



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
Fifth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday, March 22, 2012

Issue 22

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)	Johnston, Art, Calgary-Hays (PC)
Allred, Ken, St. Albert (PC)	Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL), Official Opposition Whip
Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)	Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC)
Anderson, Rob, Airdrie-Chestermere (W), Wildrose Opposition House Leader	Knight, Mel, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)
Benito, Carl, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)	Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)
Berger, Hon. Evan, Livingstone-Macleod (PC)	Liepert, Hon. Ron, Calgary-West (PC)
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)	Lindsay, Fred, Stony Plain (PC)
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Montrose (PC)	Lukaszuk, Hon. Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)
Blackett, Lindsay, Calgary-North West (PC)	Lund, Ty, Rocky Mountain House (PC)
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL), Official Opposition Deputy Leader, Official Opposition House Leader	MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (AL)
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-Calmr (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)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC), Deputy Government Whip	Prins, Ray, Lacombe-Ponoka (PC)
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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)
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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
	Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)
	Woo-Paw, Teresa, Calgary-Mackay (PC)
	Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 66 Alberta Liberal: 8 Wildrose: 4 New Democrat: 2 Alberta: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 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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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
Notley
Sarich
Tarchuk
Vacant

Standing Committee on Energy

Chair: Mrs. Ady
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Hehr
Hinman
Jacobs
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Fawcett
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MacDonald
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Deputy Chair: Mr. Campbell

Amery
Anderson
Elniski
Evans
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Mason
Rogers

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Calahasen McFarland
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Drysdale Sarich
Evans Snelgrove
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Hinman Xiao
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Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Amery Mitzel
Boutilier Notley
Calahasen Pastoor
DeLong Quest
Doerksen Stelmach
Forsyth Swann
Jacobs Tarchuk
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Leskiw Zwozdesky
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. MacDonald
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Forsyth Xiao
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Standing Committee on Public Health and Safety

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

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 22, 2012

[The Speaker in the chair] [applause]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. As we conclude for this week our work in this Assembly, we renew our energies with thanks so that we may continue our work with the people in the constituencies we represent. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: In the Speaker's gallery today are some people special to me that I would like to introduce to you: first of all, my wife, Kristina; my son, Michael; and my daughter-in-law, Robyn; and, from 26 years in my office, Beverly; Jocelyn, who's been with me for 10 years; Audrey, who is back at the office; and Danielle.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of this Legislative Assembly some outstanding grade 6 students from St. Anthony school in my community of Drayton Valley. They're joined by their teachers, Mr. Leggo and Mrs. Haggerty, and also by Mrs. Sherri Gow and Samantha Williams. It's such an honour to have you students here today. They joined me in my office earlier, and we had a nice picture together. I would ask you all to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Intergovernmental, International and Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Dallas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you a group from Westpark middle school in my constituency. These students are part of a bright, enthusiastic class here to tour the Legislature and participate in a mock Legislature and observe the members of the House. I hope this visit has been a beneficial learning experience for these young citizens as they learn more about the political traditions and processes of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. The guests are seated in the members' gallery. I would like to invite them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly two grade 6 classes from Glen Avon school in St. Paul. Fifty-two students made the two-and-a-half-hour trip to come to the Legislature. They are known as the Panthers, and they're very proud of their school and very proud of their community. They are here with the help of their bus drivers, Don and Christine Kriaski; teacher aides Debbie Rak, Val Gadowski, and Melissa Laurie; and teachers Shane Boyko, Karen Kendel, and Linda O'Neill, who, I

must add, is celebrating her birthday today with her students. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that everyone give them the traditional warm welcome. I'd ask them to stand, please.

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Redford: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly a group of students from the University of Alberta and Grant MacEwan Progressive Conservative associations: from the University of Alberta a very good friend of mine from Calgary, Aaron Pollock, who is the president of the group; Daniel Rose; Andrea Stempien; Shannon McLaughlin; Katarina Duke; and Steven Kwasny; and from Grant MacEwan Arundee Sandhu and Max Yuan. They are wonderful, passionate Albertans. They are seated in the public gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a Public Affairs Bureau intern, Aura Juarez. Aura came here from Nicaragua with her family in 1988, settling in Medicine Hat for 18 years. After graduating from Mount Royal University's public relations program in 2010, she moved to Edmonton to pursue her desire to work within government. She currently works as a public affairs officer in our ministry's branch. She expressed a keen interest in the Municipal Affairs portfolio. I'm honoured that she's part of the team, and all of the people in our department have been very thankful to have Aura work with them over this time period. She's seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through to all members of this Legislature my constituents Dick and Joanne Barendregt. They have been home-educating parents for 25 years and have nine children and seven grandchildren and more on the way. I also believe they were former constituents of yours, hard-working constituents. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Tribute to the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to thank the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for his many years of outstanding service to Albertans. The hon. member was first elected to this Assembly in 1979 and has held many positions during a distinguished career in the public service. These positions have included five different cabinet portfolios as well as chair and member of many standing and government committees. He was also Deputy Premier from 1992 to 1994, and he has served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly since 1997.

I have the privilege to be the fifth Premier who has served this province during the time that he has been a member of this Assembly, and I am so happy to have had that opportunity. I

remember as a teenager with a group of PC Youth of Alberta students meeting the hon. member. He had overseen a number of portfolios at that time, and I welcomed the chance to talk with him and learn from him, as I do today.

He was always incredibly supportive, helpful, and generous with his time, never hesitating to offer me the wealth of his accumulated knowledge or encouragement, and I don't believe that my experience was unique. I speak for many in this Assembly who have had the privilege of serving with the hon. member when I say that he has always been willing to share his expertise and perspective with us, much to our benefit. He has unfailingly treated every member of this Assembly with fairness and respect.

His passion for the parliamentary system is also well known. He initiated *The Centennial Series*, highlighting democracy in Alberta from 1905 to 2006, and he initiated the School at the Legislature program, inviting students from across this province to come to the capital for a week of democracy, meeting their MLAs one-on-one and participating in mock parliaments, as well as the MLA for a Day program for high school students.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, you have served with exemplary grace and dignity, providing outstanding and effective service to your constituents. In your role as Speaker you have brought an incredible breadth of knowledge to the Assembly and applied it in the service of the people of this province for 33 years. Your focus and support through the Legislative Assembly Office has ensured that members are provided with the most efficient and modern array of services that they need to perform their duties.

Your legacy is unique, something that we will treasure and draw on in the future. More than just about anyone else, you helped to prepare our province for the 21st century even as you played a pivotal role in defending and preserving Alberta's way of life, and this Assembly will be the poorer for your absence.

I am tremendously proud that I have had the opportunity to serve alongside you. You will be truly missed. I wish you a happy retirement with your family and all the best in the years ahead. After your long and faithful service to Alberta, you deserve no less. [Standing ovation]

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, allow me to echo the congratulations and warm thoughts of the Premier.

My House leader has reminded me that when you and Grant Mitchell were the House leaders of government and Official Opposition caucuses, you worked together to change the standing orders so that MLAs would enjoy the freedom to deliver private members' statements. Today any MLA can stand in front of the House for two minutes and speak without fear of retribution on any subject he or she pleases, a great step forward for freedom of speech in the Legislature and for personal expression. I know that all MLAs in this House appreciate this bold initiative, and that's because of you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to remind the Assembly of the Speaker's obvious care for the grounds and his efforts to forge a stronger bond between the Alberta Legislature and the community and the citizens that we serve and with citizens and leaders beyond our borders. Every day and every Canada Day our Speaker opens up this Chamber to all visitors, a rare privilege amongst parliamentary democracies. For that, thank you.

Nor should we ignore the fact that the Speaker is beloved by the people of his home constituency, who have elected and re-elected him to office since 1979. This is an impressive track record for any public servant and a measure of the esteem in which the people of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock hold the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you're a courageous man. In the early days of democracy the men and women in your position often found themselves on the wrong end of an executioner's axe. We the Official Opposition are pleased that you displayed such courage in taking this position since 1979 and shall escape this Assembly with your head firmly affixed on your broad shoulders. As you have led all the members of this Assembly, you've been a teacher to all of us, you have been a peacemaker, and, Mr. Speaker, personally, you've been a confidante. When as an MLA I had questions and concerns or I needed someone to talk to or sometimes even a little hug, you've been there.

Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for what you and your family have done to serve this great province and this great Legislature to improve the democracy of Alberta. Thank you, and God bless you in your retirement. [applause]

The Speaker: I have received several notes that there may be additional members who would like to participate, so I ask this question with great trepidation. It needs a unanimous response from the Assembly. Does any member oppose additional members wanting to participate? If so, say no.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Mr. Boutillier: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When you said trepidation, I know that that was not aimed at me at all.

Indeed, what a pleasure it is to stand as an opposition member with the Wildrose caucus and say to you, with your former profession as a teacher, that there have clearly been many teachable moments in this Assembly. I know that all political parties thank you for those teachable moments. Truly, that teacher that is in you, in your DNA, you have shared with all Albertans in this Assembly. You are truly a great parliamentarian. That no one will ever, ever dispute.

But, most importantly, my observation has been this. I had the honour as a minister of the Crown to speak in your constituency many years ago – and it was an honour for me to speak about you – and what I observed that night in your constituency of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock was an incredible respect for your bosses, which is something that you have never forgotten, that the people of Alberta are your boss and the people in your constituency have been and always will be your boss. I sincerely say that you have never forgotten that teachable moment, and I think it's something all of us will never forget.

Now, I will say, with a bit of humour, that Winston Churchill once said that if everyone was thinking the same, then no one would be thinking. I do know that sometimes you and I might not have been thinking on the same wavelength, but I do want to let you know that I have the utmost respect for your intellect in those teachable moments.

My father was a teacher. You have reminded me of my father on many occasions with your sternness. I do remember as a schoolchild occasionally being in the corner, and I thank you for never having put me in the corner.

That being the case, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely say that we wish you and your wonderful family the very best in this, your well-earned retirement. God bless you and your family. [applause]

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

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like a cat with nine lives, the Speaker has effectively persuaded the electors of his constituency to send him here nine times since the 1979 by-

election. For 15 years of that time he has presided in this Chamber, providing us with unique interpretations of the British parliamentary democratic tradition, interpretations that have distinguished our province.

Now, during those years we've frequently been on the receiving end of the elocutionary style he perfected as a model of the schoolmaster during his years as a teacher at Barrhead high school. With colourful gesture and expression he has assisted us to understand the value of attending to his tutelage. He's admonished us for our juvenile immaturity in some cases, and he's advised us to remember the importance of being models of correct social behaviour. That being said, he's also tolerated our peccadilloes during these years, as schoolmasters traditionally do, and in his absence I'll say that it was mostly the peccadilloes of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

He has put up with the knitting of sweaters, the visit of rubber duckies, napkins for speaking notes, and a singing member's statement. After spending more than a few moments instructing us on the rules of a talking stick, about how he had it and it was his and no one else was to talk when he had it, I was proud to be able to create an interrupting stick and to present him with a copy of the original, that we quietly advised we would hold on to. There was a grimace, but I can report that I still have the original, and I'm sure the Speaker will agree that he has tolerated a greater than average reliance on its use by our caucus.

Now, I can imagine that there have been many times when he has wished he was back coaching a championship *Reach for the Top* team and not trying to oversee the deliberations of the rambunctious residents of this House. Perhaps at times, sitting at the front of the House, he's even let his mind wander to fond memories of the golf course in his Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock part of the world. The question now is: when he's out on the golf course, will he enjoy fond memories of the theatrics and occasional good work accomplished here in this House? We hope so.

During his years of service, which are only slightly less than the median age of Albertans, 36 years, he has served in a wide range of positions, including several in cabinet. Over this period he has served with at least two generations of some families, including mine. Indeed, although it seems like I've been here forever, I realized today that the Speaker served longer with my father than with me.

1:50

So I join with colleagues here to say on behalf of the NDP opposition, that he so much likes to call the NDs, thank you for your service to Albertans over the last three and a half decades and please receive sincere congratulations and best wishes from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and myself.

Thank you. [applause]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been asked by a former colleague of ours, Mr. Richard Marz, the long-time MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, to read a poem he wrote for you.

Back in '79 when he came to the dome
And said I'll call this my home
For the next 30 years or more
It would be hard to conclude
What this battle-scarred Dude
Would accomplish in that three-score

You can love him or hate him
But don't underrate him
'Cause his heart is loaded with fire

Many have tried but couldn't get by
His spirit, dedication and desire

I'm proud to call him my friend
Though it's hard to comprehend
When it all comes to an end
As we round the next bend
The retirement of the Legend –
"Kowalski"

On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, your common sense and your political intuition are greater than the sum of all the other people I've met. And I want to take a little different tack. Your representation of Alberta on the international stage and the national stage, both visiting and receiving guests to our fine province, has made us all proud. You and your staff have done an incredible job of not only receiving people but preparing all of us that travel on our government's behalf, and I think Albertans are very proud of the fact that we look professional, you act professional, and we present a very strong and wonderful province to them. I do have to lament that apparently your new neighbour down south may cause you to reflect for the good old days in the Leg., but I certainly hope not.

All the best, Mr. Speaker. [applause]

The Speaker: Hon. members, thank you very, very much. I very much appreciate this. I feel very, very humbled.

When I walked into this building on August 1, 1974, it was not in a capacity as an elected person, and when you go back to 1974, that's 38 years that I have been associated with this place. There may be remains of mine to be parked in this Assembly someplace in the future. I won't tell you where, but my spirit and my heart will always be here.

This is a wonderful democracy in the province of Alberta, and I want to thank all of the men and women, current and in the past, that I've had the privilege of working with. Alberta is very well served by its elected representatives. Albertans should be very, very proud of the quality of the people who have come to this Assembly, who are in this Assembly. Albertans should take, take with great interest and care, that despite what you may see in a clip here and a clip there, the civility and the decorum of this Assembly is second to none in the country of Canada. Albertans should expect that, and Albertans have it. So I want you to be very proud of who you are. I want to thank you very much for the support that you've given me and the comments today.

