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The 28th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, October 23, 2012

Issue 7

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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Denis, Hon. Jonathan, QC, Calgary-Acadia (PC),
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Donovan, Ian, Little Bow (W)
Dorward, David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC)
Drysdale, Hon. Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)
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Fawcett, Hon. Kyle, Calgary-Klein (PC)
Fenske, Jacquie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC)
Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (W)
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)
Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC),
Government House Leader
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)
Horne, Hon. Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)
Horner, Hon. Doug, Spruce Grove-St. Albert (PC)
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Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)
Jeneroux, Matt, Edmonton-South West (PC)
Johnson, Hon. Jeff, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (PC)
Johnson, Linda, Calgary-Glenmore (PC)
Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL),
Liberal Opposition Whip
Kennedy-Glans, Donna, Calgary-Varsity (PC)
Khan, Hon. Stephen, St. Albert (PC)
Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC)
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Lemke, Ken, Stony Plain (PC)
Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)
Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)
Lukaszuk, Hon. Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)
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Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
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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

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| Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations | Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services | Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms |
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| Jeff Johnson | Minister of Education |
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STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Amery
Deputy Chair: Mr. Bikman

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| 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

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

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| Anderson |
| Casey |
| Dorward |
| Eggen |
| Kubinec |
| Sandhu |
| Sherman |

Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

Chair: Mr. Allen
Deputy Chair: Mr. Luan

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| Blakeman |
| Dorward |
| Fenske |
| Johnson, L. |
| McDonald |
| Notley |
| Saskiw |
| Wilson |
| Young |

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Pastoor
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Forsyth

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

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Xiao
Deputy Chair: Mr. McDonald

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| Bikman |
| Blakeman |
| Brown |
| DeLong |
| Eggen |
| Leskiw |
| Quadri |
| Rogers |
| Wilson |

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Zwozdesky
Deputy Chair: Mr. Young

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| Calahasen |
| Dorward |
| Forsyth |
| Goudreau |
| Jablonski |
| Mason |
| Quest |
| Sherman |
| Smith |

Standing Committee on Private Bills

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

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

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Lemke

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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.

Tuesday, October 23, 2012

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Let us pray. Almighty God and great creator of our universe, as we begin our deliberations in this fall sitting of the Alberta Legislature, we ask for Your guidance as we do our work to benefit our province and its people and to benefit our country. Let us also be mindful of those who serve in our military and peacekeeping forces and who, in so doing, afford us the great privilege of serving as democratically elected representatives. Amen.

Hon. members, as is our custom, on the earliest sitting day possible we pay tribute to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met. In addition to our admiration and respect, there is also a great deal of gratitude to members of the families, who shared in the burdens of public office and public service. Today I would like to welcome members of the Fowler family and the Lougheed family who are seated in the Speaker's gallery and also in the members' gallery. I'll introduce them very shortly.

Mr. Richard S. Fowler
April 12, 1923, to July 8, 2012

The Speaker: Hon. Richard Fowler, known to his friends and family more often as Dick Fowler, served as the MLA for St. Albert from 1989 to 1993. During the 22nd Legislature Mr. Fowler served as Solicitor General, minister responsible for native affairs, Minister of Municipal Affairs, and Minister of Justice and Attorney General. In addition, he served on the Select Standing Committee on Public Affairs.

Mr. Fowler also served in local government, serving as mayor of St. Albert from 1965 to 1968 and again from 1980 to 1989. He also had a very distinguished legal career, having served as a judge in the Provincial Court of Alberta from 1994 to 2009. A Catholic school and a nearby park are already named in honour of his service to his community.

Hon. E. Peter Lougheed, PC, CC, AOE, QC
July 26, 1928, to September 13, 2012

The Speaker: The Hon. Peter Lougheed was first elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in the 1967 general election. He represented the constituency of Calgary-West until his resignation on February 28, 1986.

On September 10, 1971, he was sworn in as Alberta's 10th Premier. To date he is the only Leader of the Official Opposition to subsequently serve as Premier. He resigned as Premier effective November 1, 1985.

