



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday, May 30, 2012

Issue 5

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont (PC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Jablonski, Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)  
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Bikman, Gary, Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND)  
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),  
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Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort (PC)  
Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)  
Cusanelli, Hon. Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)  
Dallas, Hon. Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)  
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)  
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Donovan, Ian, Little Bow (W)  
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Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)  
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)  
Griffiths, Hon. Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)  
Hale, Jason W., Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
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Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jeneroux, Matt, Edmonton-South West (PC)  
Johnson, Hon. Jeff, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (PC)  
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Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL),  
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Khan, Hon. Stephen, St. Albert (PC)  
Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC)  
Kubinec, Maureen, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (PC)  
Lemke, Ken, Stony Plain (PC)  
Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)  
Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)  
Lukaszuk, Hon. Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)  
Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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McAllister, Bruce, Chestermere-Rocky View (W),  
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McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
McQueen, Hon. Diana, Drayton Valley-Devon (PC)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
New Democrat Opposition House Leader  
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Olesen, Cathy, Sherwood Park (PC)  
Olson, Hon. Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)  
Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (PC)  
Pedersen, Blake, Medicine Hat (W)  
Quadri, Sohail, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)  
Quest, Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)  
Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC),  
Premier  
Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)  
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)  
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)  
Saskiw, Shayne, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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Smith, Danielle, Highwood (W),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
VanderBurg, Hon. George, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (PC)  
Weadick, Hon. Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)  
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)  
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W)  
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)  
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)  
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC),  
Government Whip

### Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 61

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

### Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

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Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Co-ordinator

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Counsel/Director of House Services

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms

Liz Sim, Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

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Manmeet Singh Bhullar	Minister of Service Alberta
Robin Campbell	Minister of Aboriginal Relations
Christine Cusanelli	Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Cal Dallas	Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations
Jonathan Denis	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Wayne Drysdale	Minister of Infrastructure
Kyle Fawcett	Associate Minister of Finance
Doug Griffiths	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Dave Hancock	Minister of Human Services
Fred Horne	Minister of Health
Doug Horner	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Ken Hughes	Minister of Energy
Jeff Johnson	Minister of Education
Stephen Khan	Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education
Heather Klimchuk	Minister of Culture
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Diana McQueen	Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
Frank Oberle	Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities
Verlyn Olson	Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Dave Rodney	Associate Minister of Wellness
Donald Scott	Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation
George VanderBurg	Associate Minister of Seniors
Greg Weadick	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs
Teresa Woo-Paw	Associate Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations

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

**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Amery  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Bikman

Bhardwaj	Quadri
Blakeman	Quest
Donovan	Rogers
Dorward	Sandhu
Eggen	Sherman
Fenske	Smith
Goudreau	Starke
Hehr	Strankman
Jansen	Towle
Luan	Young
McDonald	Vacant
Olesen	

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

Chair: Mr. Quest  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Anderson
Casey
Dorward
Eggen
Kubinec
Sandhu
Sherman

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Pastoor  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Forsyth

Allen	Leskiw
DeLong	Luan
Fox	McAllister
Fraser	Notley
Fritz	Pedersen
Jablonski	Sarich
Jansen	Saskiw
Jeneroux	Swann
Johnson, L.	Wilson
Kang	Young
Kubinec	Vacant
Lemke	

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Xiao  
Deputy Chair: Mr. McDonald

Bikman
Blakeman
Brown
DeLong
Eggen
Leskiw
Quadri
Rogers
Wilson

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Zwozdesky  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Young

Calahasen
Dorward
Forsyth
Goudreau
Jablonski
Mason
Quest
Sherman
Smith

**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Cao  
Deputy Chair: Ms L. Johnson

Barnes	Notley
Bhardwaj	Olesen
Brown	Pastoor
DeLong	Rowe
Fox	Sarich
Fritz	Starke
Goudreau	Strankman
Jeneroux	Swann
Kennedy-Glans	Webber
Luan	

**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Dr. Starke  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Lemke

Allen	McAllister
Amery	McDonald
Bhardwaj	Notley
Casey	Pedersen
Hehr	Sandhu
Jansen	Saskiw
Jeneroux	Towle
Johnson, L.	Xiao
Kennedy-Glans	Young
Kubinec	

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Anderson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dorward

Allen	Hale
Amery	Hehr
Anglin	Kang
Bilous	Pastoor
Calahasen	Quadri
DeLong	Sarich
Donovan	Starke
Fenske	Stier
Fraser	Webber
Fritz	

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Ms Kennedy-Glans  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowe

Anderson	Hehr
Anglin	Johnson, L.
Barnes	Kubinec
Bilous	Lemke
Blakeman	Leskiw
Brown	Sandhu
Calahasen	Stier
Cao	Webber
Casey	Xiao
Fenske	Young
Fraser	Vacant
Hale	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 30, 2012

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let us pray. Almighty God and Creator of the Universe, grant that we the members of our province's Legislative Assembly fulfill our duties with honesty and integrity. May our first concern always be for the good of all our people, and let us be guided by these principles in our deliberations this day and always. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed an honour and a pleasure to introduce to this House a good friend of this Legislative Assembly, of this government, and definitely of the province of Alberta, Federal Republic of Germany Consul General Hermann Sitz, who is accompanied today by a well-known Edmontonian of German heritage, Mr. Bernd Reuscher, the honorary consul of the Federal Republic of Germany. As all members of this Assembly know, Germany is a very important partner not only to Canada but to Alberta economically, academically, and culturally. We are proud to have an Alberta office in Munich, Germany, as well. So any visit by any member of the consular corps of Germany is very welcome in this province. I would like to ask both the consul general and the honorary consul to rise and receive our gratitude and the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Herzlich willkommen in Alberta. Welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 28 bright young grade 6 students from my constituency. That's Norwood elementary school in Wetaskiwin. They're accompanied today by their teacher, Marcie Hofbauer, and parents Laurie Dahl-Perras, Cindy Johnson, and Sherri Scolah. These young students are keenly interested in the operation of government. I'm very glad to have them here today, and I want to congratulate their teacher and parents for encouraging that interest. I hope they continue to have a great time here, and I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you 74 visitors from James Mowatt elementary school in Fort Saskatchewan. They are here as part of their grade 6 curriculum and have loved their experience here. They are accompanied today by their teachers, Miss Kristin Scott, Mrs. Barb Percy, Mr. Chris Bartsch, and Mrs. Trista Masterson, as well

as one of their parents, Mr. Jon Duval. I would like to ask them to rise – they should be on both sides of the Assembly – and receive our greeting.

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Chris Bourdeau and Mr. Nolan Sawatzky. Chris is the assistant director of communications in Treasury Board and Finance, and he is accompanied by Nolan Sawatzky, who is a student in Grant MacEwan's public relations program. Nolan is currently serving as a communications intern in the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I would ask that they rise and that we give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of 23 very bright, energetic, and photogenic students from Viking school who are visiting with us today. They are accompanied by their teacher and vice-principal, Mr. Philip Brick, teacher's aide Mrs. Wanda Lefsrud, and Mrs. Kim Beaumont. I met these students just a few minutes ago. They're enjoying their visit here to the Legislative Assembly. I would ask that other members of the Assembly join me and give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Cusanelli:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of this House two women who have been involved in promoting innovative education and life-long learning in the province. First, the president of the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta and a member of the board of trustees of Clearview public schools, Ms Patty Dittrick. Also, with Ms Dittrick is the executive director of the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta, Ms Mary Lynne Campbell. I would ask that Ms Dittrick and Ms Campbell rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Rowe:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you it is a great pleasure to introduce some very dear family friends. In politics we all know it takes sacrifice, and this family has given a great amount. For 28 straight days they lent me their father and their husband to manage my campaign, my successful campaign. I am grateful to them for this gift. Please help me welcome to the House today Porter, five; Paxton, three; and their mom, Tanya Cooper.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Seniors.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four guests that are seated here in the members' gallery. Neil Pierce, Julia Daniluck, Julie and Joshua Kelndorfer are here today in recognition of MS Awareness Month, which has occurred through the month of May. Neil serves as president of the MS Society of Alberta and is familiar to members of this Assembly for

his contributions to the voluntary sector throughout Alberta. Julia was diagnosed with MS in the spring of 2002, and her team has raised almost half a million dollars since 2006. Julie serves as director of government and community relations for the MS Society of Alberta. Diagnosed with MS eight years ago, she is an active volunteer with the organization. Joshua is a student at Parkallen school and started a team in the Edmonton MS Walk in 2008 to raise money to find a cure for his mom. Since 2008 this young man has raised \$50,000. I'd ask that these four great Albertans rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege and honour to introduce to you and through you two of my fellow Rotarians, Bob Huff and Jyl Talsma. Jyl is the mother of one of our brave Afghanistan veterans. With them today we have a very special guest, Helene Quedens, the Lacombe Rotary Club's exchange student from Denmark. Please stand and be recognized and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Marcel Severy. Marcel is a student at MacEwan University completing a major in English. He's very interested in politics and eager to learn more about the political process here in Alberta. I would ask Marcel to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a group of guests from the Candora Society. The Candora Society is a nonprofit group which has worked with residents of northeast Edmonton for over 24 years. The society is based on a philosophy of participatory education, enabling people to give voice to their issues and to take a stand on what is important to them. By connecting people to each other, the Candora Society is promoting positive growth in the lives of women, children, and families in our community for free. I would now like to ask my guests to rise as I call their names and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Susan Catlin, Ian Daly, Michelle Ackland, Colin Daly, Katrina Ungarian.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I introduced two members of the Farmworkers Union, and I neglected to mention that they're here on a dual purpose. The first indeed is the health and safety of farm workers in the province, with the absence of occupational health and safety, workers' compensation, and child labour standards, but they're really here also to highlight that farm operators are at tremendous risk, as has been highlighted by the federal minister through Bill C-45, the Westray bill, that places all farm operators at risk if they do not create the conditions for health and safety in their workplace. This is a mission that they have also shared with some in the House. I look forward to hearing more from them in the next couple of days, Eric Musekamp and Darlene Dunlop.

### Members' Statements

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

### Prohibited Donations to Political Parties

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday a point of privilege was brought against the Justice minister for allegedly misleading this Assembly when he made the outrageous claim that the former Chief Electoral Officer asked the government to muzzle him from reporting any findings of illegal donations. Obviously, this statement lacks any logic. Honestly, why on earth would a person tasked with ensuring democratic transparency ask to be muzzled from disclosing publicly illegal deeds that undermine our democracy?

That the minister's statement is also flat-out untrue was made clear by none other than the current CEO, who, when asked by a reporter late yesterday if the former CEO had requested the law to be changed so that findings of illegal donations could be kept secret, said through his spokesperson: "that was not the recommendation of the CEO."

The facts are now very clear. First, the former CEO, Lorne Gibson, did not recommend that findings of illegal donations be kept from the public. Untrue. Second, this Premier, while Justice minister, authored legislation that muzzles the CEO from reporting findings of illegal donations. Third, there have been dozens of findings of illegal donations by Elections Alberta, and as far as anyone can find out, the PC Party is involved in every single one of them.

On behalf of Albertans the Wildrose demands the following. First, the Minister of Justice and Premier should retract their past statements to this House that the CEO asked to be muzzled. It wasn't true. Second, the Minister of Justice should immediately table legislation this fall retracting this order and make it retroactive so all illegal donations found by the CEO thus far can be reported. Lastly, the PC Party must pay back every cent that was illegally donated to them and apologize to Albertans. Anything short of fulfilling these demands will show this Premier has no intention of changing the culture of corruption and secrecy that has existed for far too long in the halls of Alberta's Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Parliamentary Reform

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. After swearing in her cabinet, the Premier remarked that she wanted to change the role of the Legislature and to craft more policy with all parties, saying: we'll let everyone talk about policy and stop talking about politics. Well, the Premier declaring that she will let us talk about policy suggests that she hasn't fully grasped the role of the opposition in our system.

We believe strongly that effective opposition is a necessary safeguard for Albertans. The work of the opposition in holding the government's feet to the fire and demanding that they be accountable to the electorate is indispensable to a functioning democracy. *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms* says that question period relies on the willingness of cabinet "to submit its conduct of public affairs to the scrutiny of the Opposition on a regular basis." It also recommends that the "respect for the rights of the minority, which precludes a Government from using to excess the extensive powers that it has to limit debate," is critical.

Question period is the most important opportunity for the opposition to speak directly to cabinet about their decisions. In Alberta, however, question period is often a venue for government private members to ask the cabinet to read a news release from the

department in the Legislature. It's a waste of the Assembly's time, Mr. Speaker. I want to invite the Premier to think about the purpose of question period and to work with the opposition to craft a new role.

As we saw last week, the government has resisted working cooperatively with the opposition. Lack of communication with House leaders on Bill 1 and a refusal to allow an opposition presence in the media room for the Premier's news conferences is troubling. The Premier talks about a better relationship with the opposition while effectively ignoring the members on the other side of the floor. The Premier's repeated decisions to hold news conferences in the cabinet room – and there's another one later today, Mr. Speaker – blocks any opposition presence from those news conferences and prevents us from doing our job.

While the Premier has talked about making changes about how the Legislature functions, so far she has not taken the opportunity to consult with the opposition. That needs to change.

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

### Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month

**Ms L. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to speak about Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month. MS can occur at any age but is usually diagnosed between the ages of 15 and 40. It is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system. Symptoms can range from blurred vision, speech, bladder, and bowel problems to partial or complete paralysis.

With about 11,000 Albertans living with MS, including my friends Jan and Larry, finding safe and effective treatments for this disease is a priority for the Alberta government. This government will continue to support the work being done to find a cure for the disease. We are moving forward with Alberta's three-year observational study on CCSVI. That's chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency. Currently there are close to 1,000 participants enrolled in the study. The information gathered will provide important data in the near term to support the efforts of other investigators working to find a cure.

We also support the dynamic work of the MS Society as it continues to provide a wide variety of services and programs to Albertans affected by MS. The society is also the largest funder of MS research in Canada.

To support these programs there are several fundraising events each year. Recently there were walkathons in Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Fort McMurray, Drumheller, St. Paul-Lakeland, Medicine Hat, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, and St. Albert. You can still participate in walkathons being held in Calgary and Brooks this upcoming weekend. During the weekend of June 9 to 10 MS bike tours will take place around the province.

I encourage Albertans to learn about the many ways to get involved in helping to find a cure for MS. Jan, Larry, and others say thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Emergency Services Workers

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge the vital work of our emergency services personnel. This summer will be like many other summers we've all enjoyed over the years. Albertans will barbecue. They will gather at family functions. Our children will engage in summer activities like swimming, biking, and soccer. For most of us it will be a typical glorious, sunny summer. But for some Albertans it will be a trying summer, a summer that will test the human spirit, a summer that will

challenge the strength of family support networks. Like all other summers, our forests will be at risk of wildfires, our farms will experience drought, and our homes may flood.

All Albertans, whether we know it or not, rely on a network of emergency services personnel that is always keeping watch. We depend on these brave men and women to survey the risks, to make hard, split-second decisions, and to protect Albertans and our property from disaster. Our paramedics, policemen, firefighters, emergency dispatch, and emergency management personnel never have a typical summer. They always remain committed and always put the safety of Albertans first, tirelessly working away in the background.

I would like to acknowledge the search and rescue teams, emergency medical services, policemen, firefighters, emergency dispatch, and our Provincial Operations Centre. Thank you for ensuring our peace of mind, knowing that you're there to protect our communities, save lives, and mitigate damage to our properties. Know that the members of this Assembly and the citizens of Alberta appreciate the work that you do for us. Thank you again for your commitment to Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

#### Premier's Attendance at Bilderberg Conference

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow federal NDP leader Thomas Mulcair will be in Alberta, a golden opportunity for the Premier to meet face to face with the man who's appointed himself Alberta's number one enemy and dispel the myths he believes about our oil sands. But, instead, the Premier will be hobnobbing behind closed doors, away from the accountability of journalists and the public, at the invite-only Bilderberg conference in Virginia and sticking taxpayers with a \$19,000 tab. Where are this Premier's priorities? Is it to stand here in Alberta and defend our most important industry from bullies like Thomas Mulcair, or is it to attend secret cocktail parties on the taxpayer dime and let the bully have open season? To the Premier.

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to be able to be attending a conference in Washington made up of international leaders who are making decisions and are involved in decisions that affect the Canadian economy and the oil sands. You know, what's tremendously interesting to me is that this hon. member, before she was an hon. member, criticized the former Premier for rushing back to Alberta to try to convince someone who was never going to change their mind about the oil sands to change their mind. My job and the job of our cabinet is to advance Alberta's interests, to support the oil sands, and that's what I and the Deputy Premier will be doing tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Smith:** I hope the Premier knows that there's a big difference between a movie director and the official leader of the federal opposition.

Given the exclusive and secret nature of the Bilderberg conference, given that no reporting of this conference is allowed, and given that Bilderberg's own website states that "no resolutions are proposed, no votes [are] taken, and no policy statements [are]

issued” at the conferences, will the Premier tell us what possible justification or actual value there is for this \$19,000 taxpayer-funded trip?

**Ms Redford:** I’ll tell you that I have a pretty good sense of what the role of the Leader of the Opposition is, and I’ll tell you that I think it’s to support Alberta initiatives that matter for the future of this province in a constructive way. One of the ways that we yesterday had tremendous opportunity to speak about advancing Alberta’s interests was through the Western Premiers’ Conference, to get support from western Premiers with respect to a Canadian energy strategy, at the very moment that this Leader of the Opposition was standing in the House saying that it wouldn’t happen, it shouldn’t happen, and it couldn’t happen. And, Mr. Speaker, it did.

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

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since she’s dodged the question a couple of times, I’m going to try it one more time. Given that B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell attended Bilderberg in 2010 and the province’s Conflict of Interest Commissioner was called in to investigate and given the secretive nature of the Bilderberg meetings and the matters discussed and given that the only way to get into Bilderberg is by secret invitation, how can Alberta taxpayers know that they are getting something that actually advances our interests and not just personal networking opportunities for the Premier?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I don’t understand what the Leader of the Opposition’s definition of secret is. At 4 o’clock yesterday we issued a press release. We’re standing in the House today talking about this. I’ll tell you that we’re going to talk about Alberta’s interests. I’m very happy to continue to talk about it after this conference is over because I’ll tell you that everything that we need to do as the government of Alberta is to ensure that opinion-makers around the world understand who we are, what we do, why, and how we do it to advance Alberta’s interests and our economy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. opposition leader for her second main question.

### Committee Compensation Repayments

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of openness and transparency, only after Albertans expressed outrage about MLAs accepting cash for the no-meet committee did the Premier promise that all PC MLAs would pay back all the money they received or, I quote: any MLAs who do not will not have a place in my caucus. Wildrose MLAs have shown leadership by paying back the funds. Not the PCs. Unbelievably, MLAs are sitting in the PC caucus while still owing money to taxpayers for work they did not do. Will the Premier show that she’s kept her election promises and . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, we have been in extensive discussions with every member of this caucus with respect to this issue, and I can stand here and proudly say that every single member of our caucus has made arrangements and has already started to pay back that money. We know full well that it will be completed because it is the right thing to do.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, given that the PCs have not made this information public – the Wildrose has demonstrated leadership by once again providing proof, which I’ll table also later today, that its members did the right thing and returned all funds owing – we challenge, no, we demand, on behalf of Albertans: will the PCs who sit here today in government give the money back before the Legislature rises for the summer?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment during the election. We are keeping our commitment during the election. In fact, my understanding is that there are even people who were in this Progressive Conservative caucus who were not re-elected who paid back the money, which was not the case on the other side.

**Mr. Anderson:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Member for Airdrie, you’re rising on a point of order? Noted.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Premier is incorrect, and I’ll allow for my MLA to be able to correct her afterwards.

The Premier promised accountability, and she promised Albertans that every MLA would repay the no-meet money or they would not sit in her caucus. Voters have a right to know that that has happened. If the Premier will not table proof that all the funds have been repaid, will she keep her word and kick out the members of her caucus who have not repaid the money?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, if that is the case, I make that commitment.

**The Speaker:** Just before we go to the third main question. The chair is having some difficulty hearing the debate and the questions. I wish we could just tone it down a little bit, please. Otherwise, I will bypass you and go to the next member.

The hon. opposition leader.

### Prohibited Donations to Political Parties

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: now that, and with much gratitude, we have the official confirmation from the Chief Electoral Officer’s office that the information about proven illegal donations should be made public, should not be kept secret, can we have an end to this shameless cover-up? Will the Premier give her blessing to the Chief Electoral Officer to release, number one, the names of the offenders; number two, the party that they have donated to; and, number three, the penalty that they’ve received?

**Ms Redford:** As we’ve said many times in this House, we have Elections Alberta that is run by a Chief Electoral Officer, who – I will use the word again – is “independent” from this Legislature. Mr. Speaker, I am not in a position to tell the Chief Electoral Officer what to do or to give my blessing to anything he may or may not choose to do. I think that shows incredible contempt for the office and the independence of the office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, given that, will the Premier at least then give her blessing to the Chief Electoral Officer to release the dollar figure amounts of those donations given to her own PC Party and give this Legislature and all Albertans her commitment to return every single last cent of illegal donations given to her PC Party?