Madam Premier, from the young girl that you were a few years ago, younger girl that you were a few years ago, to the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, putting me in the same category as his father, that truly is a wide spectrum of respect and support. To you, Madam Premier, thank you very much for those very, very kind words. To you, Leader of the Official Opposition, thank you very much for your kind words. To the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, who I've known a long time, thank you for the kind words. To the imaginative comments and very kind words from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, thank you. To my neighbour, my new neighbour in the south, the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, thank you very much for your kind words, and to Mr. Marz as well.

To all of you, enough is enough. We've got a Routine to deal with. Thank you so much and the best of luck to all of you, always, always, always. [Standing ovation]

Oral Question Period

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

Long-term Care for Seniors

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was reported today that AHS plans to cut 150 spaces with around-the-clock nursing, despite all the solutions we've offered to this government. Dr. Paul Parks says that he's baffled. He asks how we can eliminate bottlenecks in our hospitals with this move. He's afraid that we're on the cusp of yet another ER crisis, a crisis that leads to the cancellation of surgeries, longer wait times, more idle ambulances, and Albertans suffering needlessly. To the Premier. Premier, are you serious? Do you actually know what you're doing to our health care system?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, the government has no knowledge of the statement that the hon. member has made; therefore, I'm not in a position to reply. If he'd care to proffer the information to us, I'd be happy to get back to him.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, it's a well-known fact that we have fewer long-term care spaces today than we had a few years ago. Given that Bruce West, the executive director of the Alberta Continuing Care Association, says that the government seems determined to push seniors with complex needs into less expensive supportive living spaces, which may not have adequate levels of care, to the Premier: why won't you listen to the people who know more about the health care system than elected people do, and stop this madness?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I think that now I understand the hon. member's first question. It's with respect to a story that was reported in Calgary with respect to the reduction of long-term care beds, which is simply not true, and Alberta Health Services will be correcting that information today.

Just to set the record straight, Mr. Speaker, last year Alberta Health Services set a goal to increase the number of home-care clients by 3,000 by March 2012, and to date 4,400 new clients have been added. The reason that's important is because that is listening to Albertans. What Alberta's seniors have said to us is that they want to be able to stay in their own homes for longer than they've been able to in the past. We are investing in that because that's what Alberta's seniors want.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, here is a fact: on PC letterhead the government promised 600 long-term care beds and 200 replacement beds. They built a long-term care facility with over 150 beds, and closed it. Given that Dr. Paul Parks, an ER doctor, and Bruce West, an expert in seniors' care, are both concerned that our vulnerable seniors will end up in acute-care beds because they don't get the care they need, to the Premier: do you understand that you are endangering the lives and safety of Albertans? Do you even care, Premier?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, at this point in time I think there are an awful lot of people who are pretending to be experts in health care. I'll tell you what we know and what we've said to Albertans and what Albertans have said to us is that we can deliver health care in a way that gives Albertans choice, whether it's families or whether it's seniors. What we know is that Albertans have said that they want to have choice with respect to how they live and where they live, and we are providing the continuing care spaces with publicly funded health care to ensure that they have that choice.

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

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, emergency doctors and front-line staff make no apologies for being experts in health care.

Alberta Health Services Third-quarter Report

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, something stinks. The performance dashboard section of AHS's second-quarter report from December 2011 is abysmal. Heart bypass surgery wait times: fail. Hip and knee surgery wait times: fail. Radiation therapy access: fail. Placing our vulnerable in continuing care: fail. Physician and staff engagement: fail. Emergency wait times: fail. Now we hear that the third-quarter report is being delayed until May or June. To the Premier: why the cover-up?

Ms Redford: Well, this is the hon. member's interpretation of that quarterly report. What we've always said is that we will continue to strive to improve health care in this province. That is happening. There are some measures we are meeting, and there are some we need to work on, and we'll be completely honest with Albertans. But, Mr. Speaker, this Alberta health care system is not failing.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, I'm a simple man. Green means good; yellow means not so good; red means fail. These were all red. Given that Cathy Roozen and her husband together donated \$27,000 to your leadership campaign and in return you rewarded her with the position of AHS board chair, to the Premier: do you honestly believe that you can delay the report until after the election and not have the integrity of AHS and your integrity called into question?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, you know what? I'm going to say right now that we believe in transparency in this government. It was certainly information that was brought to the minister's attention with respect to this report. We are committed to ensuring that Albertans understand what's going on in the health care system. We will certainly ensure that that report is provided because we want Albertans to know what's going on. I would actually ask the hon. member to refer to the colour of his own tie.

2:00

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier's idea of transparency is receiving a big donation for her leadership campaign and rewarding that donation – there are three things in the world you can't hide: the sun, the moon, and the truth – Premier, why do you persist in trying to hide the truth about this government's abysmal failure on health care? Show us the report.

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, the question has been asked; the question has been answered.

I'll ask the minister of health to supplement this answer. He might have more information.

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, the third-quarter report for Alberta Health Services has not even been presented to me yet. I believe that Albertans expect me as their Minister of Health and Wellness to understand, to review, the data contained in the report, to talk about opportunities in the budget that was passed in the House this week, to apply new resources to improve performance in areas that are of concern, as well as celebrate our success.

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

Collection of School Fees

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, let's try something different. The

government's fudge-it budget promises unsustainable, inadequate underfunding of our public education system. School boards across the province have been forced to charge working families school fees, a regressive tax. A report in the *Calgary Beacon* mentions yet another school district which sends collection agencies after parents who can't afford to pay. To the Premier: why does your government allow school boards to sic collection agencies on working families for something that's supposed to be free, public education? Premier, why?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, we have a fantastic education system in this province that we should all be proud of as Albertans. We have hard-working families and teachers that are making sure that our kids are getting educated well. We will always ensure that parents have choice. One of the choices that parents get to make is with respect to certain activities that they may want their children to be part of which are not included in our standard curriculum. It's entirely appropriate, if parents make those choices and they do choose to supplement, that they have the ability to do that. If they choose to make those agreements, then we expect them to honour the agreements.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is correct. We do have fantastic parents, teachers, and students. It's the government I'm talking about.

Given that Alberta children are not permitted to attend graduation ceremonies or purchase grad photos or a yearbook if their families can't afford these school fees, to the Premier: why does your PC government insist on wrecking graduation, the most important day in the lives of our young people, with collection agencies? Why, Premier?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, here is a member who will blow out a candle just to prove that it's dark. One of the four best education systems in the world – fabulous parent satisfaction, kids performing better than children in most of the world and definitely outperforming any other Canadians, the most choice that any province offers in education – and this member will just find the negatives.

The fact of the matter is that our budget is growing from \$6.8 billion to \$7.1 billion. We are spending roughly \$35 million per school day. Mr. Speaker, this is a world-class education system.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, I make no apologies for telling the truth and giving the facts, the facts that we have amongst the highest school noncompletion rates in the country and the lowest postsecondary participation rate in the country because of this government's failed policies. Given that our children are our greatest resource and our future, to the Premier: will you commit to doing the right thing? Will you say no to sending collection agencies to hound hard-working parents and say yes to ending school fees? Say yes, Premier. That's all you've got to do.

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, there was a pretty wonderful day in the province this week, and that was the day that this House passed the budget that provided sustainable funding for public education across this province on a three-year cycle. What that allows is for school boards to make the long-term decisions that they need to make to continue providing the highest quality of public education to children in this province so that they can continue to excel. That is something that we are very proud of as a government and will continue to support.

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

Municipal Funding

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier, in typical fearmongering fashion, with no regard for the facts, told the AAMD and C that the Wildrose was cutting funding to municipalities. If she had bothered to read our policy, she would have seen with our 10-10 municipal funding plan that it not only increases funding to municipalities but also removes the restrictive conditions this government places on the funds for their own political agendas. To the Premier: were you again being misinformed by those you picked to surround yourself with about the Wildrose municipal funding plan?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I read with great interest the fiscal plan that was put forward by this party, and what I see in that plan is a \$400 million reduction in transfers to municipalities. That's a fact. When you decide that you're going to cut infrastructure down to \$4 billion, you're going to cut infrastructure. It's not just infrastructure spending that you cut; it's infrastructure. That's schools, and that's hospitals, and that impacts municipalities, and we'll stand behind that.

Mr. Hinman: It's typical of this Premier. She only reads the first line, and she always misreads it.

Again to the Premier: is this the kind of campaign rhetoric Albertans can expect from you and your party given the distortion of the facts and the misinformation you declare about the Wildrose given that we've already seen it with your ridiculous statement about our municipal funding, our funding for front-line workers, and our priority for building the schools we need? Premier, are you so out of touch with the facts or are you so . . .*

Ms Redford: You know, Mr. Speaker, what Albertans are going to be able to expect from this Premier and our party in this election . . .

Mr. Hinman: Point of order.

Ms Redford: . . . is a vibrant discussion on policy, a vibrant discussion on defining what the future of this province will be that will not be based on fearmongering. There are other parties that do that. We're going to talk about what Alberta can be in the future, why we have faith and optimism in our children and in our families. That's going to be an exciting campaign.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has the floor.

Mr. Hinman: I'd like my full 35 seconds if she had any respect.

Given the confusion and, according to you, the clear misunderstanding by Albertans as to where you stood on the judicial inquiry on intimidation of our health care providers and where you stood on stopping the overbuild of our power lines and what a fixed election date means to you versus Albertans, it's no wonder Albertans believe that their word is their bond, and they ask: is your bond any better than a Bre-X bond?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly glad I waited for the full 35 seconds.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, we are very clear on what an independent judicial inquiry looks like, and we called one. We promised to fix election periods, and we did. We have kept every commitment that we have made in this Legislature and outside of this Legislature. We are transparent, we are honest, and we can't wait to get to the polls.

*See page 763, right column, paragraph 14

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

Long-term Care for Seniors (continued)

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have come to expect delay tactics from a Conservative government mired in scandal on the eve of an election. Perhaps the most disturbing is the Premier's tactic of deliberately withholding the most recent Alberta Health Services performance report, which is now due but will also not be released until after the election. Will this Premier stop gaming the system for political purposes, release this report, and take responsibility for her government's failed health care record?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, there is no delay tactic here. Alberta Health Services has yet to present the final version of the Q3 report to me. Our plan, which would be a responsible plan of a responsible government, is to sit down and discuss with them those results, highlight the areas we want to target for specific improvement, and then apply new resources that are available to the budget to do just that. That is what a reasonable, prudent government, knowledgeable about effective health care system performance, would do. That's what we're going to do.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's what a scared government would do on the eve of an election.

Now, given that this government hasn't increased long-term care since 2004, amounting to a 20 per cent cut in long-term care, while 473 people are currently occupying hospital beds waiting for care and given that this is one of the primary reasons for wait times in ER, why won't the Premier admit that freezing long-term care beds is not the way to solve the problems in our hospitals and come clean about the latest performance measures that AHS is withholding from the public?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, there's been no freezing of long-term care beds. The fact that these sorts of suggestions are made, quote, on the eve of an election does not surprise me at all. This is a government that is committed to continuing care, to supporting families in their homes, to ensuring that we can have publicly funded health care for seniors who can have accommodation choices and are going to be able to live where they want to live. This is exactly the commitment that we did make, we have made, and we'll continue to make.

2:10

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd suggest that the Premier should read AHS's reports because those show a freeze.

Given that experts agree that replacing long-term care beds with supportive living beds will not meet the complex medical needs of our elderly and may in fact cause them to end up back in hospital more frequently and given that stats around ER wait times have not improved as a result of this failed strategy, will this Premier tell Albertans why she won't build new long-term care beds instead of waiting for her private developer funders to build inadequate supportive living?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, what we are going to ensure that Alberta seniors have is an array of options. There are Alberta seniors that want to have choice with respect to where to live, and they want that accommodation to be supported by a publicly funded health care system. What we are talking about, what continuing care means is to give Albertans the option of being able to choose where they live with a cap maintained – so no fearmongering anymore about that – and to ensure that there are

public health care dollars that are appropriate to the level of care needed for every Alberta senior.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've met many people throughout the province who receive AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped. They anxiously awaited Budget 2012. As part of Budget 2012 this government delivered on the Premier's promise to increase the AISH monthly benefit by \$400 per month and double the employment income exemptions. Many of the AISH clients in my constituency have been asking when they can expect to see the \$400 increase. My question to the Premier: will the cheques be delivered on time and soon?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, it was a wonderful day in this province this week when this budget passed this House. What this budget did was it increased AISH recipients' benefits by \$400 a month effective April 1. The members on this side of the House supported that budget and supported that increase and are proud to have done it.

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, I just have one supplemental question for the Premier. Will AISH clients living in long-term care also receive the \$400 per month increase in benefits?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, there are no qualifications to this. This is a commitment that I made as leader, it's a commitment we made as a government, and we passed it in the budget.

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

Mr. Hehr: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say what a true honour it has been to serve with both you and every single member in this honourable House over the course of the last four years.

Home-schooling

Mr. Hehr: Mr. Speaker, I also believe that home-schooling is a valid accommodation made by governments to provide unique learning environments for some of our children. That being said, I'm highly concerned that this minister is walking away from his responsibility to ensure that every child in Alberta has the skills they need to succeed. To the Minister of Education: why are home-schoolers explicitly exempted from the requirement to write standardized exams that apply to all other Alberta students?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, actually, I thank you for that pitch, a slow one. I'll try to get it out of the park. The reason, Mr. Speaker, is that every parent in the province of Alberta can exempt their child from writing a provincial achievement test. Why should it be any different for home-schooling parents? It's perhaps one of the best kept secrets, but parents do have the option to exempt their children from writing PATs in grade 3, 6, and 9.