Upon becoming Premier, the Hon. Mr. Lougheed committed to the principle of open government. He changed how all members approached their roles by making the Assembly more open and more accessible. In March of 1972, for example, *Alberta Hansard* was officially established under his watch. For the first time Albertans all over the province could read and follow word for word what occurred in this Chamber. Also in 1972 Alberta became the first jurisdiction in Canada to provide live televised coverage of House proceedings.

A state memorial was recently held in honour of the Hon. Mr. Lougheed, and a special tribute was also held right here in our Legislature Building.

In a moment of silent prayer I would ask each of you to remember Mr. Lougheed and Mr. Fowler as each of you may have known them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.

Please be seated.

Hon. members, we have with us today members of the Lougheed and Fowler families. I'm going to break our custom and tradition to introduce them to you at this time. I will ask that they rise and remain standing as I call their names, and then we can welcome them all at the end with our generous applause.

Representing the Lougheed family is Stephen Lougheed, son of former Premier Peter Lougheed.

Representing the Fowler family are Dawne Fowler, spouse of former member Dick Fowler; James Fowler, son, and friend Brenda Raynard; Rose Marie Fowler, sister; Bill Fowler, brother, and wife, Irene; Judy Fowler, niece; and Marg Mrazek, a special family friend. As well, we welcome the following members of the Fowler family who are with us in spirit and are watching these proceedings today on television from their homes: Christine Fowler, daughter; Caroline Fowler, daughter; Cathy Doyle, daughter; Mary Ann, sister, and husband, Jake Willis, from Wetaskiwin along with their son Bruce, who is home on leave from the Middle East; Fred, brother, and his wife, Ann, from St. Albert; Uncle Bill and Aunt Hazel Dandeneau from Edmonton; stepdaughter Coralee and her children and foster children Shaelyn, Torrin, Brielle, Nicky, Stacey, Saneka, Tylys, and Eli in Raven, Alberta, as well as several other nieces, nephews, and friends.

Please join me in thanking all of them for their participation. Our tribute today goes out to them and to the late members' honour. [applause]

Thank you.

Hon. members, this being the first day of the fall sitting, I have a special treat that I know will very much brighten your day. Edmonton's own Pro Coro Canada singers will now sing a special arrangement of *O Canada* to commence our proceedings. I would ask you to stand now, please, and ordinarily I would also ask you to join in. Today, however, I would simply ask that you stand back and listen and enjoy the wonderful harmony that is about to unfold. As you're doing so, please reflect on what a great country we live in and how honoured we are to have brave men and women in our military who protect her and each and every one of us as well every single day.

Pro Coro Canada Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
 True patriot love in all thy sons command.
 Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
 Il sait porter la croix!
 Ton histoire est une épopée
 Des plus brillants exploits.
 God keep our land glorious and free!
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

[applause]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. Please be seated.

The Pro Coro group is normally 24 voices. I think at least 12 made it out here today.

1:40 Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two very distinguished Canadians who have dedicated their lives to leadership and service. Seated in your gallery are Brigadier General Christian Juneau, commander of land force western area, in charge of all regular and reserve army units from Vancouver Island to Thunder Bay, Ontario, who assumed this position on June 27 of this year; and area reserve Sergeant Major Chief Warrant Officer Gordon Crossley. As you know, the province of Alberta has a proud and storied history of support and appreciation for Canada's servicemen and women. We are honoured to be home to four active military bases and many reservist units, one of which I am proud to still be associated with. As a government we are fully committed to supporting those in the Canadian Forces as well as their families throughout their career.

Mr. Speaker, these gentlemen lead countless courageous men and women who have given so much to their country and are shining examples of service and sacrifice to all of us. It is for this reason that we are especially pleased that Brigadier General Juneau and Chief Warrant Officer Crossley are able to join us here today as we continue to carry out the democratic process that they are committed to defend. I would ask our visitors, who have risen in your gallery, to receive the very warm and traditional welcome from this grateful Assembly and from a most grateful province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly three special members of the province's Blackfoot community seated in your gallery. Arthur Calling Last is an elder and current member of the sacred Horn Society. Elder Calling Last, who was just inducted into the Lethbridge racing association's hall of fame, is a self-trained artist who takes great pride in his long involvement as a trainer and owner of racehorses here in Alberta. He is joined today by his wife, Loretta, who I am told is always supportive of her husband's cultural endeavours.