**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, the first part of that question was the same as the first one. It is not for me to bless the Chief Electoral Officer, and I think it's incredible that the Leader of the Opposition would think that as a politician she had a right to do that. In terms of whether or not the Progressive Conservative Party has received any illegal donations, the party has spoken to that matter. That is not the case. The investigations continue, as I understand it, for a number of political parties.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### **Speaker's Ruling Questions about Political Party Activity**

**The Speaker:** I will take this opportunity to again remind members that government is accountable for its own policies, its own programs, its own services, and its budgets. It is not accountable for a party, and neither are you in that respect.

So let's move on, please.

### **Prohibited Donations to Political Parties (continued)**

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier felt it necessary in this new Legislature to introduce a new Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation. Will she direct him to make it his first undertaking to review the report of former Chief Electoral Officer Lorne Gibson and develop a plan to implement his recommendations to ensure fair and transparent elections for the future of this province?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, it was quite interesting for us – and the hon. Member for Airdrie was a part of the Progressive Conservative caucus when we went through this – to undertake an extensive review of the recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer the last time that we reviewed the Election Act. What we have said is that as part of the work of the new associate minister of transparency he will be reviewing the suite of legislation that deals with conflict of interest, with political fundraising, and with elections. Now, on top of that, I believe that there was a letter tabled in this Legislature yesterday where the Minister of Justice went above and beyond and specifically solicited advice from the Chief Electoral Officer as to whether there were any changes he would like to see.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton Centre.

### **2:00 Municipal Funding**

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. There are several issues around municipal funding that this government has failed to address. Now, this government rages against the feds for taking more of Albertans' money than it gives back in equalization payments, yet it happily does exactly the same thing to Edmonton and Calgary. To the Premier: why do Edmonton and Calgary only get back pennies on the dollar for all the different taxes they pay? Calgary gets 8 cents back; Edmonton gets 6 cents back. [interjections] Oh, that seems to have distressed her. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Mr. Speaker, I'd be curious where the hon. member would be getting her information from. I have heard arguments presented by different members of the AUMA that they don't get the same value for the dollar, but they're talking about,

specifically, dollars that go to municipalities. The same arguments have been made in rural Alberta. The argument we always make is that whether it's a municipal government or a provincial government or a federal government, we all serve the same clients, and all the dollars go back to every community to provide the services that Albertans need.

**Ms Blakeman:** With respect, the point that they're making is that they don't get that money back.

On to the next question. Why is the principle of stable, predictable three-year funding available only when applied to the MSI, the municipal sustainability initiative, and not to the 22 other grants that come from the province to the municipalities?

**Mr. Griffiths:** Mr. Speaker, that's not the case at all. We have said from day one that we wanted to secure stable funding for municipalities. It applies to all of the grant programs that we run through so that municipalities know what they have, what they can count on. MSI is the major portion of that funding because it makes up almost a billion of the \$2 billion that goes to the municipalities, but the commitment is the same for all of those programs.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks. Well, let's stay on MSI, then. How is the government going to implement its new commitment to increase MSI grants to \$1.6 billion a year by 2014 when it still hasn't delivered on its two-year-old promise to increase MSI funding to \$1.4 billion a year, especially given that all you managed to do last year was \$896 million? How are you going to do this?

**Mr. Griffiths:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear from the beginning that we plan on – for 10 years the program was \$11.3 billion sent to municipalities. It was going to increase every year. Because of a global economic downturn it was difficult for the province to meet all of those obligations and targets. To get to the \$11.3 billion by 2017, we would have to approach \$1.6 billion. As we go through year-over-year fiscal plans, we're going to continue to try and meet that obligation and that promise that we made to municipalities five years ago.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the NDP opposition.

### **Prohibited Donations to Political Parties (continued)**

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just yesterday the Solicitor General claimed that legislation which allows this government to hide illegal donations made to the PC Party was introduced on the recommendation of the previous Chief Electoral Officer, but the Chief Electoral Officer says that only investigations were to be in private, not conclusions. The Chief Electoral Officer says that the Justice minister isn't telling the truth. To the Justice minister: are you telling the truth?

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, proceed if you wish.

**Mr. Denis:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to get into points of order here as I like this hon. member.

**The Speaker:** Are you rising on a point of order, are you rising to answer the question, or both?

**Mr. Denis:** I don't want to get into a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I'm prepared to answer the question.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader, then.

**Mr. Mason:** He says that he's prepared to answer the question, but then he sits down. Mr. Speaker, it's a simple question.

This one to the Deputy Premier: when you said that changes to legislation that keep the results of investigations into illegal donations secret were introduced on the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer, were you telling the truth?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I take objection to anyone in this House suggesting that I may not have been telling the truth at any point in time.

The member of the fourth party would be well served to research the legislation. Number one, there are two acts at play. One is the Election Act; the other one is the election finances act. Any monetary contributions to campaigns are made under the election finances act. I would invite him to read that act because there's only one little section on investigations. There's nothing in that act, in my opinion, that precludes the Chief Electoral Officer from releasing information, and if he chooses to do so, he's welcome to do it. He's independent. He needs no permission from this government.

**Mr. Mason:** He clearly believes otherwise, Mr. Speaker, and this government is involved in a premeditated cover-up.

To the Deputy Premier: will this government do the open and transparent thing, do the right thing, and write to the Progressive Conservative Party to demand that they voluntarily release details of the illegal donations that they have so willingly accepted in violation of the laws of this province?

### Speaker's Ruling

#### Questions about Political Party Activity

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I've just reminded a couple of previous speakers about that fine line. If you have a question that pertains to one of the officers that serve this Legislature independently or otherwise, that's a fair question. But we're treading on a very delicate piece of turf here.

Deputy Premier, I'll recognize you to respond if you wish.

#### Prohibited Donations to Political Parties

*(continued)*

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** To restate the obvious, if the Chief Electoral Officer chooses to release information, he's privileged to do so as per the independence of his office. Nothing, in my opinion, in the legislation prevents him from doing that.

But let me remind you, Mr. Speaker, that, yes, the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta has publicly stated that it has been investigated, that there were some irregularities, and that money has been paid back. But there are other parties in this Chamber that have been investigated, and I wonder who they are.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have new information in my hand that shows that this government is allowing the PC Party to stuff their coffers with illegal donations, but there's a twist. This document shows the Premier's own riding association took \$1,800 in illegal donations from Mount Royal University in 2008, with the PC Party collecting \$2,000 more. To the Minister of Justice: will the government commit today to amending the legislation to bring all violations to light?

**The Speaker:** Well, again we're treading on that fine line. This may be the last question that we allow in that vein. You might want to rephrase the next ones.

Hon. Deputy Premier, if you wish.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, less than one week, and we're racing to the bottom.

But let me try to address that. If this member feels that he has information, for the benefit of the fact that he's a new member, first, table that information in this House, and (b) file it with the Chief Electoral Officer, who will, again, investigate it and report it if he feels it's appropriate to do so.

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

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will definitely table this document later.

Given the Premier made a funding announcement to Mount Royal right before the election and then during the election the Premier's picture appeared on the cover of their alumni magazine together with a puff piece, is it fair to say that Albertans should be concerned about this obvious unethical conflict of interest?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** On a point of order? Thank you.

Hon. member, third question.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Given that the Premier herself is at the core of the problem by passing a law that makes convicted political parties unaccountable to Albertans and now that her own riding has accepted illegal donations, how can Albertans believe that the Premier . . .

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader has risen on another point of order?

**Mr. Hancock:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Noted.

The Deputy Premier to answer.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, I will speak to it. As a member of this House and as a member of the bar, being a lawyer, this member should know two things. Number one, he is making suggestions that the Premier has done something illegal, yet he hasn't even tabled the document, nor has he given the privilege to the Chief Electoral Officer to investigate it.

**Mr. Anderson:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Second of all, the member knows very well, Mr. Speaker, that there is a process by which allegations can be investigated. He should utilize that process. This is not the way we resolve issues in this House.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

#### Highways 628 and 779

**Mr. Lemke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Secondary highways 628 and 779 are major arteries in Stony Plain and through Parkland

county. For over 12 years the town has implored the Ministry of Transportation to make much-needed upgrades to these roads, but as of yet little has been done. In fact, some of my constituents refer to 628 as a goat trail. To the Minister of Transportation: what is the provincial standard for when secondary highways such as highways 628 and 779 should be upgraded?

2:10

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, to the hon. member I would say that we don't consider any highways secondary. They're all provincial highways, and upgrades are done according to overall provincial priorities and available funding. Factors that determine that funding are traffic volumes, safety records, new developments, economic activity, and condition of the infrastructure. All those are matters along with the priorities of the day.

**Mr. Lemke:** My constituents will be delighted to hear that this is a primary highway.

First supplementary question to the same minister: given that the people of Stony Plain have seen irregular and inconsistent upgrades to these roads for over a decade with no date in sight, when will the government commit to making these repairs to ensure the safety of the people of my constituency?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The initial construction work has actually begun on highway 779 by Alberta Transportation. Utility work was completed by the town of Stony Plain in 2011. My department is moving forward with the engineering, land acquisition, driveway relocations, and railway crossings for the reconstruction of highway 779, and this work will need to be completed before the construction begins. Although the construction of highway 779 will take more time, we remain committed to completing the work.

I'm out of time, unfortunately. I'll talk to the member after on more details.

**Mr. Lemke:** Second supplementary question, again to the same minister: given that in 2009 Alberta Transportation added highway 779 upgrades to its three-year plan only to remove them again in 2012 after the town of Stony Plain had spent over \$3 million in infrastructure to prepare for the new road, will Alberta Transportation add these important improvements back into the three-year plan and follow through with their commitment to the town of Stony Plain?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No committed projects were cancelled, but they were moved back to meet our funding envelope. Transportation's overall budget for 2012-2013 is \$3.3 billion, of which \$1.95 billion is for program expense, and \$1.38 billion is for capital investment. As I said, some projects were deferred. Our total capital infrastructure program is still 38 per cent higher than the average of provinces in Canada at \$1,493 as opposed to \$1,081. To the hon. member: we understand it's a priority, and as the funding becomes available, we will get that job done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

## National Energy Strategy

**Mr. Hale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose stands for defending Alberta's interests and standing up for our resource development. In contrast, the Premier prefers talking about her pet project, a vague national energy strategy, instead of getting results. Alberta needs concrete action to support the energy sector, not airy-fairy ideas that the Premier said that have little substance. We need pipelines to the west coast, to the U.S., and should support a west-to-east pipeline to diversify our markets, to get full value for our product, and to create jobs. Why did this Premier not focus on pipelines rather than pipe dreams at the Western Premiers' Conference?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, to refer to a Canadian energy strategy as airy-fairy is really not understanding the importance of this industry to this province and to this country. As a matter of fact, this initiative is supported by four western Premiers and by territorial Premiers. I don't think there is anything airy-fairy about it. As a matter of fact, this is leadership showing that as western provinces and, frankly, all of Canada we believe in responsible extraction of our natural resources.

**Mr. Hale:** The B.C. Premier wasn't even there.

Given that yesterday the Premier met with our western partners and once again touted this empty national energy strategy with no detail, no timeline, no deliveries, can the Premier tell us her national energy strategy with concrete details, or is she just going to keep having conversations? It's time to put some meat on the bone.

**Mr. Dallas:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier commented yesterday that this is a discussion, and clearly there was consensus among western Premiers. The Premier has a Canadian energy strategy on the agenda for the national discussion coming up, and there are plenty of opportunities to flesh out details on this, build consensus, make sure that all provinces understand and buy in to the benefits of a Canadian energy strategy.

**Mr. Hale:** Given that we have seen federal leaders defame our resource development, pitting other provinces against us, will the Premier consider the Saskatchewan Premier for the job of Alberta's new ambassador to Ottawa to defend our interests because our Premier is missing in action?

**Mr. Dallas:** Mr. Speaker, I think no Premier in Canada has done a better job of articulating and advancing and promoting the interests of Alberta as a place of tremendous opportunity, opportunity not just for Albertans but opportunity for all Canadians.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

## Postsecondary Tuition Fees

**Ms Kubinec:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This spring postsecondary students in Quebec have participated in a series of demonstrations, protests, and started a province-wide student strike about the cost of tuition. Government and student groups are at odds over the issue. The unrest has even turned violent, and the Quebec government has created legislation to force an end to the strike. My first question is to the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education. Student groups in our province have staged protests in the past and

most recently supported Quebec's students with a rally in Edmonton. What is preventing a full-scale student strike in Alberta?

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

**Mr. Khan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address my colleagues for the first time in this House. There are a number of reasons why this government has a strong relationship with Alberta students and postsecondary stakeholders overall. Like my predecessors, I look forward to meeting with student groups and other stakeholders to hear directly from them on issues such as tuition or any other issues they wish to speak of. I believe most students understand that this government has ensured that postsecondaries have stable three-year funding and that the rates of tuition are capped at CPI. Alberta is a leader in Canada for scholarships and bursaries, and we will continue to provide this access to education for all Albertans.

**Ms Kubinec:** Mr. Speaker, my second question is also to the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education. Institutions talk about rising costs of their own and how those costs have been passed on down to the student. Is this minister planning to allow the postsecondaries to introduce more market modifiers to help institutions who are finding it hard to cover their costs?

**Mr. Khan:** Mr. Speaker, Albertan tuition costs are in line with the national average, and tuition fee regulation is keeping tuition increases at a manageable level. As a one-time initiative market modifiers were introduced on a select number of programs because anomalies existed when the current tuition fee was implemented. The six modifiers were necessary at the time and effective in making these programs more competitive with similar programs outside the province. We continually monitor the cost of delivery and the costs associated with being a student; however, there are no plans to reintroduce market modifiers at this time.

**Ms Kubinec:** My final question is to the same minister. Tuition is only a part of the equation. What is this minister doing to control noninstructional fees, and is it the time now to develop a regulation around these fees?

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

**Mr. Khan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Students need to know that any new fees have to add value to their education. I do not believe that to achieve this, we need to make any regulation changes or develop entirely new sets of regulations. We've asked all Campus Alberta institutions to develop formal policies around these fees with formal consultation with student groups. My predecessors have done an excellent job in this area, including student groups as stakeholders in the purview of the provincial tuition rises. Students and taxpayers and Albertans understand that the government of Alberta currently subsidizes 75 per cent of the cost of postsecondary education.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the Member from Edmonton-Calder.

### **Twinning of Highway 63**

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've been building roads for a hundred years in this province, so it should be fairly easy to complete the twinning of highway 63, but the trouble is that this government has now run five consecutive deficits, the heritage fund is worth less than it was in 1976, and the

coffers are bare. Today as it stands, we are spending all our resource revenues on things we use today. To the Minister of Transportation: can you please confirm with me that we're not actually going to dip into the heritage savings trust fund to pay for this road?

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

2:20

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have made clear in the House the last two days in a row, in the next budget there's \$450 million over the next three years to build the first hundred kilometres of this road. As the hon. member also knows, we'll be coming forward with a report at about the end of June on plans to further that. We have committed that we will twin the entire road, and the financing for that will be announced in due course. I would say that there's no plan to dip into the heritage fund at this time, that I'm aware of. We will make the announcement at the appropriate time.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, given that this government is unwilling to ask citizens to pay for things they use, like roads, through taxation, will you commit to paying for highway 63 through a toll instead of on the backs of future generations?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. As we said, I am working with my ministerial staff and the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. Between us we are getting a wide variety of opinions on ways to pay for this road, and amongst those discussions will be tolls. There is no commitment to charge tolls or not to, and in the fullness of time we will bring that report to the House, and all will be revealed when the decision is made. I thank the hon. member for suggesting tolls as one of the options.

**Mr. Hehr:** The reason I suggest tolls is because you have a fiscal deficit because you spend the oil money as soon as it comes in. So there's only one way to do it, either raise taxation or build a toll. You won't tax people. Will you commit to paying for building this road through a toll?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that I couldn't hear a question there, I will do my best to respond anyway. As we've made very clear, our government is committed to looking at all of the options, and after we have that fulsome discussion and we get some informed advice, we will make the best decision that we can on behalf of all Albertans. When we make that decision, we will share it with all Albertans. I look forward to that, and I hope the hon. member will be paying attention when that happens.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### **Special-needs Education Funding**

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This PC government is supposed to be funding school boards so that they can properly support students with special needs. However, the Edmonton public school board recently reported that it has been forced to increase special-needs funding by \$21.8 million, or about 31 per cent. Even with the modest pre-election announcement for special ed here the funding gap is huge. Why is the provincial government

forcing school boards to carry this funding shortfall, which ultimately results in shortchanging every student in public education?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this particular member wasn't in this House when the budget was debated, so let me share some good news with him. For our first time in the history of this province we have passed a three-year budget for education, which is growing from \$6.8 billion to \$7.1 billion over three years, which roughly is at \$34 million per school day. Funding for inclusive education has grown by \$68 million, which is equivalent to 22 per cent. Now, if my memory is correct, the funding for special education for the Edmonton public school board has grown from \$36 million to \$52 million, a very significant increase.

**Mr. Eggen:** Mr. Speaker, the funding for special needs has been flat and has been increasing dramatically for not just Edmonton public but other school boards as well. You know, the question is whether we can fund or not fund moderate special-needs programs in our schools because of the discrepancy that was allocated for special ed. What was spent in Edmonton public was between \$45 million and \$60 million in the last four years. So numbers are fine, but the facts on the ground speak differently.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** I'm not sure if there was a question, so I will take the liberty of telling him, Mr. Speaker, that an increase of 22 per cent is hardly flat. It's quite a significant increase. The Edmonton public school board is receiving additional funding. Their funding for special needs is growing from \$36 million to that of \$52 million, quite a significant increase. There is nothing flat about that. So a 22 per cent increase for special funding and an increase of \$6.8 billion to \$7.2 billion: that's a great investment in education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd be glad to table the report that we have from Edmonton public that demonstrates that we're only getting about a third of the funding that is required to meet the special-needs education in Edmonton public schools. Will the minister commit and consult to ensure that special-needs students get the support that they need without jeopardizing the quality of education for all Alberta students? The discrepancy is there. It's on the paper.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, nothing needs to be tabled. The budget has been debated and passed in this House and is a public document. Spending on education is growing, I say one more time, from \$6.8 billion to \$7.1 billion. That is very significant. It is predictable. It's a three-year budget. It is good news for Alberta education. Alberta students are getting one of the best education systems in the world, and that particular school board is getting a significant increase as well.

### **Twinning of Highway 63**

*(continued)*

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, people are fearful to drive highway 63 to Fort McMurray. Five years ago I was taking a group of baseball players there from Medicine Hat. Unbelievably, it took several meetings with our parents to convince them to go. This was a trip in our own province, and parents felt their boys would be unsafe. This fear is keeping people away from Fort McMurray and costing thousands in economic opportunities in tourism. Wildrose stands for economic development. To the Minister of Transportation:

how can he feel it's appropriate to drag this project out when every day it's risking lives and costing Fort McMurray thousands?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the hon. member that asked the question that he should do what I did and drive up that road right now, and he would see there is lots of equipment moving, lots of work under way, lots of road construction going on. This government is taking action. This government has in the next three years' budget \$450 million. There's already been a hundred kilometres of trees and brush cleared. I would say to the hon. member: those trees didn't cut themselves down; the workers under this government did. We will continue to do that work until that highway is twinned because we are taking action on highway 63.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, I took this trip in 2007, and the promise was already a year old. It's my understanding that only somewhere between 19 and 50 kilometres have been completed. Can you explain that in action, please?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The actions taking place are that there's already about a billion dollars in roads, bridges, and other construction in and around Fort McMurray, either complete or well under way today.

Again I would repeat for the hon. member: there's another first hundred kilometres of road that will be completed three years from now. It's already in the budget. Nothing else needs to be done. I would remind the hon. member that we are working with the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to put together a plan to speed up the northern part of the road. That's nothing but action. The hon. member asked for it. The hon. member actually already has it.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government has a track record of cherry-picking recommendations, why did you not just listen to the residents of Fort McMurray?

**Mr. McIver:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, I think I just pointed out that I was up there listening to the residents, talking to the mayor of Fort McMurray and other people. I would remind the speaker that the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is a resident. We're certainly listening to him.

Mr. Speaker, I think Albertans and people from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo would be glad about who they chose in the election because the other party's recommendation was to cut our expenditures on infrastructure back by 25 per cent for four years in a row. That would leave those people waiting a lot longer.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

2:30

### **Emergency Medical Services**

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the recent campaign there were many comments made to me about the EMS service. Constituents provided a variety of comments about ways to improve that. My question is to the Minister of Health. I understand you have asked the Health Quality Council of Alberta to undertake a review of EMS services. This review comes nearly three years after EMS has transitioned under Alberta Health Services. With all these issues around ambulance response times why has it taken nearly three years to call this review?