Mr. Hehr: Are you telling me that all home-schoolers are regularly checked on their progress by this government to ensure that they're learning the curriculum and getting the skills that they need?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, home-schooling parents are affiliated with a liaison from Alberta Education, and it is made

certain that they follow the suggested teaching/learning plan for their children, but they can pick the resources that they utilize for implementing that plan at their own volition. They are affiliated with Alberta Education, and there is a parameter of what children have to be taught. But like any other parents they have the option to exempt their children from PATs.

Mr. Hehr: I'm just highly worried about these children's future and their ability to succeed. Does the minister feel comfortable with his current parameters and his checking and following up on the curriculum and whether they're learning in a proper, due, and responsible manner?

Mr. Lukaszuk: I know that this member is worried because I listened to the *Rutherford Show* today, and he's worried that these parents may be teaching these children about the Holocaust not taking place and many other scary things. I know Albertans are different. I know Albertans will teach their kids the right things. I know Albertans want their kids to succeed and be competitive in this economy. They're simply having a choice, and they're exercising their choice. They're choosing to teach their kids at home, and there's nothing wrong with that.

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

Seniors' Property Tax Deferral

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Seniors' Property Tax Deferral Act has received royal assent, and as a government member and as an Albertan I still have some questions as to the benefit of this type of program. My first question is to the Premier. What is the seniors' property tax deferral program going to do to help Albertans in their senior years that many of our other programs aren't doing already?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to ensuring that seniors have as much flexibility with respect to the choices in their life as possible. The Seniors' Property Deferral Act will allow seniors to defer their property taxes, which, of course, will allow them more options with respect to their household expenses.

We know that seniors who are active and vibrant and living in our communities do best when they have the support to be able to live in their homes. They are our friends, they are our neighbours, they are our family, and we're very proud of this program, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental also to the Premier: what about low-income seniors who already face debts? We have many of these. I fear this program may encourage some seniors to accrue even more debt.

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, this is not going to be a program that we are going to simply launch without proper information and education. There will be an application process for this. The reason we want that is to ensure that people are making the right decisions and are not incurring debt. We know that many people who are living in their own homes and have invested well can make strong and proper decisions with respect to the way that they can supplement their income, and this is another option for those people. But as part of the work that we do in government, we'll be continuing to support public education campaigns that are going to

allow seniors to make those choices and have flexibility in their own lives.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental is also to the Premier. How is the interest rate going to be set?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, this program is designed to help senior homeowners to be more independent and take advantage of the increase in their home's value. I can assure you that the interest rate for the loan will be responsibly balanced so as not to be a deterrent for seniors. Plus, seniors who do take advantage of the program will only need to pay back the loan when they sell their home. We're doing our best to help seniors keep more of their own cash in their wallets.

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

Sand and Gravel Extraction Management

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Most people don't know the term "alluvial aquifer," but Albertans do know how vital groundwater is to every aspect of our lives, from industry to agricultural irrigation to drinking water. Alluvial aquifers are a central piece of this system, and they are our cleaners and our filters. They are also a source of gravel. Our groundwater is at risk by allowing gravel mining in aquifers across the province. To the minister of environment: why isn't the minister protecting these groundwater aquifers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Quite frankly, I've said it in the House before, and I'll say it again today. We're doing an excellent job in making sure that we are protecting the environment and water. We're doing groundwater mapping throughout this province. We've mapped from Edmonton to Calgary. We'll be mapping in the southern district beyond that, and within three to five years this entire province will have groundwater mapping completed.

Ms Blakeman: Mapping isn't protecting alluvial aquifers.

Back to the same minister: when gravel mining is known to cause channel instability and erosion in rivers and can seriously lower water tables over time, why won't the minister face the fact that gravel has far more value in our river basins than dug out of them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, gravel is something that we use as a resource in this province. When we take it out of the rivers and it renews itself, it's an important resource that we have. We use it for many different things in the province.

We do, though, have rules and regulations for when the extraction of gravel is happening. Those rules and regulations must take place. Quite frankly, our department monitors and evaluates that very well, the compliance, that that happens.

Ms Blakeman: No, Minister, gravel does not renew itself. Given that once the damage is done, no amount of reclamation will ever restore our riverbeds and aquifers, at what point will this minister

choose protection of our water and say “no more” to gravel mining on our rivers?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, as I said, we have very strong regulations with regard to gravel mining within this province. We make sure that we do that. We continually monitor that. We make sure that regulations are in place. We will extract gravel in this province, but we will always do it in a very environmental and responsible manner.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

School Capital Construction

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations on your retirement, and our sincere thank you to you.

Alberta’s population is growing rapidly. In fact, the southeast corner of Edmonton is one the fastest-growing areas in Alberta. Thousands of new families have moved into this area, including the Meadows and Silver Berry, and they need a new school. My questions are to the Premier. What can you and our government do to ensure that schools are in fact being built or will be built in high-growth areas like Silver Berry and the Meadows?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, it’s very exciting to be able to talk about education. Budget 2012 has helped us to ensure that we can provide sustainable funding with respect to infrastructure and education programming for students. Mr. Speaker, currently there are 76 new schools and major renovations in various stages of planning, design, and construction in Alberta. We are looking ahead. We know that there need to be new schools in this province, and they’re being built.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Madam Premier. My constituents will be pleased to know that.

Students in my area and elsewhere are sitting in school buses for very long periods of time, and they want to know what you and our government are doing to address this very important situation for our kids.

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education is working very hard on this. As part of our plan for education we are conducting two transportation trials now that are aimed at reducing bus ride times and enhancing the educational opportunities that students can have while they are travelling.

There’s no doubt that we need to take a look at every route every year to ensure that kids aren’t using time ineffectively on buses. Through co-operative transportation funding to school boards we are looking at getting fewer buses following each other through neighbourhoods and shorter rides for children on buses. Our education system is recognized as one of the best in the world, but we have to make sure kids get to it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much. Madam Premier, what additional support can you and our government provide to those children who have so-called extra needs or perhaps special needs? This is an extremely important issue for my residents in the Silver Berry, Meadows, and other areas.

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, it’s the future of our society to ensure

that all kids are able to learn and to excel to the best of their ability. This budget took a first step towards implementing a new funding model that supports inclusive practices in schools around this province. This funding model ensures that every school board has the flexibility to support in the classrooms the needs for each child as defined by the family. Funding will be used to provide the supports and services that parents and teachers have told us they need for learners. Together we are making sure that we are preparing our children not just for today but for tomorrow.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Residential Construction Standards

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I still have the note you sent me when I asked my first question. The note said: job well done. Although my legs were shaking, that was a great encouragement for me. Thank you very much, and congratulations on your retirement.

Coming back to business, the review of the Condominium Property Act has been ongoing for some time now. Last fall the review was supposed to allow for input from condo owners and renters as well. That didn’t happen. To the Minister of Service Alberta: when will the minister consult these owners and renters whose lives are directly impacted by the legislation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Allow me to take a moment to say thank you very much. I still have the note you sent me after my maiden speech. If I recall, it said that that was one of the best speeches you had heard in this Assembly in all your years of being here. [interjection] It’s not a form letter, sir. It’s appropriate for me at this point to also mention the fact that you, sir, were elected to this Assembly one year before God sent me onto this Earth. Thank you very much.

To the member, thank you very much for your question. He’s perhaps one of the most likable fellows in this Assembly. Sir, when we move forth with the next phase of consultation, you’ll be sure to be on the list. We will consult with all Albertans. We’ve composed, essentially, a white paper with industry experts, and the next phase is to consult with residents.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister again: when will condo owners get legislation that will protect them from disasters such as the Penhorwood complex in Fort Mac and Bellavera Green in Leduc?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would invite the member to bring forth a motion to extend this period in the Legislative Assembly for a few more weeks, and perhaps we could do it now.

In all seriousness, the issues that the member brought forth with respect to Fort McMurray and Leduc are issues that involve structural components of the building, which are dealt with through Municipal Affairs. The issues that are dealt with through Service Alberta’s legislation are issues relating to condo board governance.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we are open to that offer any time for a couple more weeks.

To the minister again. I'm not seeing the government walk the talk. What is the government doing that will actually strengthen consumer protection for condo owners?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that we brought forth a group of industry experts, people representing every single stakeholder that has something to do with condo board governance. They've composed a paper, a white paper essentially, and the next phase is to go out and consult with the public on that paper. This will be happening in short order, I would hope within this particular year. I can assure the member that we're taking steps to ensure that condo owners are always protected. We were the first jurisdiction to have condo legislation, and I'm proud of that fact.

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

Election Act Reports

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today Elections Alberta announced it found at least 15 separate instances of illegal donations to political parties, with more ongoing. We can confirm that our party or CAs were not contacted, to my knowledge. We asked the CEO if he could share the details, but he can't. Why? Well, accordingly to the CEO, because of a law that this Premier passed as Justice minister that prohibits the Chief Electoral Officer from disclosing the findings of these illegal donations and these investigations. Why did you pass that law while you were Justice minister?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, we have an Election Act in this province that was passed by this Legislature, that was vigorously debated in this Legislature, and ensured, most importantly, something this hon. member does not understand: the independence of officers of this Legislature.

We need to ensure that the Chief Electoral Officer has the ability to do the investigations that that office feels necessary. The amendments to the Election Act that were put forward in this House last time around were amendments that were recommended by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Mr. Anderson: Let me get this straight. Just confirm it for me. You passed a law, that until you were Justice minister was not the case, that bans the Chief Electoral Officer from disclosing the findings of investigations into illegal donations when they're found, illegal donations by political parties, probably by your political party. Why would you do that? Does that not look like a cover-up to you?

Ms Redford: He's making a suggestion and drawing a conclusion that is entirely inappropriate. First of all, there has been no suggestion today, as he stated in his preamble, that he can come to any conclusion with respect to what the Chief Electoral Officer is investigating at the moment. What we know the Chief Electoral Officer is continuing to do is to do his work independently and to ensure that he is able to make appropriate recommendations to prosecutors.

That election legislation, Mr. Speaker, allows the Chief Electoral Officer to do his work, to make recommendations to a prosecutor where appropriate, and where there are offences committed – and I reject the innuendo from this member that any

have actually been committed – it will actually allow for an appropriate independent prosecution.

Mr. Anderson: Someone is sure protesting.

I'll give you this challenge, then, Madam Premier. If you're so confident in how squeaky clean your party is on this matter, will you please commit today to allow the Chief Electoral Officer, through legislation if necessary, to be able, when illegal donations are found, to publish those findings and actually show Albertans that you're not part of this cover-up? It looks like you are at the centre of this cover-up.

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer had the opportunity to bring forward recommendations with respect to the Election Act. That is what the Chief Electoral Officer did the last time we reviewed the act.

If this is a suggestion that this member would like to make and he somehow feels that he is an expert on the Election Act and has a better understanding as to how to administer elections in Alberta, then I would suggest that he introduce legislation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

2:30

Landowner Property Rights

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Property rights are very important to my constituents. They want to know that the government is going to respect their rights and follow through on the feedback the Property Rights Task Force received. My question is to the Premier. Is this government going to be respecting those rights and use the feedback going forward?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, in 1972 Premier Lougheed introduced the Alberta Bill of Rights, which is enforced by a human rights commission, and it enshrined the security of property rights in this province. Now, 40 years on, this government, a Progressive Conservative government, is renewing that covenant with Albertans by passing new legislation that strengthens those protections and cannot be superseded. The feedback that we received was exactly why we passed the Property Rights Advocate Act. We have strengthened the ability of Albertans to have confidence in their property rights and provided resources to allow them to navigate the system if they have concerns.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is also again to the Premier. What is the role of the property rights advocate?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, the property rights advocate will be a one-stop source of impartial information on processes, compensation, and resolution mechanisms, including access to the courts. The advocate will be required to table an annual report on its office's business each year in this Legislature. Landowners told us that they wanted to be consulted, that they wanted to have these resources, and we put that in place.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is also to the Premier. What are the next steps that will be taken now that the advocate is in place?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, we will be looking at how to improve engagement, reviewing all legislation associated with property rights in the province as well as the requirements for reclamation and remediation. Currently SRD is leading the review of the Expropriation Act and the Surface Rights Act, and that's going to be a good piece of public policy. We're looking forward to designing an engagement process that will meet the needs of Albertans and allow Albertans to express their concerns and issues with respect to this legislation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Electricity Prices

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is to the Premier. Given that over 650 megawatts of additional generation has been constructed in the last eight years in and around Fort McMurray and that this megawatt power is eligible for very generous tax and royalty concessions, how can this government continue to state that there are no subsidies here in Alberta for the construction of new electricity generation stations?

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, the type of cogeneration that the hon. member is speaking of is part of our clean energy strategy. You're getting double use, double duty, out of every hydrocarbon that is burned. Just in the same way that we encourage wind, we're encouraging cogeneration.

Mr. MacDonald: It's a subsidy, and this government knows it.

Again to the Premier: given that electricity deregulation has forced consumers to pay over \$20 billion more than they should have paid on their powers bills . . .

An Hon. Member: How do you figure that?

Mr. MacDonald: I've got it calculated, hon. member.

. . . how can this government claim that consumers benefit from electricity deregulation when over the course of the last 12 years they have paid an additional \$20 billion on their power bills?

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, I sort of bid farewell to the hon. member yesterday, but I'm glad he's back today. I'd look forward to seeing how he arrived at those numbers, I guess, outside of the Assembly.

I'll repeat what I've said before. Since we deregulated, there's been 6,600 megawatts of generation built here at a cost of \$11 billion, and none of that is on the consumer. It's all private sector.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: if what the Minister of Energy has told us is true, how do you explain that \$1.5 billion in subsidies, after deregulation was approved by this government, was given to consumers? That's a subsidy. That's not true.

Dr. Morton: Did the hon. member just say subsidies to consumers? I think he did. I think he misspoke.