Allan Pard is a Piikani elder who currently serves as senior adviser to Aboriginal Relations and is an invaluable resource to me. Allan has been with the Alberta government for more than 20 years and continues to be an active and committed steward of Blackfoot history and culture. Allan also trains and races horses on his ranch in the Piikani Nation south of Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, I invite them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: [Remarks in Blackfoot] My special way of saying welcome. Everything is going smoothly so far.

Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House on this special day when we honour Richard Fowler another one of my predecessors, Mary O'Neill. Mary served as MLA for St. Albert, winning her first election by 16 votes in 1997. She left the Assembly in 2004 but never quit working hard for Albertans. Mary has been a role model and mentor to me and many others in the community of St. Albert and around the province. She is seated in your gallery, and

I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Our first introduction of guests will be performed by the hon. Premier.

Ms Redford: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you a very special guest. Peter Mansbridge is an award-winning journalist and author and a Canadian icon. A little known fact: his father was recruited to Alberta from Ottawa to be the Deputy Minister of Health for Helen Hunley when she was the Minister of Health under Premier Peter Lougheed. For more than 40 years Canadians from coast to coast have relied on Peter's experience, integrity, and insight to stay engaged and informed. Through our radios and from our living rooms so many of us have shared with him the triumphs as well as the heartbreak of events that have shaped history, shaped our world, and shaped our country.

You are a great Canadian, Peter. Have a pleasant stay here in Alberta. Now I'd ask everyone, after you rise, to please give you a warm welcome to this House.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very special group of seniors who are members of the Heritage Senior Stop-in Centre in my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. They are seated in both the members' and public galleries today. The Heritage Senior Stop-in Centre started as a coffee group of six people who used to meet at the old Heritage Mall here in Edmonton in the early 1990s. In 2001 on their own initiative they moved to their current site in the Blue Quill Shopping Centre. Today they are here to view the proceedings of the Assembly. I'd ask Dr. Munawar Chaudhry, group leader; Ruth Gellert; and 22 other members of the organization to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, we have three school groups. I hope we can get all the intros in before 1:50.

The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two groups of grade 6 students from Woodhaven middle school in Spruce Grove. They are truly a bright and energetic group of students who participated in your mock Legislature this morning. They passed no-bullying legislation and no-homework legislation. They are accompanied by teachers Mrs. April Klueh and Mr. Graeme Webber and parent helpers Mrs. Melissa MacDonald, Mrs. Olivia MacMillan, Mrs. Heidi Chadwick, and Mrs. Michelle Spring. They are seated in both of your galleries, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

Mr. Young: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Glori

Meldrum and Laurie Szymanski. Glori is the founder and chair of Little Warriors. As a sexual abuse survivor she has been creating awareness for the treatment and prevention of child sexual abuse.

I'd also like to acknowledge a school from the constituency of Edmonton-Riverview, l'école Notre-Dame, sitting in the gallery over here. Bienvenue.

Also, from the University of Alberta we have the students' union president here today, Colten Yamagishi, and students' union councillor Mike McGinn. I would like them to 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 to members of the Assembly Mrs. Mills' class from Mundare. They are very excited to be here participating in the School at the Legislature. They will be debating whether there is enough gym time available to students. With them today is their teacher, Adrienne Mills, and three parents: Mrs. Doris Bradley, Mrs. Bernice Komarnisky, and Mrs. Jennifer Larrivee. Would they please stand so that we could greet them.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the new executive director of the Alberta Liberal Party, Gerald McEachern. Gerald hails from Ontario, where he ran northern Ontario's largest advertising agency and fought the Mike Harris Conservative government to win a full campus rural medical school for northwest Ontario, a school that we could surely use in Alberta. In the last eight years he's been living in New Brunswick doing economic and organizational development. He will soon be joined by his wife and four children. In his six short weeks in Alberta the Liberals are back in the black, we've gone green, we've fused Liberal and Alberta values in our new logo, Liberalberta. I'd like Gerald to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:50