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The government announced the review in February, following the receipt of the Health Quality Council of Alberta report that looked into a number of health care related issues. Emergency medical services was one of those issues. One thing I'd want to make very clear is that while this review will deal with a number of the issues the hon. member mentions, it will not change the government's policy decision that EMS is health care and belongs as part of the health care system.

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

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you. To the same minister: could you provide us with a progress report or an update of some kind on this project?

**Mr. Horne:** I'm very happy to do that, Mr. Speaker. The review is expected to be completed in October. It will be a public report. It will be issued by the Health Quality Council directly. It will examine a number of the issues around transition that have been raised in this House and elsewhere, things such as dispatch consolidation, challenges specifically related to the integration of fire and EMS services in some parts of the province, and the availability and adequacy of data on EMS.

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

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you. My question for the same minister: what are the remaining opportunities for the general public, for emergency response providers, and for municipalities to participate in this review?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, that question would be best directed to the Health Quality Council as they're conducting the review. But I can inform the member and the House that a number of key stakeholders have been identified who, I believe, have approached the Health Quality Council and may have been in fact engaged. Those include Alberta Health Services, of course, the Firefighters Association, the Association of Chiefs of Police, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. Those organizations as well as community organizations and members of the general public are all welcome to contact the Health Quality Council in this regard.

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

### Family Care Clinics

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, when asked about the government's big plan for family care clinics, the Minister of Health, not surprisingly, failed to answer the questions. When asked how the government will pay to build and operate 140 of these new clinics, the Health minister shook off the question, saying that he does not "preoccupy himself with questions of infrastructure." Well, Albertans want to know where the money is coming from. Again to the Health minister: how are you going to pay to build, staff, and operate 140 new state-run clinics?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, the response I gave yesterday in answer to the question yesterday was a reflection of the fact that members opposite do not seem to understand that the commitment of this government is to offer primary health care teams to every Albertan in or near their home community across the province.

While others may wish to be preoccupied with discussions about buildings and budget – and those will be addressed in due course – I want to remind this House that both family care clinics and primary care networks are going to be the vehicles that we use to deliver on this commitment. There's \$75 million that was earmarked in Budget 2012 for primary care. There are many, many clinics and organizations across the province that are already delivering primary care services, and many of those will have a role in delivering on this commitment.

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

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it hard to believe that with 140 new clinics there was no plan, no costing whatsoever. Nobody disputes that we need to add primary care for Albertans. The concern is that you won't be adding capacity at all, only further centralizing the system, as you did with the superboard.

Again to the Health minister: can you explain how many of these state-run clinics will be additional capacity and how many will merely replace what we already have, like what happened in Calgary with the Mosaic primary care network?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, we are not going to take a cookie-cutter approach to this exercise. We have tremendous resources, a great portion of my budget invested in primary health care delivery currently across the province. The question is how to use those resources and additional resources which we will allocate to them to expand the availability of care to all Albertans. That includes the services of family physicians, but as I said before, it includes the services of other professionals such as nurse practitioners, who have a greater role to play in delivering these critical services.

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

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Health minister doesn't want to preoccupy himself with matters of infrastructure, I will ask the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister, where are the other 137 state-run clinics going to be, and where are you going to find the money to build them?

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

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're working on that in consultation with Health. I don't know about state run. There will be no state-run facilities in this province. We'll be discussing that with my colleagues in putting together the funding necessary to do this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

I understand the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is scheduled to go next, followed by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Edmonton Folk Music Festival

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton Folk Music Festival is one of the most successful folk music festivals in North America. From humble roots in 1980 this festival has grown to an annual attendance of approximately 85,000 and attracts some of the biggest and best local, national, and international musicians. Despite its proven success the government seems to undervalue the festival by not providing it

with the financial support it needs and deserves. My first question to the Minister of Culture: what kind of financial support is available to the Edmonton Folk Music Festival?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that question. Indeed, the Edmonton folk festival is one of the most impressive festivals that takes place this summer in Festival City, in Edmonton. Currently the festival is eligible for funding under the Alberta Foundation for the Arts through the arts presenting grant and as well through the community spirit donation.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My next question to the same minister. Edmonton is not the only music festival in the province. Can the minister explain how Edmonton's funding compares to funding provided to other festivals, including the Calgary Folk Music Festival?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you well know, there are festivals that happen all over Alberta, from Slave Lake down to Pincher Creek. The Calgary and the Edmonton folk festivals receive the bulk of the funding because of the amount of people that attend those festivals. Also, the funding is not a cookie-cutter approach. We look at each individual application separately. We also look at the talent that comes from international, national, and from within Alberta when they come and perform.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: has funding for arts decreased in our province over the years?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to answer this question. We know that funding to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts has increased approximately 59 per cent in the past seven years, from \$16.9 million to \$27.9 million in 2012-13. In March of 2012, just this last couple of months ago, an additional \$1 million was provided through AFA to assist more artists and organizations with supplemental grants.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

#### Veterans' Licence Plates

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose stands for fiscal responsibility and budgeting on clear priorities. The current government believes in squeezing Albertans to pay for corporate welfare and pet projects. In recent years the government has raised the tax burden on Albertans through service fee hikes across the board. One of the most offensive was the fee hike on the veteran's licence plate. To the minister: when will this government stop nickel and diming our heroes and scrap the fee hike on our veterans' licence plates?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to congratulate the member for asking his first question in the House.

Secondly, I'd like to say that his question was absolutely false. There was no tax hike. There was no increase on the veterans. There was no increase on the veteran's licence plate. In fact, veterans today can go in, exchange their Alberta licence plate, and get a veteran's plate free of charge.

**Mr. Fox:** I do believe there was a 6 per cent hike on renewals that went from \$64 to \$71.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister actually telling us that he thinks this excessive tax grab from veterans is justified to cover the skewed PC government priorities like spending nearly a million dollars on a patronage appointment in Ottawa?

**2:40**

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the member is getting confused with respect to the way some items appear in the budget. However, hon. member, please take a review of that once again. There was no separate fee for veterans' licence plates. In fact, since we've introduced the veteran's licence plate, last November I introduced the veteran's licence plate for motorcycles. On this side of the House we respect our veterans, we honour them, and we will continue to do that.

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to hear that the other side of the Chamber here does respect our veterans, but given that the government has promised no new taxes for the next three years, can the minister opposite promise that Service Alberta will not bring in any more hidden taxes or fee hikes over the next three years?

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact remains that the cost of doing business does increase. For example, in the last 10 years for all motor vehicle products the cost of running these products went up by 109 per cent. Land title services increased by 71 per cent. From time to time fees must go up to account for the cost of providing those services. On this side of the House we have made a commitment to no new taxes and no tax increases. We have been open and transparent about our agenda, and that's why we're on this side of the House and not that.

#### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, you have a member's statement.

#### Alberta 4-H Program

**Ms Kubinec:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and recognize an organization that is dedicated to the personal development of youth while providing a positive impact on volunteers and communities in Alberta, an organization whose vision is to develop leadership, communication, technical and life skills to all its members and leaders. I am of course referring to the 4-H program, a program that now has 35,000 members and 10,000 leaders across Canada. My own children belong to 4-H.

In Alberta 4-H first started in 1917, and over 180,000 people, approximately 7 per cent of our population, have gone through the program. Alberta 4-H is the largest in the country, with over 8,100 members and 2,600 volunteers in 442 clubs across the province. The key objective of 4-H is to learn through hands-on experience

as all members are encouraged to gain knowledge and skills by actively participating in the projects that are offered. There are over 33 projects available in the Alberta program, projects that range from teaching its members how to care for small animals to ones involving photography and others that incorporate veterinary science.

Members have the chance to develop self-confidence and improve self-esteem; learn communication and public speaking skills; make new friends across the province, the country, and the world; win awards, trips, scholarships, bursaries; and, most importantly, have fun. Projects are open to all youths aged nine to 21, whether they come from the city, town, acreage, or a farm. There are also many activities for the whole family, and everyone is encouraged to attend meetings and social events. For those interested in gaining leadership experience, Alberta 4-H has a volunteer program for all those over 18. By organizing activities and helping 4-H members set and achieve goals, these volunteer leaders have the opportunity to gain new leadership skills.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

#### Flood Risk Management in Southern Alberta

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The floods in 2005 devastated many Alberta families and communities throughout Alberta and especially in the southwest region near my riding of Livingstone-Macleod. Communities banded together during those tough times and showed the great Alberta spirit of compassion, resilience, and hard work that many across Canada and the world have come to know this great province for.

Shortly after these floods the Alberta flood management committee was asked to produce a report on flood prevention. The report was titled Alberta Flood Mitigation Report and began shortly after the 2005 floods had taken place but, unfortunately, was put on hold when the Premier at the time announced that he would be stepping down. The report was all but finalized except for financial details, which were reported to be based upon federal assistance programs.

Sadly, the report was mothballed before the federal government ever had a chance to see the figures as Alberta communities continued to be left in the dark. The following Premier had seen the report but failed to release it to the public despite the protests of the former MLA for Highwood, who chaired the committee.

I have to agree with the former Premier when he said that there were a number of good recommendations in the report that we have to implement, and if we don't, we will see this recurring in the province. But now it's clear that the government isn't prepared to follow through on the report and doesn't want to be tied down to making the necessary improvements for these communities, and that isn't good enough.

Mr. Speaker, as we are now approaching the same season, where 64 communities in Alberta are vulnerable to flood risk, I would like to ask that this government release this study to the public and make efforts to immediately implement all recommendations made, to give Albertans the comfort of knowing that this government is prepared to respond if tragedy ever strikes again.

Thank you.

#### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 201 Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 201, the Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act.

This bill addresses scrap metal theft, which is becoming a serious problem in our ever-growing province of Alberta, by requiring scrap metal dealers and recyclers to record information about the identity of individuals selling recycled metal. This information could then be used by peace officers during scrap metal theft investigations, thereby deterring this type of theft in the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a first time]

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four items to table today, with the appropriate number of copies. The first is a letter from Ken Kowalski indicating the members who were on the no-meet committee, the Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, that were re-elected on April 23, 2012: the hon. Member for Calgary-East, the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, the hon. Member for Strathcona, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, and the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater. I table the appropriate number of copies.

I table the appropriate number of copies as well of a notice from the director of human resources and information technology to the former hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore indicating, and I quote: during the entire period of time that he was appointed to this particular committee he was also appointed to more than three Assembly committees and thus was not eligible and did not receive any compensation for his service on the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

I also table a similar document from this office regarding the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek indicating the amount that she owes, which she read into the record yesterday, and that has been paid back in full.

The fourth tabling in the appropriate numbers is a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act request which we received May 10 from Mount Royal University regarding alleged illegal donations to the Calgary-Buffalo PC Association, the Calgary-Lougheed PC Association, the PC Alberta annual general meeting and convention, and two amounts in the amount of \$900 each on November 13, 2008, to the Calgary-Elbow PC Association dinner as well as November 27, 2008, to the Calgary-Elbow PC Association event.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a long letter from a constituent, Freda Bisset, who's very concerned that the Alberta Dental Association stopped producing a fee schedule in 1997. She details a number of the results of that, which is making it very hard for a number of



people to be able to cope with the new amounts and what they get back from any coverage on it.

My second tabling today is a long series of e-mails between myself and a constituent, Chantele Theroux, who's also written to a number of other members of this House, in that her condo was built with such shoddy practices that her condo association is now subject to a number of additional assessments and she is on the verge, if she hasn't already, of losing her condominium despite being a very good homeowner and on good terms with her bank. But it's \$34,000 worth of additional assessments, and she just can't handle that. So thanks very much, government. That's not keeping people in their homes.

Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to table five copies of roughly 2,000 signatures, each gathered just over this weekend, in fact, Minister of Culture, from the Falun Dafa Association of Calgary. They urge the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to

- ... invite Shen Yun Performing Arts back to the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium . . .
- Urge the Premier to see to it that the management at the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium apologize to Shen Yun for their unprofessional conduct
- Urge the Premier to see to it that the net placed over the orchestra pit at the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium is removed for Shen Yun performances to allow proper expression of the arts.

I would note that that has been done in hundreds of other venues across North America without any problem. With that, I'll table these.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Lukaszuk, Deputy Premier, *Globe and Mail* website article dated May 28, 2012, entitled Clark To Miss Western Premiers Meeting.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we get into a long stretch of points of order and a ruling on a point of privilege, might we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** Please, hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my hon. colleagues for allowing me to introduce a group of people that are very important to me and have travelled from across the province to be here today. They're members of my family. I'd like to introduce Dr. Carola Starke, my sister; along with her two daughters, my nieces, Angela and Lydia – they are residents of Edmonton-Riverview – my in-laws, my mother-in-law and father-in-law, from Lacombe, Alberta, residents of Lacombe-Ponoka, Al and Doris Chiswell; my son, Roland Starke, who's a resident of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and is a second-year seminary student at Concordia Lutheran Seminary; and my mom, who turned 90 two weeks before April 23. Because I was otherwise occupied, I was unable to celebrate her birthday with her on that day.

**Some Hon. Members:** Shame.

**Dr. Starke:** That's pretty much what she said, too.

I'd also like to say that she is a resident of Edmonton-Calder. Last, but certainly not least, my partner and best friend, my wife, Alison, who is a resident of Vermilion-Lloydminster and actually got to vote for me. Please join in giving them the traditional warm greeting of the members of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** We'll proceed with some points of order, then. The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to refer to our standing orders in Standing Order 23, particularly (h), (i), and (j). Would you like me to proceed with both of them at the same time?

**The Speaker:** Let's do one first.

### Point of Order Factual Accuracy

**Mr. Anderson:** One first. Okay. Well, the first one that I stood on was with regard to a statement made opposite by the Premier implying, of course, that the former member of this Legislature, Mr. Paul Hinman, who is no longer a member in this House, specifically did not pay back the money that he received from the illustrious no-meet committee. As you saw, Mr. Hinman asked the Legislative Assembly Office whether he had received any money for sitting on that no-meet committee, and he received a letter in return very clearly indicating – and that letter was tabled earlier – that he had not received a dime for sitting on that committee. So I would ask somebody over there to retract the Premier's statement on that because it was just absolutely untrue.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, there's no point of order, obviously, because 23(h), as I read it, says: "makes allegations against another Member." Unfortunately for the former Member for Calgary-Glenmore, he's no longer a member, so no allegation was made against a member. That would be a technicality, however.

The reality that we've seen over the course of this rather unfortunate discussion about a no-meet committee: all members who are in this House and those who aspired to the House should know the amount of work that every MLA on every side of the House has put in, fully deserving the compensation they get for the work that they do. On this whole issue about a no-meet committee, particularly one like the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, which should only meet in the rarest of circumstances – you don't change your standing orders every day, and you certainly don't want to meet in a court on questions of privilege every day – everybody knows that that committee is not supposed to meet, and everybody knows that people were being compensated for the work they did.

That aside, one can understand the confusion when in one day in the press the former Member for Calgary-Glenmore is quoted as saying that he's not going to pay any money back because he worked very hard for every dollar he got, and quite frankly I agree with him, and then the very next day – it was a Friday and a Saturday, as I recall – somebody must have talked to him because he's very quickly then saying he is going to pay all the money back. Then all of a sudden he discovered he was right in the first place, perhaps in accordance with what now is being tabled in the

House, that he didn't have any money to pay back in the first place.

You know, this stuff gets bandied around in the public by people who make statements and impugn the character of people without knowing the facts and then expect . . .

**Mr. Anderson:** Just like the Premier just did.

**Mr. Hancock:** No.

With all due respect, the members opposite made this an issue for their own political gain when they didn't have the facts, and they knew what they were talking about was inappropriate. They knew what they were talking about was trying to besmirch the character of members who work hard on all sides of the House, and now they're upset because that information that was public now may be, by the filings that they put in place, rendered to be something different than what was understood publicly.

If that's the case, that the hon. member didn't owe any money . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, thank you. I think this is a point of clarification. It has been sufficiently commented on and clarified. We're going to move on.

You had the second point of order, hon. Government House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Allegations against a Member**

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, yes, under Standing Order 23(h), making allegations against another member; (i), imputing false or unavowed motives to another member; (j), using abusive or insulting language. In my view this is a point of order. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills raised during his question an allegation, as I recall the wording, that the Premier, who is a member of the House, accepted illegal donations.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think also under *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, 2nd edition – I probably should be using the third edition now – chapter 11, pages 501, 502, and 503, sets out some very clear rules relative to questions, and I think all members should be availing themselves of the opportunity to read and understand these. The allegation that the hon. member made, as I recall it, was in the supplementary, in which he shouldn't have been making an allegation because there isn't supposed to be a preamble to supplementaries, created disorder, reflects on the character or conduct of members of the House, asks a question which is outside of the administrative responsibility of the government – and that was a question about party financing – but also presumes that there was, in fact, an illegal donation. Mr. Speaker, we don't know that.

3:00

Just because the hon. member presumably was referring to what has since been tabled, a statement released under a FOIP request, obviously, about something that Mount Royal may have done in the past, what they do not know is whether or not that was caught at the time and returned, as has been the situation in many circumstances that I'm personally aware of where a donor or somebody who was attending a function made a cheque on behalf of an organization that wasn't supposed to. You immediately catch that, and then you go back and say, "You can't do it this way," and the individual who is attending makes his own personal cheque. That might have happened. There may be all sorts of explanations around that, but the hon. member didn't give the Premier or any other member of the House an opportunity to deal

with the issue in an appropriate way because they brought it to the House to malign the character of a member rather than sending it to the Chief Electoral Officer for a proper investigation, which he fully ought to know should be done.

**Mr. Anderson:** It's good to be back in this House, seeing such passionate defences given.

First off, in response to the Government House Leader, the member did not at any time say that the Premier did anything illegal. The exact text of the question, which I'm sure he can look up after, was: "Given that the Premier herself is at the core of the problem by passing a law," which we all know is true, "that makes convicted political parties unaccountable to Albertans and now that her own riding," referring to her riding association, "has accepted illegal donations, how can Albertans believe . . ." and so forth.

Clearly, he was not saying that the Premier did anything illegal. He was saying that her riding association accepted illegal donations. We stand by the document that was tabled. If that document is false, then I invite the government to prove that it's false. It sure doesn't look false on the face of it, but perhaps it is. An answer was not given. But clearly this member did not impugn the character of the Premier. It is the riding association that has accepted illegal donations.

Secondly, with regard to preambles we know that there is a long-standing tradition in this House – we've been using it for certainly as long as I've been here – that in your preambles you can say at the beginning of a question "given that," preface it that way, and then go on to the question so that there's some context to the preamble. Otherwise, people listening at home wouldn't have a clue what we were talking about. So we've been using that. Clearly, in his question he said "given that," so he did not abuse that privilege. Actually, it was a very short question. When he read it, it was roughly 20 seconds long, which is about half as long as this minister's answers to most questions in the House.

I think it was a fair question, and I think clarification has been given.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Hon. members, you will recall that the chair interjected on three or four occasions when this line of questioning was being pursued or different comments were being made with respect to the issue at hand. I want to just make a point here. I've been in this Assembly a long time. Some of you have been here as long as I have, and one person has been here even longer. It's a very, very fine line we tread when we start making comments that might malign someone's character or, as I stated in my credo speech, making comments that amount, perhaps, to character assassination or whatever.

Stating that a member is or has been or was engaged in some form of illegal activity certainly constitutes an allegation against a member under Standing Order 23(h). I understand that, and I'm sure you do as well. However, there has been no finding of illegality in this matter, at least not to the chair's knowledge. If you find that there are issues like this and you want to do the proper research on it, there are offices of the Ethics Commissioner. There are offices of the Privacy Commissioner. Anything concerning a possible conflict of interest: the chair would strongly advise you to avail yourselves of those independent officers.

This issue, however, is of a serious enough nature that I'm going to actually take a day to read the actual *Hansard*. I haven't had all the Blues provided to me yet. I'm not prepared to make a ruling on it, honestly, right now, but I will make a firm ruling on it

tomorrow, and I hope it will bring the tone and the timbre of questions like this under greater focus for each of the members.

Third point of order, the hon. Member for Airdrie.

### Point of Order

#### Factual Accuracy

**Mr. Anderson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it goes to something that was said by the Deputy Premier – God bless his soul – when he said in his statement that the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills in his question had accused the Premier of doing something illegal. When you review the Blues, if they are consistent with what this member was reading off, the paper that he was reading from when he asked the question, then you will see that, in fact, he was simply pointing out that the Premier's riding had accepted illegal donations.

If we're not able in this House to come forward and discuss an issue and question the government on whether their riding associations or whether the Premier, the most powerful person in the province, or her constituency association is accepting illegal donations and why we can't ask the Justice minister to change the law to keep that from happening or disclosing the information – as you eloquently put it, Mr. Speaker, we would like to know these things. We would like to know whether it was illegal or not, but we'll never know because Elections Alberta is prohibited from telling us. There's nothing the Ethics Commissioner or anyone can do for us that will allow us to know if anything illegal was done as long as this cloak of secrecy is maintained by the government.