I'm simply very happy to repeat probably for the last time in this session that the average price of electricity per megawatt hour for the last five years has been 8 cents. Lo and behold, what's the average for the month of March? It's 8.3 cents. We have a system that's working quite well, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Slave Lake Family Care Clinic

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the family care pilot projects announced today will be located in Slave Lake, to be opened on April 16. Great news for our region, which was so devastated by last spring's wildfires. People have been so worried about health services, especially after losing many of our long-time doctors. My question is to the Premier. How will this family care clinic help address the physician shortage in Slave Lake?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's an exciting day because the family care clinic model will provide people in Slave Lake with a home in the health care system. What's really interesting about Slave Lake is that it's a tremendously diverse community that, unfortunately, does not have a primary care network. So this is an important step as the community continues to rebuild after last year's devastating fire. What's really important about the family care clinic model is that it responds to the services that are needed in the community, and the bulk of the services will be provided and can be provided by a team of health professionals: some doctors, some nurse practitioners. It's what the community needs.

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Speaker, that's correct. Our community needs many of those things. It gives me great hope. Again to the Premier: given the fact that we need these services, what services will be offered at the Slave Lake family care clinic? This is real life in Slave Lake.

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, the family care clinic in Slave Lake is quite unique because it's going to be able to offer comprehensive primary care such as advice, diagnosis, and treatment, which will be provided by and will include an emphasis on wellness, which when I was last visiting the community was terribly important in terms of dealing with the impacts on families as a result of some of the issues last year. Family care clinics will be open, this one in particular, from 7 in the morning to 9 at night seven days a week. That makes a difference for families, for moms and dads. As I mentioned, since Slave Lake does not have a primary care network, it will be the first time that they'll have an interdisciplinary team of people in their community.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Madam Premier. We all know that the Slave Lake region has unique needs and serves many northern and aboriginal communities. Could you please again tell the people of my constituency how the unique needs of our communities will be met through the new family care clinic?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, before the family care clinic was established, there was a great deal of consultation that was undertaken with the community. There will be an emphasis on health promotion, chronic disease management, screening, disease and injury prevention, family planning and pregnancy counselling. This clinic is proximate to what we now see at the hospital so that there will be an opportunity for convenient exchange of services and supports. Having the ability to drop in for unscheduled appointments matters to people in Slave Lake. They're going to have that opportunity in family care clinics. This is a priority area of focus, particularly with respect to supporting the aboriginal population in Slave Lake.

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

Long-term Care Serious Incidents

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For all of us concerned for the well-being of seniors and other vulnerable Albertans in this province's care facilities, the front page of yesterday's *Calgary Herald* was truly chilling. Over the past seven years, since Auditor General Fred Dunn released his scathing long-term care report, there have been more than 1,000 confirmed cases of abuse in such facilities, including 160 cases of bodily harm. To the Minister of Seniors: as horrifying as these figures are, are they just the tip of the iceberg? How many incidents of suspected abuse go unreported by family members out of fear that a loved one may suffer retaliation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, it's hard to estimate what's unreported; I only have what's reported. Over the last seven years there have been, actually, 700 cases. Two years ago we had an updated act. Since then there have been about 80 per year reported. Of all the cases, less than 2 per cent are deemed criminal, and we immediately go right to the authorities for help.

2:40

Mr. Chase: According to the paper the average number of reportings was 500 per year. Quite a difference from 80.

Why doesn't the Protection for Persons in Care Act protect the anonymity of those reporting suspected cases of abuse in care facilities to ensure there is no retaliation?

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no retaliation to anybody that makes a report of abuse. We all have an obligation, and I've said this very, very clearly. For anybody that suspects abuse, don't wait for the Legislature to open; pick up your phone, 1.888.357.9339. You have an obligation to report. It's the law.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. And enforcing that law is extremely important.

Will this government commit to inspecting all long-term care facilities annually and to publishing the results in a timely fashion to protect vulnerable Albertans?

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear in my mandate. We need to make sure that we set the standards in all our long-term care facilities, and we must do inspections annually.

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

Provincial Tax Policy

Mr. Webber: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it has been a true honour to serve with you in this Assembly.

Since the budget was first introduced, there has been a lot of talk that this government plans on raising taxes. Now that the budget has been passed, can the Premier explain what this government's intentions are with regard to taxes?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said all along, we're very proud of this budget. What this budget did was introduce no tax increases and no new taxes. Now Albertans can have confidence that that is the future. So no more of this pretending that something might happen. This budget is the budget of Alberta. It

has set a strong fiscal framework. Let's not forget the title of this budget, Investing in People. That's what this government will do.

Mr. Webber: Again to the Premier. Your revenue projections are optimistic, to say the least. How confident are you that we will achieve the surplus position forecast in this budget?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, it's been really interesting in the last couple of weeks to see the commentary with respect to projections in this budget. This is a responsible budget. Three major Canadian banks and their assessments praised Alberta for having the strongest economic outlook in the country. You'll know that in every budget that we table, we include the comparisons. We're firmly in the middle with respect to those projections. Our oil price forecast is actually slightly below the average of private forecasts, and based on those forecasts, we are confident we will achieve a surplus of – please listen – \$5 billion by 2014.

Mr. Webber: Mr. Speaker, extensive polling to find out how our citizens are viewed by others in Canada showed there were considerable perceptions that Alberta was a conservative place and that compassion, open-mindedness, and tolerance were not always what they could or should be. To the Premier: does Budget 2012 support this view?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, they were right about one thing: we are conservative. We are Progressive Conservative, and we are proud of it. I can tell you that Budget 2012 supports those sentiments. As I said, Budget 2012 is entitled Investing in People and is helping all Albertans reach their full potential and achieve their goals. Seventy-five per cent of this budget is being invested in people through core programs that provide Albertans with better access to health care, to education, and to the infrastructure that builds their communities. We are continuing to support vulnerable Albertans, and we're proud of it.

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

Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Premier. Alberta has had one of the fastest growing economies and populations in North America, and our province is set to thrive in the years ahead. What is this government doing to ensure that communities have the room and the resources to help Alberta reach its full potential?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are investing in Albertans, and we are investing in Alberta. My goal is to ensure that this province continues to be the best place to live and to work and to plan for your family's future. That includes meeting Alberta's needs in their communities with high-quality, well-designed hospitals and clinics, with schools and postsecondary learning institutions, with seniors' facilities, and with other public buildings. We have strong and safe communities that also require adequate, predictable funding that this government is committed to. Unlike other parties, we will not balance this budget on the backs of municipalities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My next question, to the Premier again: how does Alberta compare to other jurisdictions when it comes to support for municipalities?

Ms Redford: One of the things that we're proud of on this side of

the House is our investment in infrastructure. There are other political parties that think we invest too much in infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, we invest to municipalities \$500 per person compared to a Canada-wide average of \$192. We do that because we believe that every community in this province matters. We know we need to invest in infrastructure to not just ensure that rural communities are sustainable but that they grow because that's the future of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final question, to the Premier again: Madam Premier, are you saying that this government will not slash funding to the municipalities for infrastructure?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to continuing to support municipalities, to ensuring that we are putting funding in place that municipalities have asked for. You know, whether it's AUMA or AAMD and C, what we hear is that the municipal sustainability initiative matters to Albertans and that it matters to communities. We will continue to invest in infrastructure, and unlike other parties, we will not slash infrastructure spending.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 18 members participated today, 106 questions and responses, and I want you to know that I will never ever forget this last question period. [applause]

Members' Statements

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

New Democratic Party Election Choice

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's four years since Albertans last elected people to make decisions that would deliver on the benefits of living in Alberta. Since then they have repeatedly disappointed. Some have been hurt; others are angry.

Alberta is prosperous in part because of diverse and gigantic natural resources, renewable and nonrenewable. That wealth belongs to all of us, not just to a few friends of the current government tied to corporate interests, wanting to make money for their owners instead of the people of Alberta. Government should make decisions to ensure prosperity benefits the real owners, the people of Alberta. Regardless of who sat in the Premier's chair, this government for four years has carried on the same old PC Party commitment to corporate friends.

Alberta is a prosperous place because of hard-working, innovative Albertans, but the government consistently ignores investments that will ensure life is safe, affordable, and healthy for them. Very low taxes for very wealthy people and low royalties on our bitumen have been this government's agenda. They have broken promises to build long-term care for seniors. They have underfunded education so that special needs and kindergarten have suffered, and school boards have been forced into difficult decisions to close neighbourhood schools. They've let costs for postsecondary education rise so that young people begin their working lives with tens of thousands of dollars of debt. They've ignored warnings from physicians about chaos in health care that is hurting ill Albertans.

This government has lost touch with the real lives and needs of ordinary Albertans. Worse, they have deliberately broken trust with them, Mr. Speaker. Their secret decisions have ensured that a

minority of their good friends benefit from Alberta, but behind closed doors they remain deaf to the needs of the rest of us.

We are days from an election, and the NDP offers hope to those Albertans who dream of receiving their fair share of our province's great wealth finally. The NDP is a political choice that believes that the prosperity of Alberta belongs to all of us. The NDP has practical proposals that will let all Albertans know they can have affordable utilities, seniors living in dignity, and young people making a good start in a clean environment.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud that we'll be offering these progressive choices to Albertans in every corner of the province.

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

Liberal Party Election Choice

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We live in the greatest province in the greatest country in the world. It is not hyperbole to say that Alberta is blessed: blessed with a superabundance of natural resources, blessed with the most beautiful scenery in the world, and blessed with a great people, its best resource.

There is one challenge, however, facing Albertans today, a government which says no whenever Albertans express their desire for better access to publicly delivered health care, education, seniors' care. Albertans desire balanced budgets and desire trust in their leaders and good government and real change.

2:50

This government needs to be stopped. It was once a source of solutions and goodness for this province, but before you leave this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, please take them with you. It is time to remove this government. When Albertans ask for an independent public inquiry into our broken health care system and to fix our health care, what do they say? They say yes. When Albertans ask for our seniors to be treated with dignity, the answer should be yes. When Albertans ask for an end to school fees and for postsecondary education to be more affordable, the answer should be yes. When Albertans ask for an end to insanely high power bills, it's a no-brainer that the correct answer should be yes. When Albertans ask for an end to bullying of doctors, health care workers, and municipal councillors, the correct answer is yes. When Albertans say, "Will you please stop wasting our hard-earned tax dollars?" – one more time – the answer is yes. The Alberta government is allergic to the word "yes," and this is why Albertans have so many problems.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to return the Alberta Liberals to the Legislature, like we did in 1906. To that I say yes.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Johnson: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the supplemental responses to Committee of Supply questions raised in Infrastructure's main estimates debate by the Member for Calgary-McCall and the Member for Calgary-Glenmore on March 6, 2012.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You never ever did send me a note when I was first elected, and I'm so disappointed.

The Speaker: But I gave you a hug.

Mr. MacDonald: Not that I remember.

I have a tabling today which is a document that I received, and I'm grateful to have acquired it. It's from the PC Alberta Campaign College, that occurred in February, and it is the speaking notes and the responses and the backgrounders for the Alberta PC Party to try to defend electricity deregulation during the run-up to the election and, I can only assume, during the election. If you were to look for this in a library, Mr. Speaker, you'd have to go to the fiction section to find it.

Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my constituent Ms Wellsman I am tabling a letter in which she is putting out her concerns about the Alberta dental association and their fee schedule. The last fee schedule was in 1997, and she notes that this is of great concern in that the fees have increased. The dental plan administrators tend to use a newer fee, yet your insurers will only pay the older fee. Suggesting that people shop around for a competitive rate is just not possible in this day and age because there is no competitive rate, so she's asking for the necessary steps to be taken, that a dental association fee schedule be produced and maintained.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you. The hon. Speaker sent me several notes, primarily of the cautionary kind.

Mr. Speaker, my final tabling comes with a regret, that I have not had the sessional time to table hundreds of Albertans' letters expressing concerns over clear-cutting. However, the strategic placement of a single letter, X, on a ballot will end the clear-cutting practice.

I am tabling a further 20 letters, out of the hundreds I've received, from the following individuals, who are concerned about the proposed logging in the west Bragg Creek. They are requesting a complete, facilitated, and accessible public consultation: Sandy Westinghouse, Ada Casello, Greg Axelson, Esq., Jolayne Anderson, Laveryne Green, Mataya Allan, Erik Allan, Cheryl Cohen, Lorie D. Cooper, Jeremy and Chelsea Ciolli, Dr. Keith Allan, Angel Wilson, Christine McNalley, Sandy Lyndon, Simon Coward, Peggy Wedderburn, Lisa Walpole, David Blackwood, and Giles Parker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time served.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of an article written by Christopher Walsh of the *Calgary Beacon*. The article refers to "Alberta school boards shaking down parents with collection agencies." I wish to table five copies of this.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for your time served.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table with the Assembly today five copies of the Capital Region Board's 2011 annual report. I'd like to commend the board for its continued work in the implementation of the growth plan for the capital region. The plan is going to be an invaluable tool for the region as we move forward, and it's a great example of the

collaborative work that many of Alberta's municipal leaders are undertaking to make their communities the best place in the world to live.

Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Horne, Minister of Health and Wellness, pursuant to the Health Professions Act the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors annual report to government 2010-11, the Alberta College of Occupational Therapists 2010-11 annual report, the Alberta College of Optometrists annual report to the government 2010, the College and Association of Respiratory Therapists of Alberta annual report 2011, the College of Alberta Dental Assistants annual report 2010-11, the College of Alberta Psychologists annual report 2010-11, the College of Dental Technologists of Alberta 2010 annual report, and the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta annual report 2011.

Projected Government Business

Ms Blakeman: Well, I'll be really interested to hear the answer to this. Under Standing Order 7(6) I'm going to ask the Government House Leader if he could share with us the projected government business for the week commencing April 2.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest to the House that in the event that we're here on April 2, we will be discussing the Education Act, Bill 2, and such other acts as may be placed on the Order Paper.

The Speaker: Okay. We've got two points of order that arose during the question period. The first one was by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, but I'll deal with the second one first, by the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Point of Order Speaking Time

The Speaker: I do believe the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore is going to rise on a point of order and say that he was interrupted, that he did not have an opportunity to conclude his question before the Premier responded, and he's right. The Premier showed a lot of enthusiasm, jumped into the question before the hon. member had completed his full 35-second allotment. There seems to be a lot of enthusiasm these days around this place and a lot of energy, and that clearly is a rightful point of order. The Premier should be advised that she should wait for the full 35 seconds before she overzealously . . .

