacy, you know, I don't actually have a much larger job than I had before. I can't say that for the deputy and the ADMs. I can only focus on a number of things. I can only be in so many places. There are a lot of invitations, for example, that come in from organizations that

would like the minister to appear at an AGM or an important meeting for them. Luckily, I have a parliamentary assistant, the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, who's done an incredible amount of work going around the province and meeting with business and industry in terms of the employment side. We have the chair of the secretariat on aboriginal youth.

**Ms Notley:** How about unions? Have you met with unions?

**Mr. Hancock:** I've met with the unions. I've met a lot with the unions, as a matter of fact. Mr. Chairman, I toured the plumbers' and pipefitters' new college, which is an incredible place. I've met with the leadership of the building trades union, a number of the leaders in that area, and had some very good conversations with them about things like how we can attract more workers to the province, how we can skill workers in the province. I'd like to say to the hon. member that, for example, we've met with the trade unions with respect to a project called Trade Winds. It's a cost-intensive piece but a very effective way of bringing aboriginal youth into the trades. I've met with them and actually had an opportunity to see the site when I toured that area.

I would caution the hon. member about, you know, looking at a cost-reduction strategy across government by reducing ministries. In theory, if you follow that, you could reduce it to one and just have one grand ministry. Well, of course, you're not going to be able to meet with the people who need to be met with and consult with Albertans in an appropriate way. You have to make sure that there's some cohesion to the way departments are brought together. In the Ministry of Human Services that cohesion is there, but I wouldn't say that that would be appropriate all across government.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much.  
How much time do I have?

**The Deputy Chair:** Twelve seconds.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Twelve seconds.

Will the minister commit to provide in writing the answers, specifically, for any outstanding questions that haven't been answered today?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Chair, I believe that I've answered the hon. member's questions rather fully and thoroughly, but if there's anything that I have not answered fully and thoroughly, in my opinion, then I would be more than happy to sit down with him at any time and continue the conversation.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you. Let the record show that the hon. minister did respond.

We now have about – let's see – seven minutes left in the three-hour debate, so we'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, bearing in mind that you have about seven minutes.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few questions relating to labour issues, the labour code review and labour shortage. The government recently had two Edmonton lawyers quietly conduct a review of the Labour Relations Code at the urging of a coalition of antiunion employers in the construction sector. The minister reported in question period on December 1, 2011, that he had just received the first report from those lawyers that same day and would be reviewing the material in short order. What was the report's principal finding, and what did the minister conclude about the effectiveness of the government's

legislation; that is, Bill 26, the Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2008, that was enacted to put limits on MERFing, market enhancement recovery funds? Is the minister prepared to declare this matter dead and stop threatening to curtail the few tools that unions have in Alberta, and will the minister take that report public so that all Albertans can examine the objectivity of the claims?

With respect to the labour shortage a December 2011 Human Services news release reported that the province could face a cumulative labour shortage of up to 114,000 workers across all sectors by 2021. Some occupations with anticipated shortages include a variety of trades, health care workers, financial services, retail sectors, public service careers, restaurant- and tourism-related jobs. Aging demographics, a strong economy, and global competition for skilled labour are said to be some of the biggest reasons for the forecasted labour shortage.

Can the minister outline specifically what he's doing to improve labour market conditions for groups that we generally describe as harder to employ, including aboriginal people . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but could I ask the conversations to be brought down a little bit? It's difficult to hear the speaker.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

. . . youth, immigrants, mature workers, and people with disabilities? What is Alberta doing to press the federal government to raise the cap on the number of immigrant workers allowed to come to the province, and does the minister foresee any willingness on the part of the federal government to change this? We heard recently that it was boosted to 10,000. Where does that fit in the province's needs?

Can the minister explain where the federal government's arbitrary annual cap for immigrant worker admissions to the province comes from? It was reported recently in the media, as I say, that Alberta wants the federal government to raise the cap from 5,000 to 10,000. Does that still hold true in light of the latest labour shortage projections?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll start with the last one. We, of course, would prefer that the cap was taken off, but we could live with a cap of 10,000 in the short term, moving up to 10,000 even. Any movement would be helpful because we do have a lineup of people who could be very good contributors to our province on a long-term basis, and we would like to be able to utilize that.

We've closed, for example, the family stream. If we had no cap or a larger cap, we could do a family stream or an entrepreneurial stream. We have temporary foreign workers who are ready, willing, and able to become Albertans, and they're leaving and going to Saskatchewan because they can get into the Saskatchewan plan or Manitoba because they don't have quite the intensity that we have, where they have the ability to have more flexible streams. Manitoba, for example, has the 5,000 cap as well, but they don't have the same intensity that we have in the need for workers, so they're looking at increasing their population. With a 5,000 nominee cap we get 7,400 people, and they get close to 11,500 people because they have different aims.

5:50

So, yes, we're still working on it. In fact, the Deputy Premier is down in Ottawa today meeting with the Alberta caucus, meeting tonight with the minister, and encouraging them to continue to work even though we're pleased that there's been progress made. We've had very good discussions with the federal government on this particular issue, and some of the changes that they're making on the federal level will certainly help us with respect to the Canadian experience class, with respect to moving trades into the education class, and in some of the other areas will help us with the worker piece.

With respect to employing Albertans, certainly there are strategies. I mentioned Trade Winds. There are other strategies. We have the Connecting the Dots strategy, which deals specifically with the aboriginal workforce and bringing aboriginal people into the workforce at a greater level. We have the mature workers strategy. We're working on a youth strategy. Those are three areas, in particular, where we need to focus more in terms of how we encourage and support workers coming into the workforce.

I suppose the other area that I think we need to be more effective in is helping persons with barriers to success, or disabilities, to use their ability. It's always great to be able to see that in times when there's a shortage of workers, there are more opportunities open because employers are more willing to embrace people that they might have not otherwise looked at. It's unfortunate that sometimes they wait for that, but we can take advantage of the piece that we have.

The hon. member mentioned reports. I don't remember specifically which one I was referring to in December, but there were two areas where we were asking for legal advice to the minister in areas with respect to the code. With respect to the area of competitiveness I've asked the lawyers involved to go back and do more comprehensive work relative to what is happening in our neighbouring provinces and those sorts of areas. Because that's advice to the minister, I'm not prepared to comment at the moment as to what that advice was. Suffice it to say that we're interested in competitiveness, and we're interested in looking at barriers to competitiveness. If some are brought forward, we will have a full and open discussion with all sectors of the work community, both employers and unions, relative to what, if anything, needs to be done.

With respect to MERFing, I can tell the hon. member that I'm having those discussions. I've met with the trade unions. I've met with contractor associations. We've had discussions on that, where I've asked for information with respect to the size of MERF funds and those sorts of things. [Mr. Hancock's speaking time expired] It's very unfortunate that my time is up.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you very much, hon. members.

Motion 6, agreed to back on February 8, 2012, requires us to now rise and report progress.

[Mr. Zwozdesky in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Committee of Supply has had under consideration resolutions for the Department of Human Services relating to the 2012-13 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013, reports progress, and requests leave to sit again.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Does the Assembly concur with the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Those opposed, please say no. So ordered.

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm tempted to move on with some legislation, but in view of the hour I would move that we adjourn until 7:30 p.m.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader has moved that the Assembly stand adjourned until 7:30 this evening, at which time we will reconvene in Committee of Supply. Is that your wish?

**Mr. Hancock:** I understand we would reconvene in Committee of Supply in order to deal with the votes previously scheduled.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]







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