I would say again that this member did not say that the Premier did anything illegal but did say that there were illegal donations accepted by her riding association, as was lined out by the documents tabled by the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the hon. member failed to provide any citations, so I'm not exactly sure what he's suggesting in here. However, let me say this. Really, the root of what we're talking about here is the fact that every member who runs for office and every member that gets elected to this House brings with them one thing that's exceedingly important, and that's their integrity. One ought not, as we've seen rather much lately, including an overabundance of it today, throw around words like "corruption" and "accepting illegal contributions" and that sort of language loosely. One should not do it loosely.

In fact, one would have been very tempted to raise a point of order during Members' Statements, which, of course, we're not allowed to do, when the hon. member who just raised this point of order accused a couple of people of being liars, absolutely inappropriate language for the House. One of the things that we have to have for respectful debate in the House is respect for each other and respect for the processes that are necessary when things are perceived to be wrong. One shouldn't immediately jump to the observation that somebody has done something illegal if there's an opportunity to have it fully, fairly, impartially investigated by an officer of this House. As you've already mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we have an Ethics Commissioner and a Chief Electoral Officer, and there are appropriate ways to investigate.

There has been a lot said about secrecy. What the hon. member ought to do is go back and read two acts, the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. The Election Act has section 4.2, which was put in there, talking about the privacy of an investigation. I've heard him say in the House that it's appropriate to keep investigations private, and I think it is. It's

not appropriate to be going out there and besmirching the character of individuals because there's an investigation on. That's exactly the root of what we've been talking about here today. One shouldn't jump to besmirching the character of individuals by throwing around allegations of corruption or of illegal contributions or of accepting illegal contributions. They should put it into the appropriate place where an investigation can happen.

Now, if the hon. member would read the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, there's nothing in that act which prohibits the Chief Electoral Officer from disclosing the results of an investigation.

**Mr. Anderson:** That's not what he says, Dave.

**Mr. Hancock:** That may not be what he says, but if he reads the act – you're a lawyer; I'm a lawyer – the Election Act prohibits disclosure of certain information to certain circumstances. The Chief Electoral Officer can put in place fines, the Chief Electoral Officer can direct that contributions be returned, and the Chief Electoral Officer can provide information to the prosecution service to look into whether there should be a prosecution. There are options available for the Chief Electoral Officer.

3:10

I'd ask the hon. member to read that, to make representation, if he will, to the Chief Electoral Officer about what should be appropriately done. But do not besmirch the character and integrity of any member of this House or, quite frankly, anybody else until appropriate investigations are done. There are all sorts of appropriate explanations for some of the things that have been thrown around in this House.

People do things in our political organizations. It's all volunteers. These are all good people. In my organization they're good people; I'm sure in his organization are good people. They don't all read the rules all the time. But we do put in place – I hope he does; I know we do – appropriate ways to screen to make sure that the rules are followed. So when a cheque comes from someone who's not entitled to send you a cheque, you send it back. If you don't catch it at that screen, you return the funds. If you look at the donations that were made to Calgary-Elbow, for example, in 2008, all of which have to be reported if they're over \$300, I'm sure you would not find any illegal contributions disclosed there. What does that tell you? Well, it may tell you that somebody took care of it at the source.

One could make that assumption if one was open and honest about the fact that we all come here with our integrity intact and that we intend to do the honourable thing for the people of Alberta. If you didn't want to believe that or you thought something might be askew, there's an appropriate way to go and have it investigated. I'd encourage you to ask the hon. members opposite to understand that because it will make the House operate much better for the next four years if we don't automatically assume that everybody comes here with foul motives and, instead, assume, as we ought to do, that everybody comes here with their integrity intact to do things in the best interests of Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I was interested to allow this air-clearing to proceed. It's a coattail to the previous point of order, actually, which I will be considering, as I mentioned, through the night and reading *Hansard* carefully through before ruling on that.

On this particular point of order I find there's an issue of clarification here. I hope that the Member for Airdrie feels satisfied, having made his statements. The Government House

Leader has made his. I think we can move on to the final comment.

We have one more point of order to deal with. I believe it's the hon. Government House Leader's.

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, I think we've beat this to death, and I think we should let our members proceed with their maiden speeches in response to the Speech from the Throne.

**The Speaker:** That point of order has been withdrawn, then.

### Privilege Misleading the House

**The Speaker:** Before proceeding with that, I would like to rule on the issue of privilege. Hon. members, the chair is prepared now to do so with respect to the purported question of privilege that was raised by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills in the Assembly yesterday afternoon.

As I indicated yesterday at page 60 of *Hansard*, notice was provided by the member and received in the Speaker's office at 11:18 a.m., so the requirements of Standing Order 15(2) with respect to notice have been met, although the chair will have a few words about the notice a bit later.

The basis of the member's question of privilege concerned comments made by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General on May 28 during question period about a former Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations on amendments to legislation concerning improper contributions to political parties. The exchange giving rise to the question of privilege is found at page 17 of *Hansard* for that day.

As was the case with the purported question of privilege that the chair ruled on yesterday, the allegation raised by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills actually falls into the category of a contempt of the Assembly, which is treated as a question of privilege. As the chair also explained yesterday at page 58 of *Hansard*, any act or omission which tends to impede the House in the performance of its functions or obstructs or impedes any member or officer in the discharge of their duties may be treated by the Assembly as a contempt.

Hon. members, the test for finding a prima facie question of privilege on deliberately misleading the Assembly is a very high bar. A question of privilege on this subject was brought forward last fall. On November 24, 2011, Speaker Kowalski stated at page 1367 of *Hansard*: "Deliberately misleading the Assembly is an extremely serious allegation, which seldom satisfies the test for constituting a prima facie question of privilege."

As stated by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills yesterday in his submission, the test is referred to at page 86 in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition. The test was articulated by David McGee, a former Clerk of the New Zealand House of Representatives, and is found in the third edition of his book *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, 2005, at pages 653 and 654, where he states:

There are three elements to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt by reason of a statement that the member has made: the statement must, in fact, have been misleading; it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made that it was incorrect; and, in making it, the member must have intended to mislead the House.

This was, in fact, the test used by Speaker Kowalski in the purported question of privilege last fall and also in his ruling of November 7, 2007, which is recorded at pages 1860 and 1861 of *Hansard* for that day.

In his submissions yesterday the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General was very clear that, in his view, his statements on this subject during Monday's question period were not misleading. He stated at pages 59 and 60 of yesterday's *Hansard*, "I stand by them completely." Given the strength of his convictions on this point it could not be said that he intended to mislead the Assembly, and even if the minister was mistaken, there is no evidence that anyone was actually misled.

At best, this is a disagreement about interpretation between members, which occurs not infrequently in this Chamber. At best. Some might also say that this is even less infrequent between two lawyers. As *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition, states at paragraph 494:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted. It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements . . . by Members as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

In short, this matter would not have given rise to a successful point of order, let alone a prima facie question of privilege. Accordingly, the chair finds that there is no prima facie question of privilege, and the matter is thereby concluded.

However, the chair would like to make a few additional brief comments. Questions of privilege are the most serious matters that can be considered by this Assembly and should not be taken lightly. A charge of deliberately misleading the Assembly is very serious and could damage a person's reputation forever.

The Speaker, this Speaker in particular, adopts the comment made by Speaker Kowalski in his November 24, 2011, ruling at page 1368 of *Hansard*. "However, the chair would ask members to carefully consider bringing forward matters that call into question the integrity of other members when the evidence is less than convincing."

Your chair wanted to grant the member bringing the purported question of privilege forward the greatest leeway, but frankly I was concerned when the notice for the serious charge did not actually contain the name of the member against whom the allegation was being brought. In the interests of fairness and parliamentary tradition, members should please ensure that their notices contain sufficient information to allow for a proper response by the person against whom they are brought. This is especially true where the issue is as serious as the allegation brought forward yesterday and on which I have just ruled today.

3:20

### Orders of the Day

#### Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Olesen moved, seconded by Mr. Luan, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour the Honourable Colonel (Retired) Donald S. Ethell, OC, OMM, AOE, MSC, CD, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate May 29: Mr. Dorward]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to stand and speak to the throne speech for 2012 in this Assembly. Like many Albertans, I looked forward to the throne speech, looking for signs of a clear direction, a plan, a fiscal commitment, a clear sense of how we would balance our expenditures with our revenues, and like many Albertans, I was disappointed. The Premier identified through the throne speech a global economic recovery under way, and that set the tone, to me, for a speech that lacked real groundedness, a real sense of the instability of our global economy, and the need to take very seriously an unstable future, an unstable resource revenue stream – that has always been the challenge for Alberta to deal with – the instability of our primary resource, our most valued commodity in this province and one of which we are all greatly proud and benefit from.

The government's budget of the past couple of months clearly relies heavily on this quite uncertain assertion of recovery and continues decades of addiction to this nonrenewable resource wealth, 25 and sometimes 35 per cent of our budget on a year-to-year basis, holding hostage, I would say, our future, our children's resource wealth, and living off an uncertain future to pay for today's expenses, an indicator from many authors in the world of a petrostate, very consistent with how most states function in the world when they are so reliant on the hydrocarbon industry and fail to make judicious decisions in the long-term interests of the public, fail to enact tax policy that is realistic and deals with current needs and pays for what we do today but, rather, lives on a wing and a prayer that these resources will be there and that periodically we will accept going into deficits in spite of having the greatest wealth in the country. Not leadership, not responsible governance.

We will continue to raise very pressing questions on behalf of citizens, our children, our grandchildren, and the unborn generations yet to come to this place that are looking for a more thoughtful approach, one that we, I think, on this side, in the Liberal caucus at least, feel has been addressed to some extent through our platform for a fair and progressive tax system that would address the basic needs of our people, our primary service needs: education, health care, persons with disabilities. Some of the unmet needs of crisis and emergency that we can anticipate every year – floods, fires, major disasters – we need to plan for. Again, that is part of a fair and responsible tax system.

Our fiscal plan charts, of course, then, not just for this next couple of years but for the long term and would ensure that we are taking in as a government what we intend to spend this fiscal year. It's been a tradition since I got into this House that every year this government comes back for supplementary supply, millions and millions of dollars that are unbudgeted, and any talk of fair tax, a review of tax falls on deaf ears. This is not leadership.

To quote from the Speech from the Throne, Albertans chose to “engage with the world around them and, through investment and innovation” we see opportunities. I would love to see leadership in this province on an alternate energy future, on new technologies, a knowledge-based future, that we could be in the forefront of given the wealth and the wonderful postsecondary opportunities we have here.

It has to do with planning. It has to do with investment. It has to do with seeing education as an investment, not an expense to be cut, not on the backs of students and faculty and their support services, that have seen continued dwindling over the past decade to the point where not only are they constrained from a physical budget point of view, but they are constrained by an attitude of mean-spiritedness that they feel coming from this government and the lack of resources, the lack of a positive relationship and a

position of coming with real opportunity that these postsecondary institutions bring. That needs to change.

We are pressing again for a plan that sees a real honouring and a commitment to the long-term future of this province with alternate economies based on good postsecondary investment, research, development, and an embracing of the 21st century that has us moving beyond a resource economy that is extracting and exporting. We need leadership there.

In addition, public services are continuing to be dependent on revenue from this nonrenewable resource side. People continue to suffer in Alberta, where we have something in the order of 15 per cent of children in poverty. We have increasing numbers of people with mental illness, disability, on the margins of society, ending up in health care services, ending up in addiction services, ending up in the criminal justice system because we've not seen fit to both bring in the resources we need to ensure that we deal with these issues early, preventively in schools and in disadvantaged families and in mental health services and health services, getting at the root of these issues in an early fashion by investing appropriately and bringing in the dough to make sure that we can do that as opposed to nickel and diming people, including our seniors, who are struggling, in some instances at least, to pay for their accommodation and some of the health care needs that are essential to them.

Our social supports in this province since the '90s have continued to be 30 per cent less than they were in the '90s. We are not supporting people on the margins of society, and therefore we are paying through the nose in some of these ways: in emergency departments, in addictions services, and the criminal justice system.

The decision was made to pay off the debt in the '90s – there was some rationale for that – but it was made on the backs of some of our most vulnerable people, and we continue to do that: our most vulnerable people, children growing up in poverty and continuing the cycle of poverty, mental illness, learning problems, behaviour problems.

Because of this decision and our unwillingness to take in resources adequate to the real needs of our citizens, we have among the highest rates of family violence, depression, addictions, suicide. It's understandable in some ways with a very wealthy economy but not acceptable and not something that we can at all be proud of when we know the answers lie in committing ourselves to investing in people and long-term well-being in the province.

The Premier through the speech promised greater openness, transparency, and accountability. Hard to swallow on the heels of a Premier that just flip-flopped on a commitment to a public inquiry into serious problems in the health care system: intimidation, bullying, examples of financial mismanagement and spending, and evidence from the Auditor General in the past four years at least of serious problems in financial management in Alberta Health Services that have never been addressed.

It's hard to swallow the words “more openness and accountability” when we see a report from Ontario in these past six months identifying Alberta as the least open, the least accessible to information, the least accountable of the provinces in this examination of the provinces and their access to information and freedom of information.

**3:30**

We've long complained in the budget process about the lack of details on where our money is going. We're talking millions of dollars in a line item without any details to be able to identify whether or not they are appropriate expenditures. We know,

indeed, of contracts without an open process. Bill 50 is a good example of that, where we see up to \$16 billion planned to be spent on major power line structures, with no identification of any bidding process. We have the three big power producers taking their share. That's all we see. This is not openness. It's not accountability. It's not transparency.

We heard from the Auditor not too long ago about the lack of openness of the Energy department on what it is Albertans should be expecting from the returns on our production. Understanding that the ERCB actually measures our production in fossil fuels and is mostly funded by the industry gives us pause and, I hope, pressure to move beyond industry-managed resource accountability. We've seen that in the oil sands, where the industry has been monitoring itself. We also heard from the Auditor General that he is concerned that we don't know how much of our resource accurately is being produced. Therefore, we do not know yet how much revenue we should be receiving from a publicly owned resource.

Critical public sectors – education, health, municipal services – with a tenuous relationship to this government, a fractious relationship between unions and government and a perception, at least, that this government is trying to eliminate more unions. We already have, I believe, among the lowest union participation in the country. It's clear that those involved in the front lines and those in unions feel no lost love for this government, that appears to be antiunion in some of the ways that it deals. We need to build relationships, whether it's with the medical profession or with the licensed practical nurses or with the lab technicians or the mental health workers. We need to build relationships and add to the sense of well-being and opportunity and growth that the Premier talks about.

To quote again from the report, businesses will have an even greater freedom “to operate without interference” because of government simplifying “regulatory burdens.” This is an important business principle. Unnecessary burdens should be eliminated. Red tape should be eliminated. What many of us fear is that the history of this province is a woeful lack of commitment to the environment in independent monitoring, science-based decision-making. It cannot be reconciled with the severe reductions we've seen in the last five years in Alberta Environment. In one year \$13 million was cut from monitoring in Alberta Environment. What does that say about a serious commitment to sustainable development?

Groundwater monitoring, which we talked about in 2006, forced a baseline study of groundwater monitoring, which many will remember, around coal-bed methane and the concerns around fracking and groundwater contamination. The government spent millions of dollars on baseline water testing. We have never seen a report on the outcome of those thousands of water wells that were tested to see whether the fracking was having any impact. What I do know is that the scientists in Edmonton and Calgary universities have said: “We want to know. We put in this data to Alberta Environment, and we still do not have any feedback on what the conclusions of that were. We have strong evidence that there are some groundwater sources that have been contaminated.” We need to know the big picture. What has happened over six years to this baseline groundwater monitoring?

Where is our commitment to climate change, the most serious threat to well-being, health, extreme weather events, and costs?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available should you have any questions for the previous speaker or comments about his speech. Anyone under 29(2)(a)?

If not, thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and a sincere, heart-felt congratulations to you on being named Speaker of the House.

It's a privilege to rise today to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I was just a young boy when I first visited this Assembly. My father, Doug, used to sit right up there above the clock and watch many a debate on this floor. I grew up around this building and now have the opportunity to raise my two daughters, Molly and Lily, in the very same environment. It's an absolute honour to serve our incredible province of Alberta and bring the voice of a new generation to the Legislative Assembly.

I'd also like to congratulate my fellow members on their hard-fought election campaigns and on winning their seats. We have an exciting challenge ahead of us, and I look forward to a constructive and courteous Legislative Assembly. I pledge to work collaboratively with my colleagues, whichever side of the floor they may be on, for the betterment of the province we all share. I would like to thank the hon. Premier for her tireless work in articulating a tremendous vision full of hope and confidence for the future.

In the throne speech the hon. Premier has very succinctly captured the optimistic mood and energetic spirit of Alberta in 2012, specifically with reference to the growing demand for our skills, resources, energy, and talents in the coming years and the hopefulness and confidence in the future that Albertans feel as a result. This is something that Albertans are keenly aware of. There are amazing prospects available to people in this great province, and we can be proud of the role that this government has played in the past to foster this high standard of living. This government has adapted over the years in response to the changing needs of Albertans. As this election has clearly demonstrated, Albertans have voted for a government that reflects them and their reality, and they voted for change.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to talk a little more about what this change looks like. Whether it is our more seasoned colleagues, for whom this is not their first term, or one of our newly elected members such as myself, this government epitomizes that change. We have seen the hon. Premier gather an incredible team of dedicated Albertans to form this government, and I feel that we all embody a new generation of elected officials. We are a generation of parliamentarians that represents a shift in the way government does business.

In listening to the throne speech last week, I know that the hon. Premier intends to bring forth a new era of openness, transparency, and accountability in government. The hon. Premier has signalled her commitment to clarifying conflict-of-interest issues and bringing forward whistle-blower legislation. In addition to enacting legislation that will augment ethical conduct within government, the hon. Premier has stated that we will work to change the culture of government. We need to open up the system for Albertans to have a meaningful role in the discussion on government policy and outcomes. In order to facilitate that greater transparency, we'll alter the previous culture of government, delivering more candour and openness.

I couldn't be more proud and honoured to earn the trust of the residents of Edmonton-South West to bring forth this change. Mr. Speaker, I would like to sincerely and humbly express my gratitude to the wonderful constituents of Edmonton-South West for their trust in my ability to represent them in this the 28th Legislature of the Alberta Legislative Assembly. In my capacity as their democratic representative I promise to faithfully serve

their interests. Before the members of this Assembly I would like to celebrate the fact that Edmonton-South West is one of the newest constituencies on the electoral map. We are a constituency that's vibrant, that's new, and that promises to bring fresh ideas to our province.

Nestled in the deep south and far west of Edmonton city limits, our constituency is home to a very diverse and unique set of values. Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Edmonton-South West want strong and accountable representation, and this is what I will deliver. In the countless conversations I had with Albertans, whether in coffee shops, schools, at community events, or on the doorstep, I realized that we share many of the same concerns. As a father raising two young daughters in a rapidly growing part of Edmonton, I know first-hand some of the challenges families face today. I'd like to say that for me "family" and "community" are very important words. Strong families and lively communities are the heart and soul of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, meeting with many young and growing families to hear their perspectives was an echo of my own hopes for the constituency. These constituents have also conveyed their ideas for how we can continue to improve Edmonton-South West, and I intend to work hand in hand with them to realize these goals.

As a father I know first-hand the importance that education will play in their future. In order for our children to grow up to attain their goals and aspirations, we will need to build upon the world-class education system that we have. Alberta is already recognized as a jurisdiction that performs very well both in Canada and internationally. As a parent I have to say that one of the paramount guiding principles of our education system is choice. I will continue to push for that choice in education. We know that one-size-fits-all solutions don't work in education. It's imperative that school boards and government officials continue to work with parents to identify their priorities in education.

3:40

In addition, we also recognize the fantastic and tireless work of our educators. On a daily basis they are the ones teaching the curriculum and preparing our children for a promising future. Every day in schools like Sister Annata Brockman, Johnny Bright, or George P. Nicholson these educators are helping our children to learn.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Edmonton-South West is one of the fastest growing communities in the province. As such, we face enormous growth pressure in providing the services that Albertans deserve and expect to receive in a timely manner. My own daughters will be entering the school system very shortly, and as parents we want to make sure there are local schools there which will offer our children that world-class Alberta education. As I listened to the throne speech last week, I heard that commitment in the words spoken by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

This past fall the hon. Premier committed to restoring \$107 million to the education system. Those dollars were a key investment in getting both the tools and the personnel out to our classrooms, where they are making a difference in the lives of students. During the election campaign the hon. Premier also pledged 50 new schools for the province and the modernization of 70 existing schools. This is a tremendous commitment to parents, to educators, and to the children of Alberta and one that I wholeheartedly endorse.

In addition, this fiscal year the government will create more than 12,000 new school spaces across the province. These spaces will meet the ever-increasing demand and expectations that

parents have of this government. I look forward to advocating on behalf of hard-working Alberta families for more school spaces.

Mr. Speaker, as we heard in the throne speech, growing healthy and vibrant families and communities is an investment in ourselves, in our children, and in the bright future of this province. Part of this government's commitment to helping Albertans lead healthy lives is family care clinics. We have consistently heard from Albertans that they want other options for accessing the health care system; in particular, with respect to primary care. Primary care networks have done an amazing job of bringing a new perspective to the delivery of primary care and will continue to do so.