Mr. Hinman: Can I read the question in?

The Speaker: Yes, I will allow you to read the question, but we need not go on to a further answer. We already have one. Yes, address your full question to the Assembly.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you.* Yesterday the Premier, in typical PC farm mongering fashion, with no regard to the facts, told the AAMD and C that the Wildrose cut funding to municipalities. If she had bothered to read our policy, Mr. Speaker, she would have seen that our 10-10 municipal funding plan not only increases funding to municipalities but also removes the restrictive

*See page 755, right column, paragraph 5

conditions this government places on funds for their own political agendas. To the Premier: were you again misinformed by those you picked to surround yourself with about the Wildrose municipal funding, or, even of more concern, are you knowingly misinforming Albertans for political gain?

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

The second one. Hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, you rose on a point of order, something to do with a “That’s a fact” statement.

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, you know what? In the interests of just celebrating your time here, I’m just going to withdraw that point of order and thank you for putting up with one hon. member who certainly at times gets very emotional and gets revved up in this House. You’ve dealt very well with that, I feel, and very patiently with that, and for that I thank you very much. Good luck in your retirement. You’ve done an amazing job as MLA for your community.

3:00

The Speaker: Thank you very much. There is nothing wrong with enthusiasm.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I would ask unanimous consent of the House to suspend standing orders 3(1) and 4(2) to extend the afternoon sitting until 6 p.m. to allow for further debate on Bill 2.

The Speaker: This request put forward by the hon. Government House Leader will require unanimous consent. Our standing order rules clearly indicate that on Thursdays we rise at 4:30 p.m. As I understand it, the request being made is to go beyond 4:30 to 6 o’clock. Is that correct, hon. Government House Leader? So this will require unanimous consent of all members.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Zwozdesky in the chair]

Bill 2 Education Act

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, are there any speakers? The hon. Minister of Education, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and table an amendment, which I believe you will number as A8. I know that pages and the Clerk have copies of the amendment to Bill 2, the Education Act. If you allow me, I will sit down for half a minute to allow for distribution of the amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you very much, hon. member. We will keep a copy here, the original, which we have now, thank you. I would ask the other copies to be circulated.

Hon. minister, if you would rise and read the amendment into the record while it’s being circulated, that will speed things along.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, we only have an hour and a half on the clock in order to deal with these

amendments and the bill. Hopefully, we will have full co-operation of all members in this House to do so. If not, that means that the Education Act will die on the Order Paper, and we will not be able to proceed with it further. So there we go.

This amendment has several clauses, so I will read each separately and then provide the rationale.

The following is added after section 24, related to charter schools:

Restriction on operator

25.1 The operator of a charter school must restrict its purposes to the operation of that charter school.

This section ensures that the focus of the operator of the charter school is the students that it serves.

Section 29(4)(e) is amended by striking out “the financial administration of the school is unstable and places the learning environment of the students at risk” and substituting “the financial situation of the school places the learning environment of the students at risk,” so the word “unstable” is simply removed as it is an ambiguous word.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, I hesitate to interrupt, but I thought in your opening comment you said section 24. Did you mean section 25?

Mr. Lukaszuk: The first one, Mr. Chair, was section 25, yes.

The Deputy Chair: My apologies. We’re actually having to number these, so this one that refers to or begins with “The following is added after section 25” has now been circulated, and it will be known as amendment A8.

Mr. Lukaszuk: That’s correct.

The Deputy Chair: So could I ask you to read that one into the record first as the pages complete circulating it?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Okay. This section would say:

25.1 The operator of a charter school must restrict its purposes to the operation of that charter school.

Is that fine, Mr. Chair?

The Deputy Chair: Carry on. The whole package will be known as A8.

Mr. Lukaszuk: That’s right. It is introduced as one, and it can be separated later.

Section 112 is amended by striking out subsection (1) and substituting the following:

Establishment of school division

112(1) The Minister may, by order, establish a school division

- (a) consisting of 2 or more separate school districts or separate school divisions established under this Act, or
- (b) consisting of 2 or more public school districts or public . . . divisions established under this Act.

This amendment allays concerns that section 112 as it currently is worded allows the minister to at his own discretion create a school division composed of both separate and public school districts or divisions, which is not the intention of this minister. It is supported by the Alberta Catholic School Trustees’ Association.

Section 135, Mr. Chair, is amended by striking out subsection (1)(a)(ii) and by striking out subsection (2)(a) and substituting the following:

- (a) is a Francophone,
- (a.1) is 18 years of age or older,
- (a.2) is a Canadian citizen,

- (a.3) has been a resident of Alberta for the 6 consecutive months immediately preceding nomination day and resides in the Francophone education region on election day.

This amendment removes the requirement for francophone school trustee candidates to have children in the francophone school system. This proposed amendment allows for better alignment with eligibility requirements for public and separate school systems while ensuring that minority language education rights, guaranteed under the Charter, are upheld. This amendment is supported by Fédération des Conseils Scolaires Francophones de l'Alberta, which represents the five Alberta francophone region authorities in the province.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the last, section 192 is amended by striking out subsection (2). This amendment addresses concerns respecting the sharing of school spaces. Section 192(2) as it is currently worded would permit the minister to direct a separate school board to make space available to a public school board or vice versa. It is supported by the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association.

Mr. Chairman, I want to ensure that Bill 2 appropriately strikes a balance and addresses concerns that have been raised by many Albertans since the introduction of Bill 2 on this floor. Even more so, this is an important piece of legislation that will lay the foundation of education in our province for years to come. These amendments will help strengthen the legislation and address concerns expressed by stakeholders.

I stand today and I urge all members to vote in favour of these amendments and pass Bill 2 so it does not die on the Order Paper.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, there is limited time, so the chair will observe strict speaking order by those people who wish to speak. I'll keep a list, and we'll adhere to that rigidly.

Edmonton-Centre will go next, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Blakeman: It's a point of order first, and then I'll speak.

The Deputy Chair: Please.

Point of Order Voting on Amendments

Ms Blakeman: The point of order is to request, as is the tradition of the House upon a request, that the multiple amendments put before us are voted separately. So we can debate them all at once, but they need to be voted separately.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you. We'll get the government member to respond.

Ms Blakeman: There's no response to that. They just do it.

The Deputy Chair: Please know that this is one amendment with five parts.

Ms Blakeman: Excuse me, Mr. Chair. The tradition of the House is not to ask permission.

The Deputy Chair: We'll ask the minister to clarify whether each part can be voted on individually.

The hon. minister on behalf.

Mr. Lukaszuk: I accept the authority of the member that this is the tradition of the House, and there is no objection whatsoever.

The Deputy Chair: So we have agreement on that. Thank you for raising it, hon. member.

Debate Continued

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. Now I am rising to speak to the amendment that's currently on the floor. This has been a vigorous debate with very high passion on all sides, which, frankly, I'm pleased to see. I know that conflict is often regarded as hostile, but in my world, which was the world of the theatre, you don't get a very good play unless you've got some conflict involved in it. I often find that you get a better . . .

Dr. Taft: What about comedy?

Ms Blakeman: Oh, yes. Comedy particularly has conflict. Just think of all those slamming doors and things not going right.

But conflict can also bring together many different minds trying to improve something. I had really hoped that that's what was going to happen with this education bill, and I still have hope that that will happen. It is no secret that I am passionate about public education. My parents were both teachers in the public system. They cannot stop teaching. Everything they do in their lives is about helping whoever is around them to learn something new. I once had a friend who asked my father to help him change the light in his car, and when he came back he said: you know, I just learned more about how my whole car works than I ever knew before, and that was by having your dad help me change one simple little light.

3:10

Education and the process of sharing education and those teachable moments in life are critically important to me, and I believe in public education so much. I really think it is the key to our future, that it's about our ability to create those knowledge-based economies, to move away from a resource-based economy, to make the best use that we can out of innovation and research and development. Yes, that requires oil sands and oil and gas, but it also requires brainpower, and that is nurtured by education.

I want every Alberta child to get the best possible K to 12 education that is possible, and that's why I've been so passionate about what we've had before us.

Now, I've spent a lot of time talking about rights and freedoms, and it's just a particular bee in my bonnet, if you'd like to put it that way, or perhaps you could see it as another passion of mine. We tend to throw around rights and freedoms very casually in North America and particularly in Canada. I'm trying to get people to understand that the freedoms and the rights that we do enjoy today are precious and that somebody thought long and hard and worked and negotiated with others to come to a point where we had a document that set those out for us.

That document, the Constitution, which includes the Charter, is a very important document to us. It guarantees those freedoms. It guarantees those rights. So I get right PO'd when people start throwing around the term "right." "I've got a right to out tonight, Mom and Dad. I've got a right to do this as the employee. I've got a right to have my housing paid for." No, you don't. Know what your rights are, and we'd all be a better society. So I'm always going to take issue when somebody starts to throw that around, and I've had the opportunity to talk about it quite a bit.

One of the things that we've seen in play during this discussion is the government underlining and enshrining what it sees as choices to parents in ways to educate their children. I would really prefer that we could educate all children inside of the public system. I really believe in that. I wonder why we have come to the point . . . [interjection] I'm getting lipped off there by the Energy minister. I'm sure that if he's got time, he's going to get up, but

my time is precious. With all due respect, Minister, direct your heckling somewhere else so I can get through this.

I wish that those options did not have to be written outside of the public system. I really would prefer that it's all... [interjection] There he goes again.

I really would prefer that it all happens inside of a public system. [interjection]

The Deputy Chair: I hate to interrupt the hon. member. Please, we have precious little time here, and I would ask that everybody cede the floor, as required, to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. Please, let's keep the interjections to a minimum here. Thank you.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. That's fine, Mr. Chair.

The government has been very careful to allow charter schools outside of the public system, private schools outside of the public system, and home-schooling outside of the private system. In Edmonton our charter schools are all inside of the public school system, and no one has shown me that that system isn't working as well as I think it does. I have a charter school as one of my schools, and it works really well. I'm very happy with it, and I wish everyone else would have followed that model. Wherever Mike Strembitsky is today, we owe him a deep vote of gratitude.

But other people didn't follow that system, and we have a situation where, you know, groups have approached the Calgary school board and asked to be a charter school under their system and were refused. What did we think was going to happen? Well, they're going to go on their own and say: "The act entitles us. We're going to create a charter school outside of the public system." Well, public system, I hope you're happy with the results because now what we've got is charter schools increasingly going outside of the public system. Again, I wish it didn't happen, but I understand why it is.

Home-schooling. You know, why would somebody want to home-school? Well, I know why they'd want to home-school. I've got a couple of people in my life, and I know why they home-school. I'm not going to talk about their personal choices here.

One of the things that I received a certain amount of feedback on was when I said that home-schooled children should have the same outcomes as children in the public system. I was taken to task by some people who said: "Really? There are studies out there that show that home-schooled children actually attain a better outcome than if they were in a public school."

Actually, from my experience with the people in my life I know that to be true. I think that if you've got, you know, an intelligent, well-educated parent who's going to spend that time with the kids and they get a lot of attention and they get taken out to the art gallery and the science centre and the ballet and taken through the fire station and all kinds of other life-learning situations, yeah, they will end up with a better all-around education than a child is going to get in an overcrowded classroom, which is what they're dealing with today. But there are also examples of home-schooled children who are simply left – their parents go off to work – and examples of home-schooled children who can't get into university or postsecondary because they don't know how to read.

My frustration with home-schooling is not about why people choose to home-school or how they home-school. My frustration is: are we going to end up with kids that are going to be able to move forward with our province at the end of this? For those that are able to come out of home-schooling on top of it, excellent. But for those that are not: what the heck are we going to do with them? How did we as legislators fail those kids? And we failed them; there's no two ways about it as far as I'm concerned.

I think we have a responsibility there to ensure that all home-schooled kids are going to end up at some level or above, and I'm perfectly willing to take above that level. But I don't feel it is appropriate for us to walk away from those kids that are not able to get to that level because they didn't have a good home-schooling experience. So I feel that in some case we've left those kids. I don't know how many there are in this province, but I've heard enough stories now to know that they certainly exist. I've heard as many of those stories as I've heard stories of kids that did very well under home-schooling. The fact that we don't test those kids at all I think is a huge failing of the system. I think we should be testing those kids. That, to me, is a failing of this act.

Now, am I willing to go with the act the way it is? You know what? It's better than where we were. There were a number of things that we needed to do to bring it into the 21st century. There were a number of things that the trustees and the school boards asked for that have been incorporated into this act. That is a good thing. I'm glad it's there.

I am deeply troubled by the inclusion of the preamble that was a government amendment and was added in. It troubles me deeply for the same reason. Lots of parents, most parents, are good parents. They do their best for their kids. But where they don't do their best for the kids, who is supposed to look after the children that don't get the best benefit of that? It's us. It's the state. It's the government services that come in. Where we leave children that don't get the full benefit, we have failed them, and that is my problem with what's happened with that preamble. Saying that parents can do whatever they want and they're the ultimate decider and the ultimate provider, everything that was in that particular preamble, I think for most parents that's fine. But those children that we fail: what are we going to do for them? We just let them go. We just say: "Oh, well. Too bad. Couldn't catch that one." I struggle with that.

By the government feeling that it needed to put that preamble in there despite all the other preambles that were in this act, the government, I think, caved to a group of very able lobbyists who wanted a particular change in there. They caved to them. They didn't need to. This was a good act. It had a lot of good stuff in it. Like, no act is perfect, but you do get into that argument about: is the glass half full, or is the glass half empty? Up until that amendment this glass was half full for me, and I would have gone there, but I am deeply troubled by what we end up with and how we fail those children who are left by putting that preamble in place. As I say, for most people it's not a problem; it's not a difference. But for those kids we fail, we've truly failed them. We've walked away and said: not our problem. Yet it will come to us.