Statement by the Speaker

Conduct of Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we begin question period, please be reminded that each question and response must not exceed 35 seconds and that your remarks are to be directed through the chair, supplementary questions must not be preceded by any preamble, and finally the language you use should be temperate and parliamentary at all times. So I will ask that each of you strive to uphold the civility and decorum that befits this hallowed Chamber.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: With that, to show us the way, I'll ask the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition for her first question.

MLA Remuneration

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Delighted to be back.

Mr. Speaker, I believe people are only as good as their word. During the last election the Premier promised – promised – to end gold-plated transition allowances for MLAs, but just this past Friday PCs on the Members' Services Committee did the opposite. They recommended not only giving themselves a

transition allowance but also a richer payment to RRSPs as well. The Premier says it's not her fault. She says she was caught by surprise and that she never told her caucus whip to slip this latest cash grab through the committee. Can the Premier explain to Albertans why her caucus is ready to break another election promise?

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'd like to just add that no report from the Members' Services Committee has yet come to this Chamber. I'll leave it up to the Premier, however, if she wishes to make a general comment.

Ms Redford: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think your comment is quite specific. This is a committee of the Legislative Assembly. Members who sit on that committee are fully able to explore the work that they do, as I understand it. My understanding is that the work of that committee was to review the recommendations of the Major report. I understand that that's what they did, and I don't understand that it's my role to direct the members of the committee to do anything.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the PC members of the committee want taxpayers to cover 100 per cent of their RRSPs. That means, in effect, that MLAs would get an 8 per cent, or nearly a thousand dollars a month, pay increase. Now, of course, a thousand dollars a month: that sounds kind of familiar as a number. Is this replacement money for the no-meet committee?

The Speaker: Again, hon. members, I would caution you about going down this line. No report has yet come forward from this committee; neither has any recommendation formally surfaced just yet.

Hon. Premier, I'll leave it to you if you wish to comment. If not, I'll invite the hon. leader to go on to the third question.

Ms Redford: Answered.

Ms Smith: I think, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to see a lot of that this session.

As angry as Albertans were about the no-meet committee and the payments to a few MLAs, this thousand dollars a month would end up going to all 87 MLAs. Can the Premier put an end to the immediate game playing and order her members to do the right thing and give Alberta taxpayers a break?

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hope I don't have to remind the Assembly or any future questioners again. There is no report yet that has come forward to this Assembly. There is a process. Let's try and stick to it.

Hon. Premier, if you wish to comment, I'll leave it up to you.

If not, I'll move to the Leader of the Official Opposition for her second main set of questions, please.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, in the most recent fiscal update we learned that the deficit is \$3 billion. This is exactly where we warned that this government was headed even though throughout the election they said that we were wrong. On Friday, once again, the PCs on the Members' Services Committee voted themselves an 8 per cent pay raise – that's 8 per cent – about \$1,000 per month, by having taxpayers fill up their RRSPs. Will the Premier stop grabbing taxpayer money and commit to getting spending under control?

The Speaker: I think this is a similar vein of questioning, hon. leader, so please revisit the question, but I'll invite whoever on the government side wishes to make a comment to please do so.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, it's been a very interesting summer. It's been a very interesting September and October. In fact, I've had the opportunity to do budget consultations with Albertans across this province. We had open public consultations which we invited members of the opposition and members of this side of the House to attend. I want to commend the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for attending one of those. He was the only one that did.

It was very apparent in those consultations, Mr. Speaker, that spending wisely is very important to Albertans. That's where results-based budgeting will be a true effort by this government to get value for money.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Premier is committed to an 8 per cent pay increase for her MLAs, should we expect that government employees are also going to be getting an 8 per cent pay increase this year?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, as you have so rightly said – and I'm sure eventually the Leader of the Official Opposition will understand – this is not a committee of the government. This is a committee of the Legislature that at some point will make a decision that we as MLAs will consider.