At the same time we will move forward with the family care clinic model that will group medical services all under one roof, providing a one-stop shop for families for the medical care that they need. Whether they need to see a doctor, a nurse practitioner, a dietitian, or perhaps a psychiatrist, those services will be available in the same clinic. With extended hours and a variety of health care practitioners on-site Albertans will receive better access to primary care. As well, each of the family care clinics will be further tailored to the specific needs of that local community. As a parent I know that this model will be more flexible and responsive to the busy life that most modern working parents lead these days.

This government will continue to implement practical solutions such as these to the issues that Albertans face. Mr. Speaker, the articulate and progressive vision presented in the throne speech has resonated with Albertans. We have a lot of work ahead of us and a bold agenda to complete, but this government is a team of professionals, and each brings his or her own unique skills and competencies to the table.

Under the innovative leadership of the hon. Premier our individual and collective strength will serve us well as we address the concerns of Albertans with effective solutions. As we heard in the Speech from the Throne, this government will continue to foster the conditions necessary for further economic development and further improve the standard of living for Albertans. Albertans have more reason than ever before to be hopeful, and I am proud to be part of a government that will create continued confidence in our future.

Once more I would like to thank the constituents of Edmonton-South West for their trust. I hope to bring my own unique perspective to this Assembly, but let the word go forth that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Albertans. I look forward to taking this journey in step with my constituents' high expectations of me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing no one under 29(2)(a), I'll recognize the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, it is an honour for me to rise today to respond to the throne speech. I'd like to congratulate you on being elected as Speaker of the House. I think I speak for all members that we appreciate your efforts to conduct the very challenging role of being Speaker. We are all working on our credo as you suggested. Perhaps your years as a Shumka dancer may assist you in this role. I, too, Ukrainian danced, for seven years. Given your experience in this regard I would hope that you're open to a change in the existing standing orders so that whenever there's a procedural dispute between the

government and the opposition, we can decide it through a Ukrainian dance-off with you being the judge.

Mr. Speaker, by way of introduction I'd like to give a little bit of information, a personal background. My family has very close ties to the Two Hills area. I grew up on the family farm one mile west of Two Hills, where we raised purebred Simmental cattle. My dad, Ronnie, was a beaver trapper and dynamiter for the county of Two Hills for over 25 years. It's a pretty neat job. Maybe not as neat as a bullfighter. My mom has worked at the Two Hills RCMP detachment for over 30 years. She was supposed to be retired as of last summer but keeps showing up for work. One of my sisters works as a registered nurse at the Two Hills hospital and the other at the Citizenship and Immigration centre in Vegreville. I've been made uncle to two nieces and nephews. My family says that behind every man is a stronger and smarter woman, and I can certainly say that's the case with me. I'd like to thank the love of my life, Shannon, for her love and unconditional support.

My family on my dad's side came from the Ukraine and homesteaded near Morecambe in 1903, and on my mom's side the Kings came to the same area in 1912. The settlement of Alberta's prairies was a very difficult and challenging time, Mr. Speaker, but they did not rely on the government for help but, rather, worked on their own initiative and in their own community to build our province. I recall the story about how my ancestors brought a big, heavy rock to Alberta to grind grain to make flour for bread because, of course, as advertised, there are no rocks in Alberta. As most of us members with farming backgrounds know, there are certainly a lot of them.

It is my privilege to represent the people of Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, and I am humbled by the faith and confidence they have placed in me by electing me to be their MLA. My constituency has been represented by some outstanding Albertans: Mike Maccagno, the Leader of the Official Opposition between 1964 and 1967 – he was from the Lac La Biche area – and, of course, more recently by former Premier Ed Stelmach, who had represented my home area of Two Hills at one point honorably and ably, and also former member Ray Danyluk, who served in many ministerial portfolios.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the voters in Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills who elected me to be their representative in the Alberta Legislature. It is a responsibility that I do not take lightly. I've always believed that it is an MLA's job to listen to their constituents and then bring their voice to government, not just toe the party line or parrot talking points. Sadly, too many Albertans have lost faith in their elected representatives. They have become cynical about government and how it makes decisions. They believe their elected representatives behave more like squabbling children than they do leaders.

Some would dismiss these concerns and opinions as irrelevant. After all, aren't politicians expected to behave that way? But the problem is genuine and its impact substantial. Alberta has one of the lowest voter turnouts in provincial elections across Canada. We in this Chamber have difficulty understanding how so many Albertans could choose to not have their voice heard in how our province is governed. The idea of not voting is completely foreign to us, something we would never consider doing.

While the reasons behind the decline in voter turnout are complex, I believe one of the main reasons is because an increasing number of people do not respect politicians anymore. They see the tragicomedy that is question period. They question politicians' fearmongering that their opponents are akin to Snidely Whiplash tying Lillian Gish to the railway tracks. They watch attack ads which reduce important public issues to sound bites and

character smears. I've always believed that public service is an honourable calling and that those who choose to enter public life do so because they want what is best for their families and their communities.

In the past election Albertans for the first time had a real choice between two competitive parties who offered different visions of our province. While the Wildrose was obviously disappointed with the outcome, we are by no means discouraged. Hundreds of thousands of Albertans chose to support our vision of a province and a government that has new ideas that would put Albertans first. Albertans are not well served by having elections which end in a default win for the incumbent government. A competitive election ensures accountability and engagement on the part of our politicians.

Wildrose is honoured by the role Albertans have asked it to play over the next four years. We will work hard to ensure that Albertans' voices are heard in the Legislature. We will support the government when it makes prudent and responsible decisions, and we will offer alternatives when the government loses its way. A Wildrose opposition will be considerate, responsive, and principled, not merely an opposition party but a government-in-waiting.

In speaking with my Wildrose colleagues, I believe that one of our shared priorities must be ensuring that our government leaves our children with a future which is prosperous and open to endless possibility. We must place a new focus on promoting the skilled trades as opportunities for Alberta's youth as these jobs will be in high demand and will support our growing economy. In my constituency Portage College is well placed to meet those demands.

**3:50**

Our government must implement an effective aboriginal education policy developed in consultations with First Nations and Métis settlements to make meaningful progress on this difficult issue.

As the MLA I will work hard to ensure that the government lives up to its promise to build schools in both Lac La Biche and Two Hills, and I'll fight to ensure that they are not only built on time but also to specifications to ensure that they take into account the expected growth in the area.

In terms of health care we must reject the failed policies and ideologies of those who cannot and will not see beyond the current system. Simply pouring more money into health care without changing our health care system will put our families at risk. We must work together and implement bold solutions. Alberta must be a leader in Canada on public health, not a follower.

My constituents have told me that they are not happy with prepackaged food that's being shipped to our hospitals instead of using kitchens that already exist in each and every rural hospital. I tasted the food. It's absolutely awful. It's demoralizing for the staff when they serve this food, knowing that it's bad for the seniors. There is a very active seniors' group in St. Paul and Elk Point who are standing up for seniors in their commitment on this very issue.

The lack of long-term care is a major issue across the constituency. Seniors are waiting far too long in hospital beds. They are not sick. They are simply aging and deserve proper care. This is particularly an issue in the town of St. Paul.

In Lac La Biche, in addition to the typical provincial issues, they've been fighting for a dialysis unit in the local hospital for years. In fact, the former mayor, Tom Maccagno, required the services and fought passionately for them until he recently passed away. Residents should not have to be faced with the decision to



either leave their community or risk their lives each and every day on a clunker of a bus in minus 40-degree weather.

Our energy sector remains under attack both domestically and abroad. The good-news story of Alberta's oil sands just isn't getting told. We must aggressively pursue each and every opportunity to promote Alberta's natural resources and push back against radical environmentalists and foreign lobbyists who would rather see Alberta's oil sands shut down.

Mr. Speaker, these are serious issues, and they require serious men and women to take the lead on them. As an MLA I will fight for my constituents on issues which they tell me are important to them, I will work with my colleagues to find practical and affordable solutions to our province's pressing challenges, I will stand up for the principles upon which I campaigned and was elected, and I will join my Wildrose colleagues in putting Albertans first. I look forward to the next four years and the opportunity they afford to our elected representatives to prove to Albertans that far from being disdainful, politics is both a worthy and honourable calling and one that I am honoured to pursue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

I do have a speaking list, but for certain circumstances I'd like to recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster to go next, if he's ready, with the concurrence of the hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by also expressing my congratulations to you on your election to your position. Your breadth of experience, your respect for our rules and privileges, and your exuberant personality will serve you well in your new role. I wish you all the best as the chief arbiter of debate in this august Chamber.

I'd also like to send my congratulations to the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont and the hon. Member for Red Deer-North for their election to their respective positions.

Mr. Speaker, like my 86 colleagues here in the Assembly and thousands of visitors to this imposing structure each year, I cannot help but be moved by the sense of history housed herein. If only these walls could speak, what would they tell us? What advice would they give?

As I walk by the portraits on the walls outside, I wonder: what would our forebears say if they saw the Alberta of today? What will that Alberta look like in 50 or a hundred years, when all of us here have concluded our earthly journeys and these seats are occupied by those who are not even born yet? One cannot help but be filled with the profound sense that we're only temporary guardians, stewards of Alberta's promise and potential, charged with the task of safely delivering that precious cargo to the next generation of Albertans.

So how will each of us contribute to that endeavour? For my part I hope to be able to draw on experiences as a first-generation Canadian, a parliamentarian, a veterinarian, and a community leader.

Now, my parents both came to this country nearly 60 years ago, having been forged in the tumult of war and oppression. My mother's family fled the cruel brutality of Stalin's Soviet Union, and my late father, as a 15-year-old in the summer of 1944 was handed a rifle and ordered to march east and engage the advancing Russian Red Army. My parents each came here in the '50s because there was no hope and no future for them in Europe. Canada and, more specifically, Alberta offered them both.

That story, that history is not unique. It goes on today, and it's written by people from around the world who come to Canada,

who come to Alberta because we remain a shining beacon of opportunity, hope, and freedom. We welcome these newcomers, and we embrace how their diverse cultures, their skills, and their enthusiasm enrich our province and our country. The bus driver from Bulgaria who came to Calgary to raise his sons because he felt democracy would take too long to mature in his homeland, the Filipino farm worker with a master's degree in animal science who works in a hog barn near Paradise Valley because it means a brighter future for him and his family, or the engineer from Lebanon who uses his expertise to enhance heavy oil recovery near Kitscoty: all these and thousands more like them are following the same path many of our ancestors travelled. They came to Alberta because of freedom, opportunity, and hope.

The 28th Legislature, the group of 87 Albertans: we have been granted a unique privilege. We have been charged with the duty of representing our constituents, but we have also been given the task of upholding and preserving the tradition of Westminster parliamentary democracy. That is truly a rich and colourful history, a history that I was first exposed to as a member of the TUXIS Parliament of Alberta, Canada's oldest model youth parliament. Some 30 years ago I was privileged to serve as Premier of the 62nd session of TUXIS, and two years later, Mr. Speaker, like you, I was dragged up the steps of the dais to assume the duties of Speaker. I was also privileged to represent Alberta at the first-ever Youth Parliament of Canada, serving in cabinet as minister of energy. Some years later both of my sons served in this Assembly as TUXIS parliamentarians.

That experience taught all of us rules of procedure and the rules of order and much more. We were given the opportunity to debate, to challenge each other's thinking, to respect opposing viewpoints, and to seek the truth through vigorous discussion. Indeed, provincial youth parliaments have provided a fruitful training ground for many of our nation's leaders. People like John Diefenbaker, Jack Layton, Ralph Goodale, Lloyd Axworthy, Bob Hawkesworth, David King, and Bob Clark were all once members of provincial youth parliaments in Canada.

Now, I am grateful for that experience. Each day as I return to this Chamber, I strive to embody the lessons that I learned then and the expectations that Albertans have for our behaviour here: that we learn more from discussion than discord, that we gain more from co-operation than confrontation, and that Albertans yearn more for statesmanship than showmanship.

Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues who have spoken before me, I too am fiercely proud of my constituency of Vermilion-Lloydminster. Sweeping through east-central Alberta from the Saskatchewan border along the Yellowhead and westward, extending north to the North Saskatchewan River and beyond in the Tulliby Lake district and south to the Battle River, my riding is a great diversity and wealth of economic resource and human capital.

The city of Lloydminster, Canada's only border city, is one of the most unique communities in Canada. Founded by the Barr Colonists in 1903 and, therefore, pre-dating our province's entry into Confederation, it straddles the Alberta-Saskatchewan border, creating a unique set of opportunities and challenges. We have two area codes, but you can call across the border toll-free. There is no sales tax, even on the Saskatchewan side. The legal drinking age is 18 on the west side of Meridian Avenue and 19 on the east side. There are a dozen liquor stores in Alberta, but only one on the Saskatchewan side. Our hospital is in Saskatchewan, so my sons are proud Albertans, but both carry Saskatchewan birth certificates. Fortunately, we're all in the same time zone.

4:00

While most of these idiosyncrasies are easily dealt with, Lloydminster faces a long list of jurisdictional challenges that demand an effective dialogue between our government and the one in Regina. Fortunately, we have an excellent relationship with Premier Wall's administration, and I am looking forward to working co-operatively with Tim McMillan, the MLA for Lloydminster and my counterpart in the Saskatchewan Legislature.

Our second anchoring community is the town of Vermilion, host of the main campus of Lakeland College. This outstanding postsecondary institution will celebrate its centennial year next year, and it is a vibrant and going concern at 99 years of age. Boasting the highest growth of enrolment of any Alberta postsecondary institution last year, Lakeland has an unsurpassed record of providing practical, real-world instruction to students from across Canada and around the world. A diverse range of programs from agriculture to trades to environmental technology to emergency services training keeps Lakeland at the forefront of preparing our young people to be leaders in tomorrow's Alberta. Speaking of tomorrow, I will be privileged to represent our province as Lakeland officially opens the centre for sustainable innovation, an applied research facility that will see the development of new and creative solutions in a wide variety of fields.

Vermilion's historic downtown is being carefully preserved and restored.

Vermilion is the home to Canada's winter sports heroine, that paragon of fair play and clean athleticism, the only athlete in Olympic sport to be awarded the bronze, silver, and gold medals in the same event. Of course, I'm referring to Beanie Scott.

Mr. Speaker, you have related how you represent an ethnically diverse constituency here in our capital. Well, that is also a characteristic of Vermilion-Lloydminster. Next month I will be attending the Vikings in the Streets Festival in Viking, Alberta, celebrating the rich heritage of the Norwegian immigrants who settled in that area over a century ago. Visitors have the opportunity to look for hidden trolls in Troll Park or to enter the lutefisk eating contest.

On the same weekend I will visit the Three Cities Fair, an annual summer celebration in the villages of McLaughlin, Rivercourse, and Paradise Valley, home of the unique Climb thru Time Museum, fashioned from the interior of a restored grain elevator.

There will also be a celebration in the village of Marwayne as they officially open their new agriplex facility, a joint effort of the village and local agricultural society.

A few miles to the west is the village of Dewberry, home of the five-time reigning Sask Alta hockey league champions, the Dewberry Mustangs, as well as the most storied family in the history of chuckwagon racing, the Bensmillers, the only family that has had three generations qualify for the finals of the Rangeland Derby at the Calgary Stampede.

Venture a little farther west and you will find the rich Ukrainian heritage in the areas around Clandonald, Minburn, Innisfree, and Ranfurly.

Regardless of where you travel in my constituency, you will eventually return to the crossroads of the village of Mannville, home to the historic Telephone Exchange Museum, unique in Alberta.

Vermilion-Lloydminster is home to some of the finest livestock producers in the world. During my veterinary career I was privileged to work with these progressive, innovative, and peer-respected individuals.

But we produce more than just great Alberta beef. Grain, oilseed, and pulse crop production is also vital to our area. Our

producers are leaders in the concept of farm-to-fork sustainable production, utilizing creative marketing that sees their products served in some of the finest restaurants in the world. Want to try some fine pecorino sheep cheese? We produce that. Interested in elk velvet products processed near Kitscoty and exported worldwide? We produce that, too. Even Paradise Valley free-range pork is produced in my constituency. Those pigs were my patients. Agriculture is evolving, and I'm proud of the farmers and ranchers from my constituency that are leaders in that movement.

Mr. Speaker, I've been honoured to serve my community in a variety of capacities since coming to Lloydminster in 1983. First and foremost, I was privileged to act as the other family doctor for nearly three decades in my veterinary practice. Caring for patients and their owners was not just about diagnosis and treatment. It was about trust, about building relationships and providing lifelong care to companion animals that today are family members in every sense of the word.

This vocation also gave me the opportunity to visit farms and ranches throughout our area at all hours of the day and night and often in challenging weather conditions. I learned that animals have a poor concept of clock or calendar. They don't care if it's the weekend or your birthday, and they demand your full attention when their needs arise. Since coming here, I've been told by my more experienced colleagues that this will be good preparation for my new vocation.

As a city councillor in the 1980s I learned the importance of fiscal responsibility, working co-operatively with other elected officials, and that there is only one taxpayer and they expect wise and prudent stewardship of their tax dollars. As a coach of soccer and speed skating I saw how sport and recreation is an important means to mould and mentor our young people, teach fair play, respect for rules, an active lifestyle, and lifelong fitness.

Serving recently on our health foundation as board chair, I have experienced first-hand some of the many challenges that we face in our health care system.

As church elder I have led services in our seniors' lodges and nursing homes, and I've listened to the concerns of our grandparents, who only ask to be able to enjoy their golden years in an atmosphere of dignity and respect.

Where does that leave us today? As I've listened to the debate on the Speech from the Throne, we've seen the thrust and parry that is part of our parliamentary heritage, and that's good. This parliament, this government has laid out a plan of action, one that addresses the issues and concerns raised during the recent election. Let me be clear. Albertans sent this government many messages during the course of the recent election campaign, and they have been heard. Now it's the government's job to prove that we have listened and will act on their behalf.

Opposition members have and will continue to provide constructive criticism, propose alternative courses of action, and hold the government to account. Let's make sure we listen to each other because no one party has a monopoly on all the good ideas. It shouldn't matter if it's an NDP idea or a Liberal idea or a Wildrose or a Progressive Conservative idea. What should matter is whether it's a good idea.

Albertans expect all of us to heed them and to lead them, and together we need to find the solutions to build our province for that future day when, perhaps, some of our portraits will adorn those walls. That is our mandate, and it belongs to all 87 of us. So I urge my colleagues on both sides of the House, regardless of political persuasion, to work together for the greater good of our province. In the words that we spoke at the opening of every sitting of TUXIS youth parliament, let us pledge ourselves anew in an unselfish quest for the best in our homes, in our churches and

schools, in our work and communities, remembering always that life is not a goblet to be drained but a measure to be filled.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Anybody under 29(2)(a)?

If not, then just before we go on with the next speaker, I'm going to read you the list here that I have. I've received so many notes, probably a record coming to the chair in one day, somewhere over 40, regarding the speaking list. We'll have to tighten this up in the future, hon. members. We'll need a lot of co-operation from the House leaders of all four parties and from individual members. I have the hon. Minister for Tourism, Parks and Recreation, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, then Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, Calgary-Shaw, Calgary-South East, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, and we'll announce more as we go.

Hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, with Standing Order 13 could you please clarify why the back to back? Usually we go back and forth on these.

**The Speaker:** Perhaps you didn't hear what I had said in the lead-up to this previous comment here. We had a circumstance that required a little urgency, and I asked the favour of the House. That's why we had to go with two in a row.

**Ms Cusanelli:** If it pleases you, I am happy to delay my maiden speech to another day if it would help the situation.

**The Speaker:** If that's your wish. I understood you had your parents here from the notes that I got.

**Ms Cusanelli:** My mom is here, yeah.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, why don't you just proceed. The chair has had this on his head here for the last 35 minutes and has made a ruling, so why don't you proceed.

4:10

**Ms Cusanelli:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election to this Chamber and also to my colleagues for their success in this election 2012.

What an honour it is to rise here today representing constituents of Calgary-Currie and to respond to the Speech from the Throne. As their MLA I take on this role with humility and excitement. This, my first speech, is also my promise to serve with significance and with integrity. I will act as an agent of change to bring Alberta into a very exciting future.

First off, I would also like to acknowledge His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for his commitment to public service. As a former peacekeeper he is truly a role model for all Albertans, and I would like to thank him for this.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Premier for providing real life leadership and the direction she has initiated for our province.

I would also like to recognize three very special people in my life, whom I credit my success and ability to be here with you and serve today: my mother, whose unfaltering strength has taught me that anything is achievable through hard work and through integrity; my partner, Tom, who has been my source of never-ending support and encouraged me to maintain course through storms and celebrated the happiness of overcoming those; finally, my daughter, Victoria, who is an image of patience, dignity, and love. I learn from her wisdom each day.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a responsible plan in place to build upon the great legacy of our province, and this design speaks to the needs and desires of Albertans. The policies of this government have resonated with me, especially as they relate to assisting our most vulnerable citizens. Serving families and communities has always been central to my work in public service and is something I find great joy in.