3:20

This is all part of the amendments that we're looking at. The amendments that have been provided by the government have come out as more people got a chance to read through the act. The first amendment, amendment A1, is essentially saying that, you know, General Motors can't start a school and educate children to be General Motors robots. That's what it is about. It says that, you know, they're only supposed to be a charter school. They're not supposed to be going beyond that and creating ice cream makers for Baskin Robbins. There are systems in the world that do stream children very early into a particular outcome. We don't. This is to make sure that we're not using children for things beyond education.

The section talking about unstable funding: at this point in my lack-of-sleep giddiness it struck me as a little funny. To be perfectly reasonable about it, what is "unstable"? It's not a

measurable amount. Are you unstable if you have a debt? Not always. Are you unstable if, you know, you've got zero-based budgeting? Sometimes. So what is an unstable financial situation? It gives no information here. There's nothing to mark this by to be able to say that, yes, this is unstable or, no, it's not. I think it's appropriate that the language is taken out and we just talk about the fact that it places the students' learning environment at risk. Fair enough.

The blending of the Protestant and the Catholic school boards: I know this is really important. I really struggle with this one. Essentially, the act had morphed in these sections, and it did allow that they could be forced to do this by the minister if the minister so chose. There's a section later on where the minister could force them to blend the use of their school spaces or their schools. Both of those are adapted to make sure that they can't unless the school boards both agree and say, you know: yes, the Catholic board and, yes, the Protestant board agree that in this position we're going to come together. I think we have an example of that in St. Paul where they came to the minister and said: please do this; we ask you to. [interjection] Okay. Fair enough. I hear somebody clapping, so that must be right.

The same thing with the blended use of schools, at the very minimum of the central spaces like the library and the gymnasium. I have such respect for the Catholic school board, but I sure wish you guys could figure out a way to work this one. You are really, really straining resources and making it particularly difficult in situations. I don't think anybody takes your faith away from you. But man, oh man, when you stand tight and say that you absolutely cannot use this space, this has created hardship in some areas. It created hardship for those Morinville people, and it will create hardship in other places. I just wish you would be a bit more flexible. The rest of us have to be flexible. If I could put in a plea to all of you, please be more flexible on this one. I think you can still hang on to the icons of your faith even though you're sharing a school gymnasium.

But I see what you've asked the minister to do, and he's done it. I'm not wild about it. I don't have a brass band waiting outside to cheer on this one. I'm pretty clear, you guys. I'm struggling with that one.

The amendment for the francophone is a good amendment. To say that you couldn't be a trustee of a francophone school because you didn't have a child in the system takes away anybody who doesn't have children for whatever reason, and that could be a real punishment. What if you wanted to have children and couldn't but you were faithfully, you know, bringing all you could and volunteering in a francophone school? You cannot run to be a school board trustee? That's cruel, and there's no reason for it. It's prejudice against someone because of their ability to bear children or not bear children. Get off it. This is the 21st century. Sorry; that sounded meaner than I meant it. But you know what I mean.

So that's actually a good amendment, to say that, no, you don't have to have a child in the system, but you do have to adhere to the other requirements that are there, that you are a Canadian citizen over 18 and that you're a francophone. That's perfectly reasonable. But to say that you have to have a kid in the system, no. That takes all of the retired people, you know, out of the mix, the pool of people you could draw from. It's not a very large pool to begin with in Alberta, so I think we need to make the best of what we've got. So that was a perfectly acceptable amendment to me.

The blending of the school boards and the sharing of the space I'm struggling with, you know, but the rest of these amendments I think are fine.

So are we better off with this act than without it? Yes. Am I over the moon about everything that's in here? No. Am I struggling with how some children will be left unprotected and unidentified as needing help in schooling? Yes, because that will follow them the rest of their lives. You know, who does that fall back on in a much more expensive way? Society and the state.

I think we should have been more aggressive in the beginning in trying to accommodate people inside the public system, which is where we used to do it. I think we could still do it again, but because we didn't set the system up in a consistent way previously, it's now too fractured. It's too fractured to be able to draw everyone back in. So we're not going to be able to put those charter schools in the Calgary area under the public school board. They're not; they were created outside of it. That's what it is. We've got to move on and deal with the fact that you now have them inside the system in Edmonton and outside the system in Calgary. What are you going to do? You're going to try and give some consistency there.

I would really like to see a cap on the number of charter schools that there are in the province just so that everybody doesn't decide they don't like the way this or that is handled in a public education system and runs out and starts their own charter school. That really does not help us bring a diverse and respective and well-educated society to fruition. It doesn't. It just allows everybody to have their own little area that they fight to defend. It doesn't help us work together as a province to be as amazing and creative and well-educated as I know we could be. We will have to compete globally, and we're already falling behind. You know, India and China are way ahead of us and are moving in a direction so fast that we would have to run very fast right now to catch up to them. So the education and the ability of Albertans to move together in the same direction is very important.

The other thing about education, to me, is that it's the ultimate leveller. You can be a kid that comes from a poor family, from a family of colour. You could have a disability. You could be almost anything, and when you come into a public education system, you get an education. You work hard. You do well. You've got good teachers. You are going to come out on top. You can be a PhD. You can be a scientist. You can be a rocket scientist. You can be anything you want to be because education will get you there. It is the ultimate key to doing whatever you want to do with your life. It doesn't matter where you came from. If you can get into a public education system and it serves you well, it is the key to your future and to whatever you want to do. That's why I believe it has such amazing potential for us.

Back to where I started. We do have rights to educate children in certain ways – Catholic and Protestant, English and French – and to protect the minorities in both of those areas. The government has seen fit over the years to make accommodations to allow the option – I'm using the government language – of charter schools and of home-schooling. Those options still exist. I wish that we had been able to serve those people well enough in the public system that we didn't have them going outside of the public system, but that hasn't happened.

I think that there are some things where we need to be careful to be testing children, to be monitoring them and evaluating them all the way along. We don't do that, and I think that is where we can be failing children.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon.

Member for Calgary-Glenmore, barring any short questions that may be directed straight to the minister should he wish to respond.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, I look at this amendment, and I look forward to it being divided into five separate amendments. That being said, I'm quite surprised that we would need amendments at this time from the government after the extensive consultation process that was done not only by this minister under this version of the Education Act but also with the previous Minister of Education. I think it was bill 16.

An Hon. Member: Bill 18.

Mr. MacDonald: Bill 18. I stand corrected. Thank you for that.

I certainly had considerable interest from constituents with the original Bill 18, from various groups, whether they were school trustees, whether they were home-schoolers, whether they were parents of children in the public or separate system or in the charter school system.

3:30

Certainly, I look at the first amendment here, the restriction on operator, and we're adding this after section 25. There is quite a list of rules or laws that charter schools will have to follow in the application of the act to charter schools. We have also, before that, an application to establish a charter school. But we're going to add after section 25: "The operator of a charter school must restrict its purposes to the operation of that charter school." My question, and hopefully we can get it answered in the course of debate: is this not the case now, Mr. Chairman?

I'm looking at last year's annual report for the Ministry of Education. There's \$65.8 million being spent for charter schools, and when we look at infrastructure and other initiatives, that ministry total jumps by another \$11 million, so in total there is \$76.6 million being spent on charter schools all over the province. Certainly, there's Westmount Charter School Society, Valhalla, Suzuki, New Horizons, Mother Earth's Children's Charter School, Foundations for the Future Charter Academy, the Centre for Academic and Personal Excellence Institute, Calgary Science School, Calgary Girls' School Society, Calgary Arts Academy Society, the Boyle Street Education Centre, the Aurora school, and Almadina school society. All told, 30 per cent of the money that was allocated is going to one charter, and that's Foundations for the Future Charter Academy. So they received \$25.7 million, or one-third, essentially, of the total allocation.

There has been a growth in charter schools. The public and the separate school system are going to have to be careful because if they continue to close good public schools in central neighbourhoods of both Edmonton and Calgary, then there's going to be more and more of a demand created or an interest in charter schools by parents. I can't fault or blame parents for looking at alternatives whenever good public schools are being closed. The parents, and I would certainly agree with them, feel that there's no valid reason for that.

With this amendment I would really like to know, during the course of debate, if there are examples of where an operator of a charter school has been violating the licence or the permit to operate as is suggested in this amendment. I certainly hope that's not the case. I know the Auditor General had, a number of years ago, a lot of questions and a lot of suggestions for the boards of charter schools because some charter schools, of course, had difficulty providing in a timely fashion accurate audited financial statements. As far as I know, that situation has been corrected.

Certainly, we need to keep a diligent eye on how the \$76 million that we are providing, Mr. Chairman, through the tax system to charter schools is being used and that it is being used correctly. It is my view that it certainly has been spent where it is budgeted, and that's fine.

I had a discussion, Mr. Chairman, with a constituent about the difference between private schools and charter schools. This was a couple who have their children in Holyrood elementary. I'm sure that the hon. member is very familiar with that school. That's a very good school. It has a long list of graduates who have gone on to bigger and better things. Yes. I took this question and I thought about it for a minute. I picked up not this annual report but the one from the previous year, and I explained to the public school parents that the details on how a charter school spends its money, that has been provided to it through the tax system, are publicly available. Not only are charter schools included in the schedule to financial statements in the annual report, but certainly you could in five minutes, for instance, go onto the Internet and find the previous financial statements for schools such as the Suzuki school of music. No problem. You would find that if you were interested as a taxpayer.

But whenever we look at private school funding, that's not the same. These public school parents, both of them also taxpayers through their personal income tax and their education property tax, were contributing to the provincial treasury, and of course that's where we get the money to fund schools. Now, I showed these parents, Mr. Chairman, the accredited private school support. If we go back a number of years – let's say we go back five years – we spent \$134 million on accredited private school support. That was for both the private schools and the private operators. Interestingly enough, that was overspent by 5 and a half million dollars. If we move forward to now, you can see where, of course, that has gone up. That's one of the problems that in the discussion of this bill people have issues with: this government's enthusiastic support for the funding of private schools, that now has gone up from \$134 million to over \$177 million.

That certainly is interesting, Mr. Chairman, because that offended the constituents who had come to see me to discuss the original format of this bill, Bill 18. They thought as taxpayers that this wasn't fair because there wasn't accountability.

Now, I could perhaps entertain accepting this bill and this amendment as it's written if there was some accountability towards private school operators. There is not, in my view, any accountability. They just get the money and that's it. They don't have to spell out, for instance, like the public school boards or the separate school boards do, how the money is spent and why. It may be of interest, but it certainly won't be in my time here. Maybe the current Minister of Energy will be chairman of Public Accounts after the next election. He could invite some of these private school operators to Public Accounts, and they could explain in detail how this sum of \$177 million is spent.

3:40

If the hon. Minister of Education was to not so much put restrictions on operators but put guidelines or recommendations on how private schools operate, instead of just picking on charter schools, then one would be more likely to support this amendment as presented.

Now, amendment B, Mr. Chairman, the second amendment, where section 29 is to be amended by striking out "the financial administration of the school is unstable and places the learning environment of the students at risk." This is regarding, oddly enough, private schools. I don't know why the word "unstable" was used in the first place, but it is interesting to note that,

obviously, some people somewhere found that insensitive or inappropriate and wanted it changed. As a result of that, we see the substitution of “the financial situation of the school places the learning environment of the students at risk.”

I guess that’s not nearly as offensive, but I still don’t understand why we can’t have it mandated that there be good, sound financial reporting from private schools, and I certainly don’t consider this section to adequately address what taxpayers want and need from private schools. The budget for private schools continues to go up and up and up, but there doesn’t seem to be an improvement in the accountability.

Certainly, the minister has had time to think about this. I’m sure there was a consultation process with these private school providers or marketers whenever the consultation process was going on. I don’t know if it was separate or whether it was together with the public relations exercise that happened up at the Northlands Expo Centre. It could have been. Maybe not, but certainly the minister can clarify that to the Assembly.

I am also interested in talking about amendment C, the proposed amendment of section 112. Section 112 is the creation, alteration, and dissolution of school divisions. Now, one would almost say that the Minister of Education is caving in to the Alberta Party. That’s the political party that seems to think that we don’t need separate boards and we don’t need public boards; we can consolidate them all into one. I would certainly disagree with that.

The hon. Minister of Transportation certainly knows the Constitution and, certainly, would recognize that separate school rights go back to the British North America Act, the northwest ordinance of, I believe, 1896 – I could stand corrected; it could be 1898 – and also the Alberta Act of 1905, which enshrined separate school rights.

I think we have to be respectful of the Catholic community and make sure that these rights continue. Some political parties may think that we can consolidate all these school boards, but I for one don’t think so. They make the argument that we’ll have fewer administration costs and we’ll have more efficiencies. Well, that argument was made by the Member for Calgary-West when he fired the nine regional health authorities and created the one health board right after the 2008 election. There was no talk of that. There was no political chat during the election of firing the regional health authorities and starting one superboard. We know what has happened with that. We can look at the budget of Health and Wellness. We can look at the budget of Alberta Health Services, and we can see that it’s gone up and up and up. We haven’t seen an improvement in service. We can’t even control our costs. So this is a caution that I would make when we are looking at amendment A8, section C here, which is the establishment of the school divisions, where

the Minister may, by order, establish a school division

- (a) consisting of 2 or more separate school districts or separate school divisions established under this Act, or
- (b) consisting of 2 or more public school districts or public school divisions established under this Act.

I would encourage all hon. members to reflect on what possibly could go on here. I don’t think it’s in the interests of local government. If there is a study that the Department of Education has on how all this will work, how it will save money and improve our education system, provide it, table it, make it public so that separate school supporters can see it and public school supporters can see it. I’m sure there are reports in there, but this government doesn’t have the political nerve to make them public.