We made it very clear as a government and have stood by the fact that we do not support a transition allowance. We will not support a transition allowance. We have made no commitment in any way as a government to any increase with respect to MLAs, nor should we. That's why we have a Members' Services Committee. It is the job of MLAs, not the government.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would also remind you that questions ought not be speculative in nature. Bearing that in mind, please proceed.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The idea of employees – and, yes, we do actually work for Albertans – deviously getting taxpayers to cover 100 per cent of RRSP contributions is just something that would not happen in the real world. Would the Premier now admit that having her people raise this in the Members' Services Committee was wrong?

Speaker's Ruling Hypothetical Questions

The Speaker: Hon. members, let me say for the third or the fourth time, please: don't deal in speculation; don't deal in something that is hypothetical, something that has not yet come forward in the proper process way. So let us move on to the next question, please.

Leader of the Official Opposition, your third main set of questions, please.

Provincial Fiscal Reporting

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is in deficit trouble. That's pretty clear now. The Associate Minister of Finance shocked his colleagues when he actually told the truth and admitted that the government would only attempt to run a balanced operating budget this year while taking out debt to pay for everything else. Then the real Minister of Finance tried to reassure Albertans by explaining that this was actually a legitimate

way to balance the books. Finally, the Premier tried to smooth things over with what looked like a redefinition of the word "balanced." Albertans want to know the real truth. When is the budget, all of it, going to be balanced?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is my purview: to bring forward a budget based on my consultations with Albertans, which we've done. I've already mentioned that. I think Albertans can rest assured that when we put forward the budget next year, it's going to include the priorities of Albertans. It's going to include funding for our capital plan, and our commitment is that it will be balanced.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, this government is also running an honesty deficit. The last fiscal update avoided telling the entire story, even though by law, by the government's own law, it has to. What the minister did last time, not showing all the numbers, might even be illegal. Will the Finance minister commit to a complete and full and honest update next time?

The Speaker: Let us remember the 35-second rule and no preambles, please. Let's continue.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take exception to some of the accusations, frankly, that might have been thrown across there. We have a very high standard of reporting. In fact, what we're doing is making it better. We are going to give Albertans a comparison of what our actual is to what our original budget was. We did that in the first quarter. We believe that we met the terms of the legislation in what was released in that first quarter. We will be sitting down with the Auditor General and the audit committee, as we already have, and talking about further refinements to our quarterly updating. In fact, we did not decline any requests for information, including from the opposition.

Ms Smith: Well, we'd like to see a full update next time.

Mr. Speaker, given that the deficit hole is huge and only getting bigger and given that we see no evidence yet of any effort to fix the problem and given that energy prices remain low and the Canadian dollar remains high, how will this minister reduce spending to restore a little confidence that he actually knows what he's doing?

2:00

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that in the 60 some-odd-plus meetings I've had with captains of industry in our province, with CFOs of corporations, with chambers of commerce, they are very confident of this government's ability to move forward and deliver on what Albertans' priorities are, and I feel quite confident. We've also done in-year savings expectations. We have increased them. If the hon. member had been listening when we did the first-quarter update, she would have got this, that we are going to be looking for in-year savings of more than half a billion dollars. We've asked departments to review all of their capital spending, and in fact we've made some adjustments in that regard.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition.

Health Services Local Decision-making

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to be back.

An internal memo obtained by CBC indicates that the new AHS Board chair, Stephen Lockwood, has the full backing of the

province to off-load its responsibilities onto local hospitals without consultation or a clear plan. This has left senior management scratching their heads and wondering who's in charge: their executive, the Health minister, or the Premier? To the Premier: is your interference an admission that the government's AHS experiment has failed?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I was quite pleased today in my scrum before question period to be asked exactly this question by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and I have to say that I was pleased to hear the good news because what we've heard from the opposition and what we've heard from Albertans is that they want to make sure that health care is delivered in our communities. The best way to do that is to keep local managers and health advisory councils involved, so I think it's fantastic that local communities are going to be directly involved in consulting and delivering on health care in their communities.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The right thing done wrong could cause problems.