It is the joy in witnessing the transformation in the lives of young people that inspired me as a school principal. Being an educator provided me with many satisfying experiences, which have made distinct impressions on my life. No experience was more rewarding than developing trusting and caring relationships with vulnerable, disadvantaged students and helping them with their day-to-day challenges. While working with these students, I realized that there is a unique potential within all of us and that everyone deserves opportunity to grow into productive citizens. Troubled students, however, need our support. They need our promise that we will help them reach their goals and overcome their challenges.

Through our children's stories I have learned the value of a promise kept. The Speech from the Throne reminded me of my duty to uphold the examples of our government's kept promises.

This government in carrying out these promises is fulfilling a valuable and noble cause. Our government will continue to build a tradition of serving Albertans by doing the right things. By maintaining steady and predictable funding to our education system, over the next three years we will be able to employ the necessary resources to assist each of our children. I am proud of this measure, which will give the ability to school districts to make decisions at the local level and serve the needs of our constituents. In doing so, we will recognize the potential of our youth, helping to ensure that they have bright and productive futures. Mr. Speaker, this three-year funding decision is the right thing to do for education, and I could not be more honoured to be a part of this membership, which values the future of our province and honours its promise to children.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight that His Honour's Speech from the Throne addressed the importance of environmental stewardship. Alberta is the home to some of the most scenic places in the world. From the pristine lakes and rivers to the towering Rocky Mountains, our diverse landscape is one to envy. People from around the world come to Alberta to truly live the experience of adventure and majestic beauty that we have the opportunity to be a part of as a way of life.

We were also blessed with a wealth of natural resources. These resources sustain our economy and families across the province. For this we are extremely fortunate. However, in developing these resources, we must be cognizant of our environment and its fragile nature. Mr. Speaker, I believe it is critical that we maintain a high level of environmental stewardship in order to protect Alberta's natural beauty. In doing so, Alberta will signal to the rest of the world that we are striving toward a cleaner environment, setting an example for other jurisdictions.

The Speech from the Throne laid forth initiatives that will help monitor environmental quality, and these steps will help us ensure that our environmental standards are continuously improved, enabling us to maintain the splendour we have all come to know and love here in Alberta. I am grateful to be able to act as a steward on behalf of the constituents of Calgary-Currie. So many of the rich dialogues with our Calgary-Currie constituents were held on the doorsteps and involved discussions related to environmental stewardship. I make the promise to my constituents to be their voice on this front. I look forward to the two-way dialogue that we will have over the course of the next years.

I am also looking forward to our government building infrastructure to expand our energy sector across Canada and also across the world. This will help create jobs and improve our economic well-being, benefiting all Albertans. As His Honour stated last week, Alberta's prosperity cannot come at the expense of its beauty. The two must go hand in hand. We know that all Albertans expect us to make decisions regarding the prosperity of our province for the right reasons. Together I know that we will achieve the delicate balance that exists between high quality of life and also maintaining the graceful landscape and beauty with which we have been blessed.

In closing, I would like to again thank the constituents of Calgary-Currie for this opportunity to represent them. I am truly humbled and grateful for this opportunity to advocate for their needs. We will celebrate our strong, vibrant voice in this Assembly, and that is my promise to my constituents. To His Honour the Lieutenant Governor: thank you for so eloquently presenting the Speech from the Throne. To all members of this House: let us work together in a cohesive and dignified manner. Let us reflect the hopes of our constituents of building upon the already great legacy of our province, and let us reflect these hopes in a manner that demonstrates the real leadership, true respect, and dignity that is the expectation of our constituents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing no one, I'll go to Cardston-Taber-Warner, please.

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand and address the 28th Legislature and all Albertans. I'd like to begin by looking at some things that I think we all have in common. First, we won more votes in our riding than anyone else. We talked with many people grateful to live in Alberta. Some were born here. Others moved here looking for a job or a better job. We have a desire to serve all Albertans, we want to make a difference and leave a legacy, and like most Albertans, many of us are or used to be PC Party supporters.

I was born and raised in Lethbridge. I had a paper route as a kid and worked summers for my dad's trucking company, Speedy Storage & Cartage. I swept floors, washed trucks, worked as a swamper, helped out in the shop, and even made deliveries around the city.

When I was 20, I moved to Sweden and lived there for two and a half years. I learned to speak the language and still *snacka lite svenska*. I lived among the people. I saw first-hand the debilitating effects of womb-to-tomb socialism: the high tax rates, the redistribution of wealth from the productive risk takers to those cautiously putting forth less effort and expecting others to provide for them.

I learned four economic truths in Sweden. First, you can't multiply wealth by dividing it. Secondly, you can't legislate the poor into prosperity by taxing the wealthy out of prosperity. Third, what one person receives without working for, another person must work for without receiving. Fourth, government cannot give someone anything that it does not first take from someone else.

4:20

Upon returning from Scandinavia, I attended university in the U.S.A. and earned degrees in psychology and a master's of business administration. I spent most of my working years running the family trucking company, steering it in a different direction, from local delivery to oil field services. We relocated the business to Taber and became known for providing the quickest, safest, and

most cost-effective rig moves in western Canada. This was accomplished by creating systems that encouraged innovation and creative problem solving by people on the front lines.

I've also taught management at the University of Lethbridge and developed and taught a very effective life skills and employability module to help introduction-to-trades students complete their courses successfully at Lethbridge College. I'm a volunteer at a nongovernment, not-for-profit employment agency. I lead self-employment workshops for aspiring entrepreneurs. Each school day that I'm not here, I teach ethics and morality to grade 11 and 12 students, who get up before school starts to come early and study the wisdom literature of the ages. From these books we learn the constancy of human nature and how to apply life lessons from the past to current challenges.

With partners I cofounded ChopStix restaurant, a new franchise concept we recently opened in Airdrie. It's right on highway 2, and I invite all of you to stop in and enjoy some quick gourmet Chinese food.

**Mr. McAllister:** Free.

**Mr. Bikman:** Who said that?

As a father of 13 children I know a little bit about organization, teamwork, and delegation. I've learned how to adjudicate and how to find common ground. Eight sons and five daughters graduated from public school and have all earned at least one postsecondary degree; some have three. All are married, and my wife, Sheila, and I have 33 and a third grandchildren. I've negotiated with teamsters and with suppliers, and I can tell you that they're easier than kids.

At times over the past 30 years I've been a mayor, a deputy mayor, and a councillor in the village of Stirling. Like many of you, I've always voted so that I'd have a right to complain. Well, I hope I don't give my constituents any cause to complain.

The Cardston-Taber-Warner riding covers a large part of southern Alberta. From the rich, productive, irrigated fields surrounding Barnwell, Taber, and Grassy Lake in the east, it includes the communities of Wrentham, Warner, Milk River, and south to Coutts on the American border. Going west along highway 501 through the rich, productive rolling hills of the Milk River Ridge, we come to Del Bonita, which this year celebrates its 100th anniversary, and then to the temple town of Cardston. Highway 501 runs through the newly discovered Bakken formation oil field, beginning to be developed now. Continuing west of Cardston along highway 5 through the hamlets of Leavitt and Mountain View, my friend Broyce Jacob's hometown, leads us to the Waterton Park townsite. Passing south of Hill Spring and Glenwood, this is beautiful farming and ranching country.

The Blood reserve is now part of this large riding, too, with its First Nation heritage and unique culture. Travelling east from Stand Off, we cross the very important St. Mary dam and reservoir, rejoining highway 5 at Spring Coulee. Further east are the towns of Magrath, Welling, Raymond, and Stirling, my hometown, all settled originally, beginning in 1899, by Mormon pioneers. They came to develop an irrigation system that turned this dry, parched part of the Palliser Triangle into one of the most productive and advanced irrigated farming and ranching areas in the world, a huge exporter of beef and produce and home of delicious Taber corn.

This drive is well over 600 kilometres. Irrigation farmers, deeply dependent on electricity to run their pumps, are very concerned about the alarming increases in electrical costs. Bill 50 is one of the main reasons that they voted Wildrose. They hoped the rest of the province was equally aware of the threat to all Albertans and the businesses that employ them. Irrigation and

water management are vital to the region. Much more money and attention are needed for storage and to deal with flooding and runoff, a regular threat to the village of Stirling, which last year came within inches of having the Ridge reservoir breached, a disaster that would have destroyed my town.

My constituents have had honourable MLAs since the mid-1970s. However, for the past four years they've felt increasingly disenfranchised. They believe their voices have not been heard clearly or understood by the past and current Premiers. When asked why they left the PC Party, they usually say, "I didn't leave the party; the party left me," and they move their hand to the left, indicating the drift to more socialistic and left-leaning philosophies.

Here's a little list of what the constituents of Cardston-Taber-Warner tell me prompted their migration to Wildrose. First, they want a say in decisions that affect them. The Premier often states: we've listened to Albertans, and they're telling us. Well, no farmer, rancher, or dairyman I know asked for a landowners' advocate. What they said instead, loudly and clearly, at the task force meetings was: "Repeal bills 24, 36, and 50. Let's start fresh." They don't want to just be listened to. They want to be heard, and they'd like to think that what they say will make a difference. It will to me. I promised them that I'll work with the government to remind them of the principles that made Alberta great.

In the south they're tired of hearing their PC MLAs apologetically attempting to justify legislation that he or she knows full well is not what the constituents wanted or needed. "I spoke up for you in caucus but was voted down" is the unacceptable explanation usually given. Mr. Speaker, so far as I know, there is no law or rule preventing this government from allowing its MLAs free votes in the Legislature. I'm asked: why doesn't this happen? Our conclusion in Cardston-Taber-Warner is that democracy under PC rule simply means: "Jeez, we let you vote about every four years in a semifixed election season. What more do you people want?"

Lately the government's message has clearly been: when we want your opinion, we'll give it to you. People in my riding can't believe that their government really thinks that it's smarter than the collective wisdom of Albertans, that it's so out of touch with the voters it thinks government means a legislative dictatorship. They've observed that the PCs are actually a minority government, one that over 50 per cent of the voters rejected.

In discussing the superboard, my neighbours reminded me that nowhere in history has central planning ever produced better results for hard-working citizens. Oh, it's more efficient. You don't have to put up with disagreements or the opinions of those you don't consider your intellectual equals, but it sure as heck isn't better at meeting real needs in a timely, cost-effective manner.

Second, southern Albertans want a balanced budget. They know this government has a spending problem, not a revenue problem. Nothing in the Speech from the Throne reassured them that it realizes this yet or intends to make any real changes. They know that when more money is left in the hands of the people and companies that earn it, more productive sector jobs are created, the standard of living rises, and their government – yes, the people's government – collects more taxes. History proves it. They know the government doesn't have any money of its own. It's all taxpayers' money. They know the government doesn't create wealth. Too often it usurps and misallocates it by subsidizing uncompetitive projects – does anybody want some world-class magnesium? – creating bloated bureaucracies and trying to bribe voters with their own money.

Many of my constituents are businessmen and -women, including lots in agribusiness. They know the surest way to underdeliver at the front lines and exceed budgets is by allowing overhead expenses to grow out of proportion to the services being provided and the results being achieved. They're smart enough to know that when cuts are required, they must begin at the top, not at the client, consumer, or citizen delivery end. They know that free enterprise is the most efficient and effective way to deliver scarce resources. The invisible hand that Adam Smith spoke of is real because human nature is constant. No government is smart or powerful enough to overcome human nature. History is littered with the remains of failed dictatorships, be they legislative tyrannies or bloody battles.

Thirdly, they're tired of long waiting lines for health services and intimidation of the real health care providers on the front lines. Again, it's not money; it's the system. Decisions need to be made closer to the people affected by them. The main benefit of centralization is purchasing. Right now that's the only thing most people think the superboard may be getting right, and you don't need eight layers of management to accomplish that.

4:30

An Alberta Health Services worker recently whispered to me, fearful of losing her job, that she sees millions of dollars wasted each year in just her small area. She asserts that a one-time investment of \$100,000 would return at least 40 times its cost every year. That's \$4 million in annual savings in this little department, and her manager agrees. Why isn't it being done? Because he says that the savings will benefit another department, too, and result in a smaller budget for him. Where is the accountability? Don't bother looking. It doesn't exist.

I ran on a platform of restoring the Alberta advantage. To the citizens of Cardston-Taber-Warner this means, among other things: entrenching property rights in our Charter and allowing access to the legal system for all disputes, balanced budgets, rebuilding the heritage savings trust fund and saving for a rainy day, cost-effective medical services, more choice in education and certainly no clause 16 in the Education Act, reduced regulation and red tape, accountability within the civil service, transparency and openness in government decision-making, not behind closed cabinet doors.

We believe in the collective wisdom and intelligence of our citizens. They need to be consulted, listened to, and heard. It takes more time and effort to begin with, but it's much quicker and cheaper in the long run because you get it right the first time.

I'll be watching, I'll be working hard, and I'll be advocating for true conservative principles. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing no one, let me just give you the speakers list – I think we have it sorted out – Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, Calgary-Shaw, Calgary-South East, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, and if time permits Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, the hon. Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation, Little Bow, and Calgary-McCall.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your election. As a rookie in this Assembly I look forward to your advice. Throughout your career you've established a reputation as someone who has been fair and approachable. This House will be well served by you and the guidance you will provide to all members. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I am a third-generation constituent of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, and I am so honoured to be able to represent the dynamic constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I figure everyone has a phrase to address their constituency with, and mine will be “dynamic.” Some would say that it’s dynamic because of the many communities it includes, 12 municipalities: three counties, Lamont, parts of Beaver and Minburn counties; two villages, Chipman and Andrew; five towns, Bruderheim, Lamont, Mundare, Vegreville, and Tofield; one city, the city of Fort Saskatchewan; and a very large portion of the specialized municipality of Strathcona county. Those are the municipalities that make up Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. These communities provide a great deal of variety of lifestyle choice, ranging from urban to rural, infusing vitality through diversity.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Agricultural opportunities brought pioneers to this area, and this industry continues to play a vital role in sustaining our economy. Agriculture has evolved since the days of the homesteaders, since the days of my grandparents. In the Speech from the Throne the Lieutenant Governor referred to the unique western heritage and spirit of self-reliance that have made our province a special place to live. Alberta’s farmers embody this heritage and this spirit. Mr. Speaker, farmers are now working thousands of acres and operate millions of dollars of equipment.

Farmers have to be innovative to stay competitive, and Providence Grain, a farmer-owned independent grain handling company whose head office is in Fort Saskatchewan, is one example of how farmers have addressed their changing needs and their opportunities. Others have diversified. Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is home to commercial saskatoon berry orchards, an experimental hackberry orchard, a growing equestrian industry, and commercial and purebred cattle operations.

Agriculture continues to be a growth industry in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. Unique independent food processors have invested in this region and have thrived as a result. I’m very pleased to have shared with my colleagues today a sample of one of Vegreville’s fine local products from Simply Fine Sweets, a local specialty chocolatier and bakery. Mr. Speaker, their products are available in Vegreville, but they are also served at Edmonton’s own Hotel Macdonald.

Adding value to our products locally, be they agricultural or petrochemical, is not only important to me and my constituents but to all Albertans. I say this because according to a recent survey 70 per cent of Albertans feel strongly about value-added and about upgrading bitumen within this province. Home to three of Alberta’s five Industrial Heartland partners – Lamont, Fort Saskatchewan, and Strathcona – we embrace and we encourage sustainable industrial development in our riding.

Alberta’s Industrial Heartland is a total of 582 square kilometres, and the value-added is more than just upgrading bitumen to synthetic crude. It also presents an opportunity for Alberta to grow our thriving petrochemical industry by using the off-gases from one company to become the feedstock of another. This approach is already starting to happen as Williams Energy recently agreed to supply off-gas ethane to NOVA Chemicals. The heartland is close to the resources needed for the development of industry, including water, workforce, and transportation.

This development is happening in an environmentally conscious way that is sensitive to the local community. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Life in the Heartland website was developed as a one-stop information portal to provide residents with convenient access to air and water quality information, noise and light data, and safety

information. I’m very proud to say that one of the ways safety is being addressed is the Northeast Region Community Awareness Emergency Response – what a mouthful – NR CAER for short, which provides mutual aid emergency preparedness for its nine member municipalities and 30 industrial partners. This organization established the UPDATEline, that was implemented in 2003, in order to provide the community with 24-hour information on its member activity.

Alberta’s Industrial Heartland has attracted over \$30 billion of investment and has developed into Canada’s largest hydrocarbon-processing region and has done so using eco-industrial principles. This is very much in line with the Premier’s vision of developing our natural resources responsibly while protecting our province’s natural beauty. I am encouraged by our hon. Premier’s recent comments in this House before the recent election.

We in this government are committed to diversifying the economy and to ensuring that we’re investing in value-added for the good of all Albertans. We know that that has tremendous opportunities for Albertans and Alberta taxpayers across the province.

Now, I would be remiss as a small-business owner not to mention that small-business owners have located throughout Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, and as they say: small business is big business. These businesses provide services to the major industrial players and to local residents alike. Small businesses are vital to our continued success as a province. Our province, as noted in the Speech from the Throne, is the most economically free jurisdiction in North America. Small business will benefit from our government’s work to simplify their regulatory burden.

In addition, all businesses, large or small, require access to markets, and Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is fortunate to be served by both the CP and the CN rail lines; the Warren Thomas Aerodrome, Josephburg; numerous pipelines; and many highways, including the Trans Canada Yellowhead highway.

Mr. Speaker, you will find Elk Island national park and the Ukrainian cultural village within this riding. In Fort Saskatchewan you can find a showcase of history, the recreated North West Mounted Police fort, which stood on the site from 1875 to 1885. As part of the Fort Saskatchewan Museum and Historic Site the fort helps tell the story of the people that made Fort Saskatchewan their home.

I could go on, but the main reason that Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is such a dynamic constituency is the people that I have the privilege to represent. They work hard, they aren’t afraid to get involved, and they care about their communities and neighbours. They are the reason I want to do everything in my power to ensure that the communities they love are strong and vibrant. That is one of the reasons I was so proud to hear in the Speech from the Throne our government’s commitment to strengthening families and communities.

4:40

Alberta would be much poorer if the small-town way of life were to disappear. That’s why I want to ensure that people can call their same community home from their first birthday to their last. This means we must work to ensure the proper balance between services and fiscal priorities. This means not only ensuring timely access to health care and innovative education programs, near and dear to my heart as an educator, but also support for recreation and cultural pursuits, delivered through local organizations such as agricultural societies, cultural communities, and faith groups.

Mr. Speaker, I know my constituents expect me to listen to their issues, to their ideas, and to their solutions, and I will do my best to listen and to represent them and carry their message forward.

One such message I look forward to working with my colleagues here to address is the volatility of electrical prices and ensuring that Alberta's economy remains strong and prosperous.

Having just finished a campaign, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with my hon. colleagues that infrastructure investment is vital to this area. Local municipalities, industrial partners, and the province must work towards a new heavy-load bridge across the North Saskatchewan River, affordable seniors housing units, and an improved or new facility to deliver hospital services in Vegreville. These examples are just some of the needs that exist in the communities of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, that are simultaneously growing and aging. I applaud the government's continued investment in infrastructure, as outlined in the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with all members of the Assembly in this building in the future, following in the steps of those such as the hon. Ed Stelmach, Rob Lougheed, Muriel Abdurahman, Derek Fox, and Dr. Walter Buck. I look forward to helping to assist in a future that invests in people no matter where they live, an Alberta that honours our seniors, supports our families, and encourages our youth to reach their potential.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members. Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, I'll recognize the next speaker. The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to be here today addressing this House for the first time. The history of this magnificent building and all it stands for, the beauty of this Chamber, and being in the presence of my fellow members makes this perhaps one of the most equally humbling and exciting moments of my life as I deliver this my maiden speech. I strongly believe that the next four years will shape our province into the future and the roles we play on both sides of this floor will have a lasting impact on Albertans for a long time.

Thank you to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for his delivery of the Speech from the Throne. I have great respect for him, the role he plays in our democracy, and what he has achieved, a member of the Order of Canada and a man who has spent his life fighting to ensure that other nations can enjoy the same things we so often take for granted here at home: safety, security, freedom, and democracy. His Honour is a shining example of a great Albertan, and being in his presence has added to the pride that I have in being a member of this Assembly.

I have the immense privilege of representing the riding of Calgary-Shaw, which recently went through some border changes to accommodate the redrawn electoral map. Located in the deep south end of the city, Calgary-Shaw is now made up of six distinct and unique communities: Midnapore, Sundance, Somerset, Shawnessy, and the recently added Millrise and Shawnee Slopes. The last two communities, Millrise and Shawnee Slopes, were previously well represented by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, and I pledge to continue the good work he did there.

In Calgary-Shaw there is a tangible spirit that is admirable and infectious. During the course of the campaign I had the pleasure of meeting with many great residents in the riding who have dedicated countless hours of volunteer work to building their communities. One shining example of this that I would like to share with the House is the story of the South Fish Creek Recreation Association. The creation of this outstanding facility is an iconic Albertan story, and it adds to the pride that my wife and I share in representing this riding. It is a great example of what

makes Albertans unique: the spirit to overcome adversity, the willingness to give of oneself for the greater good, and ultimately the understanding that creating a legacy beyond ourselves is what real great work is about.