I would caution hon. members that before we contemplate consolidating separate or public school boards, two or more, we

remember the lessons from Alberta Health Services, where all the promises were made. There was no public discussion. There was no cost-benefit analysis done, whether internally or externally by high-priced outside consultants. Nothing was done, and we see what has been created. So let’s be very, very careful about this. I know the minister is trying to clarify some things in section 112, but I don’t think this is the way to do it.

Now, certainly, section D is also of interest, and that has been discussed in the Gold Bar community. There was an individual who was contemplating running for the school board there, the francophone board, and this may satisfy them. This is an amendment, I think, that one could support.

The last amendment, section 192, by striking out that subsection – I have to find it here, Mr. Chairman. I looked at this with interest as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre was speaking. I’m curious about the origins of this. This would be the deletion of 192(2). “When, in the opinion of the Minister, space is available in a school building, the Minister may direct the board operating the school building to make that space available to another board.” Well, certainly, that seems to be going on now. I think the deletion of this is a good thing.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The chair recognizes the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

3:50

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I have to be honest. I’m just going over right now in a rush with our researchers this amendment. There’s a lot of information here, a lot of material here. I’ve got to say that I am amazed. Yesterday or the day before – I forget when it was – we were debating, obviously, Wildrose amendments on this. The Education minister at that time berated us for not bringing our amendments forward sooner so that he could take a look at them, so that he could evaluate them, whether they should be added. He said:

No criticism or no constructive suggestions [meaning to us] on what should be changed or how to amend this bill. Nothing. So as far as I’m concerned, the bill has met the standards of that particular caucus. That is why, hon. member, I was so shocked to find out that at the final line – it was in second reading – all of a sudden we have a whole array of amendments. Where were they before? It could have been done, but where were they before?

So here we are half an hour before the Legislature closes for probably an election call, and the minister brings four amendments and just expects us to pass these four amendments. Sorry. Five? There are five amendments.

The Deputy Chair: Five parts under one amendment, each to be voted separately.

Mr. Anderson: That’s right.

I just don’t understand this. Mr. Chair, we are on the record in *Hansard* for yesterday. We had finished all of the Wildrose amendments. There were two of them. We had finished them. The government had voted against them. We said that we supported the 99 per cent of Bill 2 that was there. Some very good things were in there: more local autonomy for school boards, raising the dropout age – you can go up and down; there were tons of good stuff – allowing charter schools to go forward with their charters for longer periods of time and giving them a more stable, predictable existence, all of these very good things.

We had, obviously, two problems with it, specifically section 16, specifically the preamble. It didn’t protect parental rights as

well as we would have liked. But we gave an olive branch to this government, and we said that we would be willing to pass this bill, that we would pass this bill. We sat down in our chairs, and we didn't speak again for the entire day and then watched in bemusement as nine members of the government got up one after the other and filibustered their own bill. Then to our complete amazement . . .

Mr. MacDonald: No session.

Mr. Anderson: Exactly. That's right. At the very end of it the House leader gets up and says that we're not going to have an evening session. Total shock. We were trying to figure out what's going on. We thought the bill was going to pass. We put out a press release saying that we support Bill 2. We're behind it minus section 16, the section 16 that we've been advocating to get out and replace, and we've had a long discussion about that. We said: "Besides that, we agree with the rest of the bill. Let's get it through."

Then the government comes back. After a couple of morning appointments I get into the office at noon today, and there are five new amendments sitting on my desk from the Education minister. No explanation. I heard that he did attempt to come earlier in the morning. I wasn't there. It's too bad we couldn't have met then. I think he came at about 10 or 11 – I don't know the exact time – and left these amendments with us at noon.

We have had exactly four hours to take four or five substantive amendments and research them and go back to our constituents and talk to them and ask them what they think about it, ask the stakeholders at the Catholic school boards, at the independent schools association, the home-schoolers, the public school boards, all of these folks. We had no chance to consult with them at all, and we're supposed to just trust the government that these amendments are good for the people of Alberta – "Just trust us" – when they sat there and berated us for a week when we brought our own amendments forward, saying: "How dare you guys? Why on earth would you bring these amendments now when you had so long before to bring those amendments?"

So we got through it. We voted on it, and we sat down in our chairs and didn't say another word. In fact, if the government had come and said, "You know what?" – now everything is up in the air. We've gotten calls from several organizations that are still studying this because we did ask: what do you guys think about these amendments? They're like: we haven't had a chance to look at them.

Now we're in a position where this government is asking us to participate and condone their sausage-making. We're not interested in the sausage-making. We're interested in a good bill. We're very interested in a good bill. We're glad the government has consulted on this. We're glad the former Minister of Education consulted on it. We're glad the current Minister of Education consulted on it. We're very happy about this. It's good. Consultation is good. Consultation with the Legislative Assembly is also good, I think.

We come here with this bill, and we give two amendments. Two amendments: that's it. Two small-in-words amendments, and they're apparently the end of the world and don't get passed. But we respect this Legislature's time enough to say: okay; let's vote on this now. Then the government filibusters their own bill and cancels the evening session and then comes back the next day and says: "Guess what? Surprise. Not only do we want to pass Bill 2, so take you up on your offer of last night, but we also want to introduce five new amendments. We know we berated you for bringing last-minute amendments a week ago, but we're going

bring last-hour, last-second amendments, and we expect you to pass them." If not, my guess is that they're going to go run around saying: "Oh, the Wildrose doesn't love education. Oh, look at this. They're trying to play politics with our kids."

What an embarrassment. We've talked with the Alberta School Boards Association about this, the independent school association. We've talked with dozens of trustees about this bill. They like parts of it, but they have concerns as well about certain parts of it and would like it to be improved. But, generally speaking, it's good.

We were willing to say: "You know what? Let's have an election on this issue surrounding section 16. We'll pass this bill, and then we'll come back after the election, and if it's a Wildrose government, we'll make some changes in that regard. If it's a PC government, well, then, obviously the people didn't care enough about that issue, and the government gets their way on it." That's why we fight elections. We were willing to do that and still get the 99 per cent of this thing passed so that it didn't have to get delayed a month or whatever.

Now, unfortunately, Mr. Chair, I think that the government has put us in a position where we have absolutely no choice but to wait and ask them to wait until we can go back to the stakeholder groups and go over these amendments and get their feedback and ask.

Mr. Lukaszuk: The bill dies on the Order Paper.

Mr. Anderson: That's right. The Minister of Education is rightfully pointing out right now that if we don't pass this bill today, it will die on the Order Paper. Well, you should have thought of that last night when you cancelled the night sitting, when the Wildrose was completely prepared to go ahead and pass this bill in its present form and then come back after the election and amend section 16 to get that very poorly worded section out of there. That was the plan.

Now we've got five new amendments, that we've barely seen, regarding charter schools, something very important, regarding different authorities under school divisions. Good grief, our researchers haven't even done a brief on this yet, for crying out loud. It's just beyond belief that we're expected to just trust the government and pass these without even doing any kind of substantive briefing on it. We've had no time. We've had virtually no time to do this, and there's no way that I in good conscience as a legislator can sit here and say: "Oh, well, that's okay. We'll just trust the government." I made that mistake once. Did you know that, Mr. Chairman? I made a mistake like that once. It was regarding a land-use bill. It was called Bill 36. People quote that a lot in here when they get mad at me. They never let me forget about it, and I like that. I like that they don't.

4:00

It was a fantastic lesson. The lesson was: never ever trust. You know what? Never trust anybody with your own vote. I don't care if they're in your party or they're in an opposite party. Never trust that you are getting the full bill of goods. I learned that the hard way on Bill 36 because I did not do my due diligence. I did not go back to my stakeholders like I should have done and say: are you sure about this bill? I didn't even have a property rights lawyer look it over and say: is there anything in here I should be worried about and so forth? I just blindly followed. And guess what? That was a big mistake and one I very much regret. So I am not prepared as a legislator to come in here and do the exact same thing out of political expediency.

Now, what does this mean for the bill? Well, it means it will die on the Order Paper if the election is called. We don't know when

the election will be called. The Premier was just quoted outside. They asked her: will you possibly be coming back after the constituency break; will you be resuming? She said maybe. The exact quote is – oh, shoot; I just got an e-mail, too. But she said that we might still do that. She hasn't decided. Okay? She said: when I drop the writ, you will know. You know, this is the person that promised fixed election dates during the leadership campaign.

Anyway, if that's the case and we're going to come back after, then all we're going to need, probably, is one or two more days max to get Bill 2 through. Maybe that's what the government should think about doing. Wait a couple more days. We'll go back for constituency week, hear out our constituents on this and other issues, and come back here for a couple of days. By then we will have had a week to go over the amendments. We will have had a week to go talk to stakeholders about those amendments and so forth. Then we can all come back here and finish off the debate and pass it.

Or, door 2, we can go to an election, and the Wildrose will be proposing that after the election we will be bringing forth this same Bill 2, the exact same as it's written, with a caveat that we're not sure about the five amendments. We'll have to do some research on that, as I said. But everything else will be essentially the same. Bring these five pieces and see if they're worth adding, and then take out section 16 of the act and replace it with what is there right now under the current act, that same section, because we think section 16 broadens the authority of school boards and the Ministry of Education to force parents to teach things that they don't believe in to their kids in home-school settings and threatens under section 29 of Bill 2. It could be used to take away the accreditation of faith-based schools or Catholic schools or any schools – section 29 deals with private schools, so that would be faith-based schools – that do not uphold the different rulings and interpretations of the Alberta human rights tribunals.

To me if you have a faith-based school that says, "No; we're going to teach our own interpretation of a certain moral issue," which certainly is their right under freedom of religion, there is something in the act that says that if they do that and that doesn't jibe with what the interpretation of human rights are by the suspect human rights tribunal that we have in this province, we are going to strip you of your rights. I'm not saying that's what the minister plans, but that is what the act allows for, and we can't agree with that.

Now, of course, we don't have a majority, Mr. Chairman, at all, as we're reminded every day. It's 67 – well, they're down to about 64 or 65 now, whatever it is – to 4, so we don't have that ability to stop the bill. We're going to have to eventually vote on Bill 2, and we agree with 99 per cent of the bill. But a Wildrose government, if we get in, will bring this exact bill forward with the changes to section 16 and the preamble as well to enshrine the rights of parents and make them paramount. That's what we are willing to do. That's what we've been willing to do the whole time, and I think it's important that that be on the record.

So that was the second door, Mr. Chair. We could wait for an election, come back, and if we have a Wildrose government, we pass it then.

Or, door 3, the PCs remain the government. Certainly, that could happen. Who knows? They've done it for 41 straight years. They could do it again. If they do it again, then they can bring their act and these amendments and everything forward, and they can call the Legislature back to pass it. You know, it won't take very long because it'll just be one bill on the Order Paper unless they want to add something else. So they'll have to reintroduce it. That's fine. They could have it done probably in a week. We're not talking about killing this bill for all time and eternity. We're

talking about delaying it a month, though, possibly just a week if it means that we're coming back after a constituency break. If they're going to call an election, yes, this will be delayed at least a month, probably a month and a half, thereabouts, at the government's discretion.

Mr. Chair, the Wildrose does not control the government agenda in this House. Clearly, we have no power or authority to control it. We cannot bring this to a vote. We cannot invoke closure. We cannot do anything of the sort. I have spoken to this bill maybe three times through all of the different readings. That's it. It's not like we've been filibustering this bill at all. We brought a couple of amendments. We spoke for about an hour or two hours, maybe, on both of those amendments, and we've pretty much shut up other than that. It's not like we've been sitting here till all hours of the morning debating this bill. We thought that because of that good faith and the fact that 99 per cent of the bill was good, we were going to go forward with it, have an election, and then come back and take section 16 out if we were Wildrose, or the government could just leave it if they were still the government, the PCs.

Now we don't have that option, and we're not going to do it. We're not going to allow the government to I think mock, frankly, the proceedings in this House by bringing five substantive amendments – these aren't just little word changes; these are substantive amendments that affect the bill – and expect us to just roll over and play dead. That certainly is not what we're willing to do, Mr. Chair. We expect that this government will do the right thing at this point.

You know, we'd be certainly willing to adjourn debate on this issue and go home if people want to do that, because we've got nothing else, apparently, to do. [interjection] Never mind; because the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore wants to speak as well.

We will say this, too. We support the ability of the government to bring amendments in Committee of the Whole. We have no problem with that at all. We think that's what Committee of the Whole is partially for as well as opposition amendments, but you can't give us an hour and a half to debate five amendments and say that you've done your due diligence or expect us to go back to our constituents and say, "Yes, we've done our due diligence," because that would be an out-and-out lie because we just got these. We're not going to do that.

Mr. Chair, I hope that we can all come back, do our due diligence on these five amendments, have an election, probably, talk a little bit about section 16 issues as well, and come back and pass a bill that works for all Albertans when we return to this House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am grateful that I have this opportunity here to get up and address the amendment. Is it amendment A8 or A9? Where are we at? I didn't get it written down.

Anyway, Mr. Chair, there are a few things I want to clarify first before I get into the details of the amendment, and I think it's very important that we do this. I want to start off by quoting from *Hansard* from Tuesday evening, the Minister of Education.

... "Why is it that the Wildrose opposition raises concerns now and not earlier," she is right that on that particular amendment they didn't have an opportunity to raise it earlier because it was just a freshly tabled amendment on the floor of the Legislature, so they couldn't possibly have had the time to research it and to raise issues with it.

4:10

Then a little bit further down he goes on to say:

... not one visit to the office, not one communication of any sort, neither to my predecessor nor to myself, from that particular caucus on this bill. No criticism or no constructive suggestions on what should be changed or how to amend this bill. Nothing. So as far as I am concerned, the bill has met the standards of that particular caucus. That is why, hon. member, I was so shocked to find out that at the final line – it was [only] in second reading – all of a sudden we have a whole array of amendments.

A whole array of amendments. Two.

Where were they before? It could have been done, but where were they before?

Then I want to quote a little bit further down because this is the part that for me is particularly insulting to Albertans. The minister says:

That's fine.

It should be mentioned, Mr. Chairman, that bills 18 and 2 are one and the same. It's the same bill reintroduced. The only reason that the number changed, as you well know, is that every time we reintroduce a bill, it loses its placement order, and it just simply receives a different number. It's the same bill with a different number on the cover. But that's fine if they want to argue that.

Mr. Chair, that's the whole reason we can't trust these amendments coming in. They're saying: "That's the way it is. That's fine. Just trust us." They're not the same bills. Bill 18 and Bill 2 are not the same bills.

It's just a simple little word that they changed in this big, thick document. How many pages is it that we have here? We have 186 pages. One concern that many parents and many people and I myself have spoken on is that it's not just "parents"; they've inserted the words "informed parents." Thereby, I see an expert being able to come in and say: well, that parent has made that choice, but they're not informed, and we can change that. Even if that was the only change in this bill, for this minister to get up and say that it's the same bill is wrong. It's categorically wrong.

I can go through 22 other changes that I've got just in the first, I think, 20 pages. All of those tabs, Mr. Chair, are changes that are made from Bill 18 to Bill 2, yet this deceptive government and minister want to say that they're the exact same bills. They're absolutely, categorically not the same bills.

Again, I was in the office this morning when he came over. He wouldn't leave his amendments.

An Hon. Member: Oh. He came over.

Mr. Hinman: Oh, yes. He came over in a rush with these amendments. But he wouldn't leave them for even myself or our head researcher to be able to see. He took them back. I came out and said: well, where are they? He said: oh, he wouldn't leave them with me. This person won't even share them. They had them yesterday. How many times have we received things from this government that say, "Draft only"? They can say: draft only. They could have told us yesterday afternoon that they had, all of a sudden, this great need for an amendment. They berated us. They berated myself, saying how after 18 months – again, that was categorically wrong because Bill 2 just came in in February or whatever. It hasn't even been two months, yet he said: it's 18 months that you haven't done anything.

This bill is basically very good. It's very exciting for many people. But there are a few problems in here. After all of the arguments that he's had, Mr. Chair, at the last minute he brings in

five amendments to this bill and says that we've got to get them passed this afternoon.

Even more importantly – again maybe this is fate; this is what we all needed – the Premier knew this problem was going to happen. That's why she could never declare that the 26th of March was going to be the fixed election date. So now they have a legitimate out to come back on April 2, which, again, they haven't said yes or no to. The Premier says: oh, you'll know when I drop the writ. Isn't that nice? She tells us how it's important for Albertans to know when the writ is going to be. I still have seniors that want to go away on vacation, and they don't know. I mean, it's just wrong.

Mr. Chair, what we have here are five amendments. I must say that I finally did get briefed. Also, to think that at noon today we had nothing else on our plates, that we could all of a sudden just: let's not have question period. Let's not have anything else we need to deal with so that we can look at this for four hours. Let's give ourselves time to actually contact and verify. I mean, how many times have these people, this government, said one thing, and then when you go to verify it, it isn't so? It just isn't so. Yet they say: trust me. My goodness, I wouldn't trust a rattlesnake for fear that it's going to bite me. Why? Because it behaves that way. The behaviour, the past behaviour, of this government is indicative of why we can't trust them.

Ms Blakeman: A scorpion and a mouse.

Mr. Hinman: Yes.

Time and time again we find out that it isn't there. Again, I'm so disappointed because the process of bringing this forward in such short order is wrong. They know it; they've talked about it. They thought that what we were doing in bringing in amendments was wrong, yet here is their bill. Eighteen months. It's supposedly to them the same bill, but here is another change they want to make. What's really sad, Mr. Chair, is that this is purely playing politics. They think they're going to be cute and go out there and say: "Oh, Alberta doesn't have Bill 2 because of the Wildrose. They filibustered."

My good colleague from Airdrie-Chestermere talked yesterday about how they filibustered. We said: "You know what? You guys have the majority. We're ready to concede that we can't stop you on this. We know that section 16 is wrong, we know the preamble is wrong, but we'll go to the people, and we'll have an election. We can fix it after that if, in fact, that's what the people want." That's what the democratic process is about, and this government was saying that that's what they wanted to do. They were satisfied, and then all of a sudden there's this holy inspiration that has come across that we've got to get this in here and make an amendment.

It's comical, Mr. Chair. It's comical that this same minister can flip-flop. Well, that whole government seems to be able to flip-flop. They're definitely not fish because they're out of water and they're still alive, but we'll see how many are five weeks from now. They adapted very well, very quickly.

To go through here, again, it's very disappointing that they're playing politics. They want stability. They could have debated this. We could have gone forward. There's no reason not to.

There are two real reasons why this bill shouldn't pass, and that's because of parental rights and because of the fact that those parents want section 16. They want to go back to make sure that all people are respected, not a list. As my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Centre loves to get at – I totally agree with her – when you're in law and in legislation, once you start a list, that's a list of exclusion. We want all people to be protected equally under the

law, not a certain group, and we certainly don't want them subject to the Human Rights Act.

Ms Blakeman: Yes, we do.

Mr. Hinman: No. We need to fix that if we want to be subject to it.

Mr. Anderson: The legislation is already subject to it.

Mr. Hinman: Well, no, no. I mean that as Albertans you don't want to be subject to an act.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the debate and discussion is through the chair and relevant to the five amendment sections under one amendment, A8, please.

Mr. Hinman: Let's go through a few of those amendments and look at them and see how the government could possibly, after all this consultation and stuff, be in a situation where they're desperate and need to in an hour and a half pass this very important bill, which mostly is good.

The first one: "The operator of a charter school must restrict its purposes to the operation of that charter school." Now, what could that possibly mean? Why did we need to change that? What it is, from what briefing I've gotten – but I want to go and verify that it is – is that right now it's a set of parents who come together and say: "You know what? We're not meeting the needs of our child, and we think that we need to set up this special charter school so that our children can get that special education they want." Maybe it's something to do with music and is not offered in the other schools. Maybe it's to do with . . .

Ms Blakeman: Muslim schools.

Mr. Hinman: Yeah, religious needs and wanting to start their own.

There are many reasons why parents might want to come together and say, "We need a charter school because we think this is in the best interests of our children" and go there. My understanding – and it seems plausible – is that the reason we need to change that is so that we don't have someone like a developer go and start a new area and as part of that development say, "I'm going to start a charter school." He could then draw people to a community or be able to set one up and say, "You know what; this community is going to sell" because he's using a charter school for that. I think all of us in here would agree that that's not right. We want parents to come together, not some business using the act to be able to say: we're going to start a charter school to get an area to go together.

On just a short, brief look at this for less than an hour I would say that, well, maybe that is good, but once again I want to go home. I want to do some consultation. I want to hear if it's okay.

4:20

The next one. Section 29(4)(e) is amended by striking out "the financial administration of the school is unstable and places the learning environment of the students at risk" and substituting "the financial situation of the school places the learning environment of the students at risk." Again, I think that this is a credible change, but why after all this time and all this consultation did we just get it this afternoon that this is what needs to be changed? If, in fact, they were pontificating how perfect this legislation was, that they've done all the consultation, it's hard to understand why it's brought forward in such last-minute debate and needing to go through.

Amendment C. Section 112 is amended by striking out subsection (1) and substituting the following:

Establishment of school division

112(1) The Minister may, by order, establish a school division

- (a) consisting of 2 or more separate school districts or separate school divisions established under this Act, or
- (b) consisting of 2 or more public school districts or public school divisions established under this Act.

Why do we need to change that all of a sudden?

Let's turn to 112 and read what was in there before and see how the government could possibly – possibly – have missed this and need to make an amendment. When we turn to section 112, we read: "The Minister may, by order, establish a school division consisting of any number of public school districts, separate school districts and school divisions established under this Act."

When it's pointed out, again it becomes quite obvious to me. I see that they're worried here because the written law is arbitrary enough that what they're afraid of – actually, the minister tried, and they've never used their authority before. It says in here that "the Minister may, by order" do this. They've always gone to these different schools and said, "Could we use part of this for a private school?" and negotiated, and it was always a good-will deal, but now what they're saying is that it's not going to be by order to, more importantly, "establish a school division consisting of any number of public school districts, separate school districts and school divisions."

What they're doing is that they're separating those because there's a concern that perhaps with a Catholic school board the minister would come in and say: "You know what? You need to take this wing out of there, and it becomes a public one." The minister could just order that. What they're clarifying here, their intent, is: "Okay. We'll take a charter school or a public school or a Catholic one, and we could combine them, but we won't force the three to come together."

Again, I think this looks like another credible one, but I'm sorry, Mr. Chair; I want the time to go back. I want to consult. One thing that's always amazing to me in my life is that just when you think you understand something, somebody brings in a new detail, and I say: "Wow. I never thought of that. That came out of left field, but you know what? It's right."

We've accepted some amendments. The most important one that we accepted in this one is that only students are subject to bullying, yet somehow we missed all of that. An amendment came forward to say, "No, no. It should be everybody. Everybody should be subject to bullying." We amended it unanimously, which is the way it should be.

It's always exciting in here when we have unanimous consent. I could go back and talk about the different ones where we've had unanimous consent, and all of them were exciting, where we came together, where we saw the need. So here we are with an amendment saying that we need to do that.

Mr. Chair, this is wrong. We shouldn't rush the process. We need to have the time to go back to consult, and I'm excited to think that the Premier has not called an election, that we can come back on April 2, that we can go through this properly. If she wants to put children first, let's come back April 2, let's pass this bill, let's make the proper amendments, and then go to election.

But I think she's only concerned about her party, their skin and their power, and they're going to run off and call an election here, which they wouldn't fix. They wouldn't even have the generosity to tell Albertans: this is when we want to go to our election. I have seniors that are upset. They've got planned vacations. They

wanted to be here but couldn't because this Premier wouldn't keep her word and say that the fixed election date is the 26th of March or that the fixed election date is the 2nd of May.

That's what we should be looking at, Mr. Chair. We shouldn't be rushing through some of these amendments. We have two more amendments there. Again, it would be great to be back here. I look forward to being back on April 2 to debate this, and we'll . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. I hesitate to interrupt, but as we all know, pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) I am compelled to interrupt the proceedings and call on the committee to now rise and report.

[Mr. Zwozdesky in the chair]

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

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the

Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? If you do, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Those opposed, please say no. Accordingly the report is accepted.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I would move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on April 2.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:26 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 27th Legislature - 5th Session (2012)

Activity to March 22, 2012

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 200 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills with lower numbers are Government Bills. Bills numbered Pr1, etc., are Private Bills.

*An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If it comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned a chapter number until the conclusion of the fall sittings.

1 Results-based Budgeting Act (Redford)

First Reading -- 4 (Feb. 7 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 31-38 (Feb. 8 aft.), 125-34 (Feb. 13 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 124-34 (Feb. 14 aft.), 160-61 (Feb. 15 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 164-65 (Feb. 15 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 5 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 5, 2012; SA 2012 cR-17.5]

2* Education Act (Lukaszuk)

First Reading -- 115 (Feb. 14 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 152-59 (Feb. 15 aft.), 187-88 (Feb. 16 aft.), 182-85 (Feb. 16 aft.), 256-57 (Feb. 22 aft.), 405-11 (Mar. 8 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 500-01 (Mar. 13 eve.), 515-35 (Mar. 14 aft.), 537-71 (Mar. 14 eve., amendments passed), 706-18 (Mar. 20 eve.), 734-50 (Mar. 21 aft., amendment passed), 764-74 (Mar. 22 aft., adjourned, amendment introduced)

3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2012 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading -- 115 (Feb. 14 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 150-52 (Feb. 15 aft.), 161 (Feb. 15 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 185-86 (Feb. 16 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-56 (Feb. 22 aft., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 5 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 5, 2012; SA 2012 c1]

4 St. Albert and Sturgeon Valley School Districts Establishment Act (Lukaszuk)

First Reading -- 236 (Feb. 22 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 403-04 (Mar. 8 aft.), 480-88 (Mar. 13 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 633-35 (Mar. 19 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 697-98 (Mar. 20 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 21 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cS-1.5]

5 Seniors' Property Tax Deferral Act (Jablonski)

First Reading -- 298 (Mar. 5 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 403 (Mar. 8 aft.), 488-94 (Mar. 13 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 635-43 (Mar. 19 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 698-701 (Mar. 20 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 21 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cS-7.2]

6 Property Rights Advocate Act (McQueen)

First Reading -- 236 (Feb. 22 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 404-05 (Mar. 8 aft.), 494-500 (Mar. 13 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 643-45 (Mar. 19 eve.), 645-62 (Mar. 19 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 701-02 (Mar. 20 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 21 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cP-26.5]

- 7 Appropriation Act, 2012 (\$) (Horner)**
First Reading -- 513 (Mar. 14 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 586-95 (Mar. 15 aft., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 627-33 (Mar. 19 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 681-96 (Mar. 20 aft.), 703-06 (Mar. 20 eve., passed on division)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 21 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 21, 2012; SA 2012 c3]
- 201 Alberta Bill of Rights (Property Rights Protection) Amendment Act, 2012 (Hinman)**
First Reading -- 69 (Feb. 13 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 299-311 (Mar. 5 aft., defeated on division)
- 203* Tobacco Reduction (Protection of Children in Vehicles) Amendment Act, 2012 (Sherman)**
First Reading -- 69 (Feb. 13 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 427-36 (Mar. 12 aft., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 613-22 (Mar. 19 aft., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 623 (Mar. 19 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 21 outside of House sitting)
- 204 Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2012 (Allred)**
First Reading -- 357 (Mar. 7 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 436-38 (Mar. 12 aft., passed)
- 205 Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act (Quest)**
First Reading -- 585 (Mar. 15 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 623-24 (Mar. 19 aft., adjourned)
- 209 Homeowner Protection Act (Hehr)**
First Reading -- 585 (Mar. 15 aft., passed)
- 210 Early Childhood Learning and Child Care Act (Taylor)**
First Reading -- 513-14 (Mar. 14 aft., passed)

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