In conjunction with the YMCA, the public library, and a Catholic high school a group of dedicated volunteers took their vision for a community-based recreation centre and created a facility that will have a lasting impact on Albertans for generations. The community portion was just expanded two weeks ago, and it has become the first quad ice surface in the city. I had the great pleasure of being there to celebrate the grand opening with the wonderful people who made it all happen. There are countless inspiring stories in this riding, and in time I look forward to sharing many more.

Calgary-Shaw has a long history of electing strong members to this House, from Jim Dinning to Jon Havelock and, recently, Cindy Ady. The good people of this riding have always been well represented. This is the first time they have ever elected a member from the Official Opposition, and it will allow me to advocate for the constituents in a different way, from across this floor. I look forward to numerous engaging discussions and debates here, and I have confidence that many positives can come from this relationship as we work together to find areas of mutual interest and benefit.

Many people in the riding expressed concerns during the campaign that affect and impact all Albertans: health care, education, and seniors' care. I think that we can all agree here today that it is incumbent upon us all to put aside partisan gamesmanship as we find solutions to these critical areas of importance to all Albertans. It is simply what they expect of their government and why we in the Wildrose Party, as the Official Opposition, have stated that we will not oppose simply for the sake of opposing.

There are a couple of local issues I would like to highlight for this House, and those are primarily transportation and infrastructure issues within the riding. The construction of the ring road in Calgary is long overdue, and I applaud the work that has been done thus far. There are concerns about the interchange that is going in at 22X and Macleod Trail; specifically, that it will cut off access from Shawville Boulevard to eastbound 22X, which is critical to the flow of traffic out of the core commercial district in the riding, which is also home to an LRT station and the aforementioned rec centre, Y, public library, and high school. It impacts all Calgarians who benefit from and use this area, but in Calgary-Shaw it's in the heart of the riding. It is vital to ensure that shopping, dining, or accessing entertainment or public transit does not become a burden to those who live in the community.

There are also concerns that this interchange is one of the last to be built on the south leg of the ring road as it currently is only a single lane flowing in either direction and will eventually create a pinch point. The southwest portion of the ring road is also of high importance to our riding, and I look forward to assisting the hon. Minister of Transportation in any possible way I can to help put an end to the decades-long struggle around this piece of infrastructure.

Fish Creek park, one of the largest urban parks in North America, with a mixture of grassland and mixed forest spanning over 3,000 acres, is a source of immense pride for our riding. Roughly 3 million visitors per year enjoy this historic and natural preserve, and ensuring that the best practices of sustainability are employed to preserve the feel, atmosphere, and sense of tranquility the park has offered to so many over the years is of utmost importance to our riding.

Now, we have a lot to be proud of in Calgary-Shaw and a lot of great ideas to ensure that we continue to grow and meet the needs of our growing population while we still care for our natural environment.

Mr. Speaker, after you were dragged to your chair last week, you spoke with powerful emotion about your family and their role in your life. I am also very lucky to have a family that is very supportive and one that I wish to make proud in my role here. My wife, Sally, and my two-year-old son, Jude, are without question the greatest gifts in my life, and I will always remember the passion and dedication that my wife put into my campaign to be here today.

She is a first-generation Canadian, born of two Egyptian immigrants who came to Canada in 1976, and seeing the world through the lens of my in-laws, who experienced life under a dictatorship, is an invaluable perspective to be able to bring here and contrast our own government to.

I'll remind this House that Egypt just last week went through their first presidential election ever. Much was made during this past campaign about the fact that we have had one ruling party in Alberta for over 40 years. Similarly, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak also held onto power for over 40 years. At least here at home we can say that it was always through a democratic process that our governments received their mandates.

4:50

Likewise, we in the opposition have also received a mandate from the public, and our role is a critical component to a functioning democracy. Now, I've been asked to be the critic for Human Services, and I would like to thank our leader for tasking me with this important ministry. I have many personal connections to it, starting with the fact that I along with my sister are both adopted. We do not share the same biological parents, but the adoptive parents that we share are two of the finest people I will ever meet in my life, Dave and Sam Wilson, and I want them to be recognized here as well.

It is said that friends are the family that we choose. In my case I couldn't have chosen or asked for a better family. I'm eternally grateful to my biological mother for her strength and courage at the age of 16 to make the choice that she did, and I believe it is what allows me to be here today.

My sister Amanda has had many challenges in her life as she continues to learn how to live with an autism spectrum disorder. Growing up with a sibling with special needs was at times a struggle, but it taught me some of the most important life lessons, and I will carry them with me always: the strength of compassion; the need for equality; the understanding that just because our brains are wired differently does not mean that we are not the same, that we do not share the same desires, the same wants, to love and be loved. She is married to a wonderful man. Both of them are supported by AISH, and they share a special and unique bond. My wife and I are her alternate guardians, and this has us preparing for our lives to change overnight when we are set to assume the same responsibilities that many Albertans shoulder as they care for family members in need.

While knocking on doors, the one thing that struck me was just how many families are impacted by children with special needs. I could sense the agony as they strive to create the best life they can for their loved ones. Human Services can make a difference for the thousands of families that go through these struggles daily. I feel that my understanding and my familiarity with some of them will give me the capacity to work passionately and productively with the hon. minister to help fulfill the noble vision of this ministry.

These past weeks have been filled with new experiences, and I am in awe of the traditions of this House and will be inspired by its beauty and the passion of my fellow members. Last week, when I sat at this desk for the first time, I had an unexpected surprise when I opened the drawer to the desk and found those who had sat here before me, such names as Laurence Decore, former Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and Peter Trynchy, whose grandson Jeffery now plays an integral role in our party.

While on that subject, I would also like to have this House recall another Canadian parliamentarian, one who has been an inspiration to me as I embark on my political career. Chuck Cadman was first elected to Parliament in 1997 as a Reformer. His primary initiative was to change the laws governing young offenders and to protect victims' rights after his 16-year-old son was randomly murdered in a brutal street attack. He successfully passed a private member's bill that resulted in changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, achieving his initial goal.

Now, many of you may recall the drama that unfolded in Parliament in 2005. We had a minority Liberal government. It was on the brink of falling during the budget vote. Mr. Cadman, the only independent elected, held the balance of power. A vote with the opposition, the government falls; a vote with the Liberals, they live to see another day. Despite receiving chemotherapy treatments throughout this time, it is rumoured that he sat in his constituency office for upwards of 12 hours a day, meeting with and listening to his constituents as he tried to decide how he was going to vote and what he was going to do. On voting day Mr. Cadman flew across the country to fulfill his duty.

I'll never forget the image of Mr. Cadman standing, ultimately siding with the Liberals. That moment in time, when he stood to vote, will forever be burned into my memory, and I consider that instant one of the most pure moments of democracy that I have ever witnessed. When he stood, he defined himself a second time. When asked why he voted with the government, he stated that he was simply obeying the wishes of his constituents, who did not want to face an election so soon after the last one.

He lost his battle with cancer only a few weeks after that defining moment. What I find so inspiring about Chuck Cadman is that he finished his political career the same way he started it, with honour and integrity. He fought for what he believed in, and he exemplified the ideal that our democracy is founded upon, that we as elected officials are here to represent our constituents, not our party and not our own interests.

Mr. Speaker, as we embark on this the 28th Legislature, my first, I will always remember why I am here and who it is that I represent, and most importantly I will constantly strive to do it with honour and integrity.

Thank you.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, I'll recognize the next speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to rise today to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I begin by thanking His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, Donald Ethell. His Honour delivered a lucid and well-formulated plan on behalf of the government of Alberta.

I have great assurance and trust that the government of Alberta under the leadership of our hon. Premier will continue the long-term success that has made Alberta one of the best places to live in the world. I would like to thank the hon. Premier for articulating



an exemplary vision for the future of this province, a vision that is forward thinking and one that will continue to foster the conditions necessary for our future development and growth. We are all very privileged to live in this great province, and I'm certainly privileged to be the representative for Calgary-South East.

I would like to sincerely thank the people at the very heart of our democratic system, the voters. Let us always remember that it is with their blessing and their authority that each of us is present in this Assembly today. I would like to express my gratitude to the people of Calgary-South East for placing their faith and confidence in me. I assure them that I will represent their interests faithfully, articulately, and with purpose. I will make their voice count in this Assembly and ensure that it is always present in the dialogue when we talk about the priorities Albertans hold for the future and how we can make our lives better for our families.

I also want to take this time to thank my wife, Mishelle; our two sons, Carson and Thaine; my family; friends; and supporters for helping me become a member of this Assembly. Without the enormous support of some key people in my riding this would not have been possible. I also want to thank the following people for the excellent work they do at the grassroots: Sean Chu, Kelly Bitz, Richard MacQuarrie, Shane Byciuk, James Sale, Leslie Paron, Cory Exner, Michelle Taylor, and Chris Wigle.

Mr. Speaker, one of the values that I've learned over and over in life is teamwork. We are always better when we stand together and work together. In my career as an advanced care paramedic I've experienced the positive outcomes of collaboration creating significant change, and that is what I hope to bring to the constituents of Calgary-South East.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take a moment to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of this esteemed House. To all of my colleagues both in government caucus as well as the members of opposition parties: I congratulate you. It is my hope as members of this Assembly that together we will have a respectful and productive legislative session and four years of putting Albertans first rather than specific political interests.

As we celebrate 100 years in this House and 100 years of democracy, 100 years of the Calgary Stampede and the recognition of our heritage, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on my own family history. My family came to Canada in 1905. At that time my great-grandfather was 13 years old. He was wanting to follow in his older brother's footsteps, who had already had his own homestead in the wide open spaces of Alberta. Shortly after arriving in Alberta in his early teens, my great-grandfather took on the task of herding cattle by himself. He camped out for three months 120 kilometres from home with his dog and his horse. It's hard to imagine those sorts of things happening in this day and age. He demonstrated his ambition, courage, and determination. In 1911 that same 18-year-old applied for and received his own homestead just north of Michichi, Alberta, where my father grew up and where I spent my summers. Today that homestead is still producing food and contributing to the economy, run by my uncle and his son.

Mr. Speaker, my family has been in Alberta for over a hundred years, and I am blessed to know our history and our family and its contribution to this great province, from teaching Sunday school, adopting children, always lending a helping hand, participating in celebrations of our heritage like the Calgary Stampede, providing work and training for new Canadians, and dropping off groceries anonymously at people's doorsteps. Some of these examples I've seen first-hand, and others I have read about. Nonetheless, it has

helped me shape my own values and the values I wish to pass on to my children.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, my family is just one example out of tens of thousands of families in this province that have contributed to our success by exemplifying the values of putting people first. As members of this Assembly if we truly serve and work to serve Albertans every day, how can we possibly go wrong? I believe Albertans care about people, and they value principles more than the bottom line. It is my understanding that this compassion was well articulated in the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I'm particularly proud of my constituency of Calgary-South East. This is a vibrant, diverse, and growing community that reflects the best qualities of Calgary and the best qualities of this great province. This is an urban riding that encompasses the communities of Auburn Bay, Chaparral, Copperfield, Cranston, New Brighton, Legacy, Mahogany, Seton, Silverado, and Walden. The majority of people here speak English, but many of my constituents also speak Spanish, Vietnamese, Punjabi, German, Chinese, and French. They represent the ever-changing face of Alberta, that has grown to become more diverse over the years, and it is this diversity that is the strength for this province.

People bring with them new ways of doing things and perspectives that enrich the fabric of our society. A constant flow of ideas and fresh perspectives are key to maintaining and growing our international and economic competitiveness. It is true in the case of both long-time residents of Alberta as well as newcomers that the diligent and entrepreneurial spirit of these constituents has been apparent throughout the constituency. We are a constituency of opportunity-oriented folks who run their own small businesses and are taking advantage of the wealth of opportunities available to us as Albertans. My father ran his own business for 40 years, and it was there that I learned the values of honesty, integrity, and getting the job done right the first time. I see much of that same outlook present in the riding of Calgary-South East. It is this powerful western spirit that has been crucial to our past successes and will remain so as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to point out with pride that the constituency of Calgary-South East is also an educated one. Fully 90 per cent of the constituents have a diploma or a certificate of some sort while 30 per cent of constituents have a university degree. In both cases, this is higher than the average provincially. In addition, the fact is that a large proportion of constituents are employed in the scientific, technical, or professional fields, engaged in developing constant innovations and knowledge. Whether it is construction, manufacturing, retail, transportation, finance, education, or health care, I know that the constituents of Calgary-South East are performing tremendously well in their respective fields.

Mr. Speaker, when I hear the hon. Premier speak about government's priorities for the future, I see how they align with what I hear from Albertans. The message they convey to me is to put people first, do it with purpose, and do it while building the province more efficiently, all while continuing to spend wisely. This is why I was pleased to hear the Speech from the Throne last week as it expressed many of the perspectives that I've been hearing from my constituents. Much like this government, Albertans believe in building stronger families and communities. The goal is to support families and communities in reaching their full potential, paving the way for people to take advantage of opportunities which allow them to enjoy a better quality of life.

The hon. Premier has also pledged to have a strong and nimble public service, one that is designed around Albertans and one that is well poised to offer exemplary services to the public in an efficient manner.

Mr. Speaker, the family and the local community is the most basic unit of our society, and we are only as strong as our weakest family and our weakest community. Family is where the future of this province is to be found. That being said, let us not forget our First Nations and Métis families. With a proud history they were here before any other newcomers started arriving, and they, too, have contributed to the greatness of this province. I served with Maskwachees Ambulance Authority on the Samson Cree Nation, Ermineskin, Louis Bull, and Montana reserves. I've seen firsthand the challenges the aboriginal people of Alberta are facing, and I look forward to a meaningful dialogue to see where we can be of support.

Mr. Speaker, it was obvious to me from the throne speech that we must support our seniors, giving them the tools that they need to live fulfilled lives as they age. After all, the generations before us were the ones who built this province and made it an amazing place today.

I am pleased that this government continues to innovate in the provision of health care. Family care clinics and community care paramedics are a model for recognizing the crucial role of health care practitioners and allowing them to practise to their full extent. These innovations will also create greater access to primary health care for Albertans, which will contribute to a more efficient system in the future.

It is also important to help younger members of the family by offering a variety of educational options right in the community. As I raise my two young sons, I am grateful for the number of choices that I can make with respect to their education, particularly the choices in my own home, where I have the freedom to teach my children my values. Albertans have access to world-class education, and this government is committed to keeping it that way.

Most families and communities in this province are thriving, Mr. Speaker, and we will carry on making sure that they do. What I heard from the throne speech is a commitment from this government to providing the resources necessary for families to flourish.

I also believe in the solid basis of our current prosperity. It was built by a government that fostered the conditions for economic growth and development. To me the throne speech has emphasized this, the importance of securing Alberta's economic future.

This is a government that believes in spending the taxpayers' money wisely. Through her effective leadership the hon. Premier has introduced the idea of results-based budgets that will balance public spending by providing predictable funding and eliminating government waste. This will be achieved through no new taxes and no provincial sales tax. Mr. Speaker, let me repeat myself: no new taxes and no provincial sales tax.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be innovative, we're going to be collaborative, we're going to be efficient, and we're going to be inclusive. We are going to lead this province with purpose, with class, and with dignity while serving Albertans first.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Just before I recognize the next speaker, I will just give you the order that I have for speakers. Assuming that we will have time, I will next recognize the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, then the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo,

the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and if we have time, the hon. Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation.

Before I recognize the next speaker, may we briefly revert to the Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some members of my campaign team who are here this evening. Joscelyn Proby, Donald George Retson, Peter Cross, Val Neaves, and Trevor Zimmerman all helped a great deal to ensure that we have this seat that I'm standing above here today. If they could stand and receive the warm welcome.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, introductions?

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce a number of very special guests. Along with my parents are many campaign workers, volunteers, who helped me be here today. I'd like to call your names, and as I do, please stand and be recognized: my parents, Orest and Mary Ann Bilous; Chris Klein; Miranda Klein; Gertrude Sopracolle; Brad Lafortune; Peggy Wright; Garrett Spelliscy; Bri Pickard; Sasha Pickard; Darren Zeigel. Please stay standing. If you could please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

### Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

(continued)

**The Deputy Speaker:** On His Honour's speech I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by expressing my congratulations to all the new members on their election to the Assembly. I'd also like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your new role and was pleased to hear your commitment to impartiality and fairness in the House.

I'm honoured and humbled to be the elected representative for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I think all members will agree that our electoral success was the direct result of the hard work of many volunteers, including family members, that was put into our campaigns. In addition to the volunteers that I introduced, I would also like to thank the many volunteers who couldn't be here today who contributed countless hours and strengthened the fabric of our democracy by getting involved.

I'd like to take this opportunity to talk a little bit about the area I represent, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, about its history and deep roots in progressive politics. The constituency is located in the northeast part of Edmonton and has a very rich history. Originally Beverly, the community where I live, was known for its mines, that provided jobs for its many residents and coal for much of Alberta. The town of Beverly was incorporated in 1914, and though the coal mines no longer provide the backbone for the community, the area is still full of life and will be celebrating its

hundred-year anniversary in July of 2014. I feel proud and humbled to be able to represent the community as it celebrates its centennial.

#### 5:10

One of the undeniable characteristics of Beverly is its sense of history. Many original families continue to live in the Beverly area, and in my three years of door-knocking I've had the opportunity to meet many community members whose families have lived in the area for generations. With this history comes a great sense of pride and passion for the community, and I'm excited to see young families moving back into the neighbourhoods north and south of 118th Ave. These young families will add their stories to the next hundred years of Beverly's already rich history.

The constituency also crosses the Yellowhead and encompasses Clareview, including Hermitage, Belmont, and the historic Fort Road district. With the new electoral boundaries our constituency gained some neighbourhoods from Edmonton-Manning. I experienced the fabulous sense of community in those neighbourhoods on Family Day this year, when the Hairsine Community League organized a great event with pickup hockey, bonfires, and a sleigh ride for kids.

First developed in 1972, Clareview is still a relatively new part of Edmonton. It's a good area for young families. It's affordable, they can live close to the schools and the beautiful Hermitage ravine, and there's convenient access to public transit through the LRT. I met constituents from all walks of life while door-knocking in the Clareview area. It's an area of immense diversity. Many new Canadians are settling there, some so new they haven't become citizens yet, so they couldn't vote in this election but are looking forward to 2016.

The aboriginal community is also a very significant part of this area. Some told me they were concerned about their young people, who face many challenges in the form of poverty, gangs, and addiction. I share with them a commitment to safer communities with thriving programs for our youth and supporting our municipalities so they can afford good community policing. As a teacher in Edmonton's inner city I've worked with many aboriginal youth, and I believe every one of them deserves a fair chance at success. I'm happy to have the opportunity to serve these constituents as the NDP aboriginal affairs critic.

The people of Clareview are hard-working Albertans who responded to our message of making life more affordable. They're worried about their electricity bills, especially the seniors on fixed incomes who I met. They need Alberta to have predictable regulated rates like everywhere else in Canada so that they can make ends meet every month.

In the last election people in Clareview made an important choice. They wanted real representation, a strong voice in the Legislature standing up to this government and fighting for their priorities. As a New Democrat I come after other strong NDP representation in the communities of Beverly-Clareview. The constituency has had two New Democrat MLAs in the past – Ed Ewasiuk from '86 to '93 and Ray Martin from 2004 to 2008 – plus one member of the CCF, Elmer E. Roper, from 1942 to 1955. I've learned a lot indirectly and personally from these men, and their names would continue to come up on the doorstep when I was campaigning for the past three years. I think that foundation was a large part of our success, and I will do my best to live up to the high standard these former MLAs have set.

For six years I taught high school in Edmonton's inner city. I worked with some of the most vulnerable members of society. The barriers and challenges that these young people face is incredible.

Many youth have lived through foster care, the prison system, homelessness, prostitution, addictions, trouble with the law, struggling to make ends meet, frequent trips to the Food Bank, and insufficient winter clothing. There is no shortage of challenges these young people face. I taught at an inner-city high school because I believe all Albertans deserve to have the same opportunities. I've seen and been a part of the successes of students and young people when they're given the opportunity to overcome incredible odds and climb insurmountable obstacles.

No matter how different people may appear to be on the outside or on the surface, inside we're all the same, with the same needs, desires, hopes, and dreams. The people of this province, the people of Beverly-Clareview are no different. They all want a roof over their head, a safe community to live in, a clean environment, a good job, a health care system that can be relied upon when they're sick. That's why Albertans deserve a government where people are the first priority. In the words of JFK: "Democracy is never a final achievement. It is a call to an untiring effort."

Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the job of an MLA is to represent his or her constituents. By talking to people over the past three years on the doorstep, in their homes, and at their places of work, I met thousands of people who were eager to share their priorities and their concerns about our community and our province. In response to the Speech from the Throne, I would like to share with this Assembly my priorities, which have come from conversations I've had directly with the residents of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. The Alberta NDP opposition stands up for all Albertans. Unfortunately, as evidenced by their throne speech, the current government does not.

I met many people who work in the oil and gas sector, and they told me that keeping quality jobs in Alberta is important. Many said that they were voting New Democrat for the first time in their life because they want this province to invest in upgrading and refining our bitumen here in Alberta. Many Albertans cannot understand why the Conservative government is intent on building a pipeline to ship our raw bitumen and our jobs with it. If we build four new upgraders in Alberta, it would generate billions of dollars in revenue from taxes and royalties, create thousands of high-quality long-term jobs, and ensure Alberta remains prosperous for the long term.

It baffles me that this government is intent on and insists on sending raw bitumen to the U.S. instead of upgrading it here. This begs the question: whose interests is the government looking out for? I can see how oil companies would prefer to build a pipeline and ship bitumen to existing factories in Texas, but it escapes me how the government also thinks this is a good idea. I was under the impression we were elected to represent the best interests of Albertans.

Another priority for the residents of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is making our communities safer. We all deserve to live in a neighbourhood we're proud to call home. As a resident of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview I believe this begins with investing in safe and healthy communities. There is no easy answer to some of the problems in our neighbourhoods, but by investing in strategies that focus on crime prevention and community involvement, I'm confident we can make our communities safer.

Building safe and vibrant communities for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview and across Alberta means co-ordinating efforts to address not just the symptoms but the root causes of crime. Of course, we need adequate laws and sentences to bring those who break the law to justice, but more importantly we need to build healthy communities from the ground up so that the common crimes we see in our neighbourhoods are less likely to happen in

the first place. Let's not forget that crime prevention is cheaper than enforcement, prosecution, and jail time. It also means fewer of us will be victims of crime.

For a New Democrat education is a critical investment in the future of Alberta. A highly educated workforce means that Albertans will be competitive in the global market. Unfortunately, this government has not done enough. Class sizes continue to be a challenge for teachers, parents, and students. Adequate training, resources, and the provision of support staff all play a pivotal role in helping schools deliver the best quality of education possible. Integrated and inclusive classrooms can be a great idea if all stakeholders – school boards, teachers, parents, and students – receive the level of support they need to be successful. Proper training, small staff-to-student ratios, appropriate equipment, and sufficient funding are all necessary to meet the diverse needs of schools that provide wraparound services.

Schools are the hub and lifeblood of a community, and I believe that the government has a duty to play in keeping schools open and acknowledging their importance, especially in mature neighbourhoods. Families often move into an area because the school is local and often walking distance from home. Children and parents have the opportunities to get to know one another through school activities, spending time in their own neighbourhood, which helps to develop a meaningful relationship and connection to their community.

More needs to be done to keep postsecondary education affordable and ensure that higher learning is not just a place for the elite. If the cost of attending postsecondary institutions continues to rise, more and more Albertans will seek higher learning elsewhere, which will increase the chances of those students remaining out of Alberta upon completion.

Decades ago we knew the time was fast approaching when baby boomers would retire and make the transition from independent to assisted living. There should not be a shortage of spaces for seniors. They should not be gouged by rising or hidden costs, not in this province.

5:20

Alberta is prosperous because of the workers who helped generate these profits. Workers in Alberta deserve to be compensated appropriately for the work they do. Our labour laws should be protecting the very people on whose backs the corporations are turning record profits. We need a diversified economy, one where there is support for small businesses and incentives to develop alternative energies such as wind and solar. Our government needs to ensure the Alberta economy is not subject to the whimsical nature of a boom-bust cycle. Long-term planning, strategic decisions, and calculated steps need to be taken in order to ensure our ship can weather the storm during times of scarcity and make smart investments during times of abundance.

A diversified economy includes agriculture, yet we find little or no support for agricultural co-operatives or local markets. We should be supporting our small- and medium-sized producers and provide initiatives for them to connect to the market directly. We should be packaging the food we grow locally as opposed to shipping it overseas to be packaged and then returned to be sold. We need to ensure that local producers, farmers, get paid for the true cost of production.

Health care is a priority for Albertans. They recognize the value of our public health care system and want assurances that it will remain publicly funded and publicly delivered. We need to address the shortage of health care practitioners through innovative solutions such as increasing enrolment in postsecondary institutions,

attracting and retaining medical professionals, reducing emergency room wait times, and creating more hospital beds, home care options, and facilities for seniors.

As a social studies teacher I had many discussions with students regarding the role of government and the job of an MLA. They thought, as I do, that people elect governments to make decisions on their behalf and to act in their best interests. That meant once upon a time that voters elected representatives because they had vision and foresight. They had ideas on how to improve the quality of life for their neighbours and their communities.

Leadership is about vision. It's about taking risks and making bold decisions which sometimes may not be the most popular. If some politicians in our history stuck to making only easy ones, we would have been shortchanged. Our public health care system exists because a man named Tommy Douglas had the courage, resolve, and tenacity to carry out his vision of a society where everyone has access to health care services regardless of income, status, or ability to pay. Our public health care system is a source of pride for many Canadians and is the envy of many jurisdictions around the world.

Part of the reason I got involved in politics is because I see Alberta's potential. I believe in a just Alberta, where the government places people before profit. We live in the richest province in the country, in the wealthiest jurisdiction in the world. Albertans should have the best programs and services available, yet there is much room for improvement. It's a matter of approach, of priority.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent a constituency with such immense cultural and religious diversity. Indeed, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is a good example of the huge range of backgrounds that we have as Albertans. As their MLA I will celebrate the richness that each group brings to our community. I commit to reaching out, to taking an inclusive approach, and working with cultural and religious groups of all stripes to make their voices heard, from aboriginals who want their youth to have a fair chance of success and our environment to be respected for the sake of future generations to commitment to family and community that I've seen in the Dutch Reformed Church, the Somali Muslim community, and in my own Ukrainian heritage.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview on his speech so far, and I would like to ask him if he has anything more to say.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. On election day Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview constituents of all cultures, religions, and walks of life made a choice for real change in their community. They want inclusive representation that they know will work hard on their behalf. I value the differences in our experiences and our history. They have also sent me to this House with an important message. Regardless of political affiliation or ideology I will reach out to all members in order to work toward our common future and a better, more inclusive Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to working with all members of this Legislature in order to effect positive changes in all of our communities.

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

I now recognize the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor both for his many years of service to this country and to this great province and also for sharing his view of the tremendous future that lies ahead for Alberta.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Speaker on winning not just one but two elections in the past five weeks. I'm honoured to serve in an Assembly under your guidance, wisdom, and impartiality.

In what will become my maiden speech as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the new riding of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, it is a pleasure to rise today to reply to the Speech from the Throne.

To begin, I must say that I'm extremely proud and humbled to represent the great people of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and to stand up today on their behalf. I would also like to thank a number of people for helping elect me as the new MLA, including Jim Moore, Andrew Highfield, Jeff Thompson, Ujeer Ahmed, Dave Gilmour, Kareem Noor, and many others who worked tirelessly on my behalf. Without their support and encouragement I would not be here today. Their passion and dedication are great examples for the economically strong and culturally vibrant corner of the province that is Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that I have been a part of the community since 1993, when I moved my young family to Fort McMurray to purchase a small business called Campbell's Music at a time when the economy was still struggling from the previous downturn. I did not move there with a two- or a five-year plan, as many did, but to run my own business and become a highly engaged member of my new community, my new home. I'm pleased to say that our diverse product inventory makes us one of the most popular music stores in western Canada and is the only major music store north of Edmonton, now celebrating its 36th year in business. There wasn't a lot going on back then. Fort McMurray was just a small, friendly city where everybody knew each other, but we were still full of excitement with the opportunities ahead.

Fort McMurray, of course, is in the heart of the oil sands, and many might find the oil sands to be relatively new. They think it's a relatively new discovery. But for the past hundred years global attention in the oil and gas business has been on conventional supplies, developed by drilling oil wells into the ground. It's only been as those supplies appear to be dwindling and as politics in the Middle East have become increasingly problematic that international attention has been drawn to the oil sands. However, the oil sands are not something new or unknown. Hundreds of years ago aboriginal people used exposed heavy oil harvested from the banks of the Clearwater River to waterproof their canoes. Now the Wood Buffalo region is indisputably the hottest regional industrial economy in the entire world. But even as Fort McMurray is becoming a citizen of the world, it is also very much a community rooted in the northeast corner of Alberta in a magnificent boreal wilderness and in our ties to an opportunity and way of life that are unique in the world.

Accelerated global interest in oil sands development has meant tremendous growth, and that growth has presented some challenges. Addressing the challenges that accompany such rapid growth requires bold thinking and innovative approaches. At the same time Fort McMurray is among the most dynamic communities in Canada, with a highly educated workforce and a commitment to stretching the bounds of emerging technologies to achieve prosperity. As a

community we saw unprecedented growth over a very short period of time that led to many challenges, and we fought hard to protect our interests with all levels of government: municipal, provincial, and federal.

It was during that period of time that I chose to get more involved and joined the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce, where I eventually served two terms as the president. As the president I lived and breathed the issues faced by small business in this community: lack of available commercial space, labour shortages and recruitment challenges, competitive wages. I also lobbied regional council on a number of issues. At that point I subsequently became elected and served two terms as a member of council for the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. As a member of council I had the opportunity to grow, learn from, and work diligently with a team of men and women that have developed a strong vision of how Wood Buffalo will continue to be a world-class region, with a 25-year outlook to ensure that it will not only be a sustainable and vibrant region but will become an example to the rest of the world on how to make sustainability happen in a resource-dominated northern city.

5:30

There I worked with a great many councillors and staff and was able to see the valuable work done by our municipal governments not just in Fort McMurray but across this province. After all, municipalities are the foundation of our province, and our government knows that relationships with our cities and towns are key to enhancing the quality of life of all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, the region I call home is one of the premier economic drivers of our great province, of Canada, and of the world. Our province enjoys the highest average weekly earnings, the highest employment growth, and the lowest unemployment rate in the country. The hard work being done in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo makes a significant contribution to the prosperity that Albertans enjoy today and will continue to benefit from for years to come.

As we heard in the Speech from the Throne, securing Alberta's economic future is one of our government's top priorities. To do so, we have committed to saving, to balancing the budget by 2013-14, and to finding innovative ways to maintain Alberta's long tradition of fiscal discipline. We have also committed to no new taxes and no tax increases so that Alberta families can continue to build financially sound futures and so businesses continue to attract investment and stay competitive globally. Mr. Speaker, it's easy to see where Fort McMurray fits into this, and going forward, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo will surely remain a leader in efforts to secure our province's economic future in the decades to come.

Mr. Speaker, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is so much more than just an economic powerhouse. It is a culturally diverse region and one where families are at the heart of the community fabric. As such, I was very pleased to hear the hon. Lieutenant Governor say in the Speech from the Throne that this government will continue to invest in families and communities. By investing in families and communities, we will ensure the continued well-being of those with whom our future rests.

In Budget 2012 our most critical public services – education, advanced education, health, and municipal services – are receiving stable funding in the form of three-year budget commitments. This is needed to ensure that our public institutions have the resources, services, and capabilities they need to continue providing the best services possible, that Albertans deserve.

Mr. Speaker, during the election I made a commitment, as did this government, to accountability and transparency. I'm very, very pleased that my fellow Fort McMurray MLA was named the Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation. I now look forward to working with my hon. colleague and friend from Fort McMurray-Conklin on these very important issues.

The first and most important commitment I made to the people of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo during the election, Mr. Speaker, was to open a fully staffed and operational constituency office in Fort McMurray, where residents can come for assistance with provincial services. As I have often said, the first step in accountability and transparency is accessibility to the constituents, and I'm committed to remaining accessible. That is why I'm so pleased today to announce that as of next week the constituency office of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, located in downtown Fort McMurray, will be open for business. In the weeks since the election we have already assisted dozens of individuals with various issues, and starting next week, we will be better equipped to assist many more.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, I was recently assigned a very important task by the Premier as special adviser to the Minister of Transportation. That task is to provide recommendations for highway 63 safety, and I would like to take a moment to address that before closing my statement. Since being assigned this task, I've done a great deal of research and have met with many stakeholders and individuals with valuable input, and I will continue to do so in the weeks ahead before we table the recommendations. It is important to know that highway safety in general across the province, but specifically on highway 63, is a top priority for this government, and I would like to thank the Premier for reaffirming that by assigning me this important task.

I want to remind Albertans through you, Mr. Speaker, that highway safety is not just about adding more roads or more lanes. My report will no doubt contain recommendations on the addition of passing lanes and a plan for the accelerated twinning of highway 63, but the approach will also focus on changing the culture on our highways. We must discourage bad drivers, and we must encourage good drivers. More passing lanes should not be an opportunity for racing on our highways. A twinned road should not be a blank cheque for speeders. Our highways have been plagued by overzealous drivers, racers, speeders, and impaired drivers, and we must take steps to reduce and eliminate these. That will also be a focus of my report because the safety of our citizens is the highest priority for all Albertans.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the vision of the Speech from the Throne is one where our government will pledge to continue to advance our world-leading resource stewardship. For more than half a century Alberta has been developing our oil and gas resources while coming up with new ways to minimize the impacts to our environment. It's no secret that the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo region has been one of the world leaders in this regard. This government will push those efforts into overdrive. One key piece will be AOSTRA 2, which is the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority. It will help us to develop technologies to shape the ever-changing global markets so we can sell them our products and our innovation. We will strive to become global energy leaders in every field from production to research and development.

Mr. Speaker, over the next four years there will be plenty of work to do as our province has the potential to reach greater heights than ever before. This government will meet the needs of Albertans in a way that prepares us for the long term. As the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo I am committed to playing an

important part in the building of this foundation. Likewise, I have committed and will remain committed to an honest, open, and transparent government, one that takes the twinning of highway 63 and the issues facing the Fort McMurray region very seriously.

In closing, I would again like to thank the constituents of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for giving me the opportunity to represent them and reiterate how proud I am to do so. I would also like to thank our hon. Premier for her vision, leadership, and hard work. I look forward to becoming an active member of her team for years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, I will recognize the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Rowe:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise in this House today to speak on behalf of my constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. First, I would like to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on your recent election.

I am both honoured and humbled to rise and address this Assembly for the first time on behalf of the citizens of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I am honoured to be chosen for the duty entrusted to me by my constituents and humbled to serve in this House, where many able and worthy representatives have come before me. I do have big shoes to fill.

I congratulate and applaud my predecessor, Richard Marz, on a lengthy and noteworthy career. When Mr. Marz stood where I stand today delivering his maiden speech in the Legislature, he referenced the English writer and clergyman Sydney Smith, who said, "It is the calling of great men, not so much to preach new truths, as to rescue from oblivion those old truths which it is our wisdom to remember and our weakness to forget." Mr. Speaker, I believe Mr. Marz lived those words and right to the end sought to return his party to the path of small "c" conservatism. I shall endeavour to continue his work here in this Legislature.

In fact, there is a long history of great MLAs from the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills region, including the youngest member, elected at the age of 23. Bob Clark later became the minister of youth and then education. He finished his 20-year career as an MLA as Leader of the Opposition.

Lastly, I recognize and thank another former MLA, Connie Osterman, who served the people of the region faithfully for more than a decade. Before her career as an MLA and minister began, she organized a group of farmers and landowners to campaign for changes to the Surface Rights Act and the Expropriation Act, changes finally made in the early 1970s. The work she did to protect landowners' rights should not be lost on this generation of MLAs. I thank Connie and her husband, Joe, for their support, and I am proud to call them friends.

I am gratified, Mr. Speaker, to represent the citizens of one of Alberta's larger rural ridings. Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is more than just an amalgamation of three towns having a common history. My riding relies on the hard work of hundreds of farm families who live between our 12 urban municipalities, where agriculture is not just a leading industry; it is the backbone of our economy and the bedrock upon which our communities are built. It is important to remember that long after the oil is gone, agriculture must and will remain.

5:40

Mr. Speaker, we have a vast and diverse riding that sweeps from Huxley in the northeast to Water Valley in the southwest and from

Eagle Hill in the northwest to Carbon in the southeast. Not only do we have 12 urban municipalities, but there are also three counties as well: the counties of Mountain View, Rocky View, and Kneehill. Our rural areas are strong, but the towns in the riding take a back seat to no one. We have our namesakes, but we also have wonderful communities like Carstairs, Trochu, and Linden. When the riding boundaries were redrawn, we welcomed a new southern boundary, and the riding now includes Crossfield, Irricana, and Beiseker, my home town. Crossfield is the heart of manufacturing and commercial industry in the riding.

We have unlimited potential in the riding of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and in the whole province of Alberta. Helping to unleash that potential is Olds College. Founded in 1913, the college today sits on a campus of more than 2,000 acres that includes a working farm. They have more than 30 degree programs and lead in innovation and agricultural technology. Recently I was honoured to attend the grand opening of a new program at the college. They became the first college in western Canada to offer a brewmaster program.

For those of you that are good at math, you would have realized that in 2013 the college will celebrate its 100th anniversary. The whole year will be a celebration of agriculture in rural Alberta that will feature major monthly events, peaking with the World Plowing Championship in August. I invite you to come down to the college and join me and the brewmasters for the historic events and enjoy the fruits of their labours. I also hope the government of Alberta will be forthcoming with support for this year-long celebration.

Like many of my constituency citizens, I was raised on a family farm. My parents farmed just west of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. I spent many an hour in the seat of my father's 1960s Massey tractor, with no power steering, and I learned a love for the land that endures to this day. Growing up where and when I did, it didn't take long for me to realize that our farm was too small to support two families. After high school I made the decision to attend the Saskatchewan Technical Institute and start my career as an electrician.

Like some before me and many afterwards, I left Saskatchewan for Calgary in 1969 to obtain full-time work. It proved to be one of the best decisions of my life. I spent the next 35 years as one of Alberta's hard-working tradesmen and small business owners. I saw the good times and the bad, the energy boom of the early '70s, and the awful aftermath of Trudeau's national energy program in the 1980s. During this period I met and married my wife, Carol. We have two children, Barbara and Steven, and two grandsons, Everett and Elliott.

Mr. Speaker, you may rest assured that public service is a calling I take seriously. I have served as mayor for the better part of a decade. I have learned that it takes more than a sense of duty to help your community succeed. It takes hard work, long hours, and determination. More importantly, it takes a heartfelt desire to listen to the people and the wisdom to act on their concerns.

My fellow members need to understand that the previous government's legislation impacting landowners' rights is not acceptable. The way in which landowner rights were being abused was just plain wrong. The lack of discussion with Albertans when creating the legislation was disappointing, to say the least. Landowners' rights are vital to Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. It is critical we respect Albertans' private property.

Continued tinkering with the health care system while wait times grow is not acceptable. This includes introducing new programs or clinics without proper consultation with the stakeholders or a completion of pilot projects. In the throne speech we heard about the continued commitment to family care clinics, but the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are very concerned about just where all the new doctors and nurses are going to come from. Even the AMA

has raised concerns about this project, but it seems that, like with land rights, the government is not that interested in listening. As a result of the lack of listening, for the first time in a generation my riding chose to elect an opposition MLA, giving me a solid mandate to raise their concerns. My election was no accident. The government broke the faith with my constituents as with many citizens across this great province.

The great news, my friends, is that it doesn't have to be this way. All of us, all 87 members of the 28th Assembly, have the opportunity to turn the page on politics as usual, which often leave the individual MLA muzzled and local communities wondering where their representation has gone. As my riding's MLA I pledge to provide my support and voice the ideas advocated by my constituents. As well, if a fellow MLA brings forward an idea supported by my constituents, I will support it in words and in action. The free vote I have as a member of the Wildrose ensures that good policy will win my support.

Mr. Speaker, I truly hope that others here today are willing to embrace this approach, which, I believe, will renew our democracy in ways that will benefit our children's children. Often it seems that the meaningful debate of vital interest to our province is locked away behind caucus and cabinet doors. By bringing that debate back into this Chamber, it will empower MLAs to do the job we were sent here to do.

As a former member of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association executive I'm keenly aware of how beneficial it can be when people of all political stripes work together. Furthermore, I believe it is in the interest of our province to remove the politics from our infrastructure funding system. We need a universal priority list of infrastructure projects, and we need to make that list publicly available. Whether it's the twinning of highway 63 or the highway 2 overpass for the town of Olds, the public deserves to know when these projects will be completed as well as when and why projects are overdue.

On the east side of my riding the cost of water is another factor standing in the way of economic development. I believe we must find a long-term solution to the high water rates paid by those connected to the Aqua 7 waterline. The public demands and deserves this basic accountability. As a true conservative I believe that a smaller, more-focused government is advantageous to its citizenry.

Mr. Speaker, I am more than willing to meet with any MLA in this Legislature to discuss issues of common concern. I will also oppose the government forcefully when necessary, but you may rest assured that I am less interested in posturing than I am in policy. I look forward to working with all 86 members of this Assembly and representing the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

The hon. Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation.

**Mr. Scott:** Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour I'd move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:50 p.m. to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]









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