Given that the Health Quality Council recommended against further shuffling of AHS management deck chairs and recommended a focus on reducing hospital occupancy rates to 85 per cent by improving home care and long-term care, why is the Premier ignoring Dr. John Cowell's advice?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing about running a health care system that's as large as the one that we have is that you can't do what the hon. member is suggesting and focus on one issue at a time. We are at the moment making a commitment, and have, through the chair of Alberta Health Services to work with local communities to do exactly what local communities have said, and that includes family care clinics and better support for long-term care. It's going to allow for greater operational flexibility, for lower costs, for opportunity for community engagement, and it will create an engaged and an innovative approach to health care, including long-term care, for all Albertans.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, there's a reason they call this question period and not answer period.

Given that the AHS performance dashboard from June 2012 shows that the government is warehousing 467 seniors in hospitals and that another thousand are still in limbo, awaiting placement, why is the Premier yet again renovating the management structure instead of renovating her government's failed home care and long-term care policy?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, the exciting thing about health care is that you can have an integrated approach to resolving problems, and I have to say that this question does not suggest that the hon. member actually understands that. We know that it's possible to develop innovative approaches to access to health care and long-term care such as the work that our Minister of Health has done in conjunction with community leaders in support of decisions that are being made in Alberta Health Services to create better opportunities, and I thank him for that.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. leader of the New Democratic opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie.

XL Foods Inc. Beef Recall

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When news of the E coli crisis at XL Foods broke, the Premier responded by telling Albertans to keep eating beef even though E coli can cause death and serious disabilities, especially for children. Even as the Premier was giving Albertans cooking advice, the recall on the contaminated meat was further expanded. Will the Premier admit that she jeopardized the health of Albertans by encouraging them to eat a product that was deemed unsafe for human consumption?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I will not do that, but what I will do is say that the hon. member jeopardized the health of the beef industry by fearmongering and suggesting that Alberta beef is not safe to eat, and . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Premier has not concluded her remarks.

Ms Redford: Thank you. On that very day when I met with beef producers, we talked about the fact that the incident at XL was an unfortunate incident. There is no doubt that the CFIA took appropriate steps, and we had to make sure that our minister worked with the federal government to get that plant open. Good news today, Mr. Speaker: we achieved our goal.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This Premier clearly puts the health of the beef industry ahead of the health of Albertans.

Given that the federal inspections have failed to protect Albertans and other Canadians from tainted beef and given that the federal budget contains major cuts to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, when will this Premier finally stand up to her federal cousins in Ottawa and demand adequate funding for food safety in Canada?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, one thing I will say that I'm very proud of is our provincially regulated food processing in this province. It works, and it protects public safety. One of the things that we have already done in this province is taken more responsibility for food regulation and inspection than in other parts of the country. Our record stands for that. We are primarily concerned about public health in this province. We protect public health in this province. We've had a record of doing that and will continue to do it.

Mr. Mason: The Premier's words are not matched by her actions, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the health of Albertans, not to mention the health of the beef industry, depends on preventing another beef contamination crisis, why has the Premier failed Albertans by refusing to support a public inquiry into the failures of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency at the XL plant?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, I believe that there are always times when we can learn from opportunities. This was a very unfortunate incident. It certainly impacted Albertans in many ways. We've seen already from discussions that our minister of agriculture has had today with the federal minister that steps are already in place to learn lessons from this experience. There is no doubt that there are lessons to be learned. We will take them seriously. We will share some of our best practices with the federal government, and that is how we will resolve this, not through a public inquiry.

Provincial Fiscal Position

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, in 2005 Alberta had a very proud moment, of course, and that's when Premier Klein announced that Alberta was debt free. I remember the photograph – I think we all do – of Ralph sitting beside a large cheque with “paid in full” emblazoned right across the front of it. Now, just seven years later, a report by the well respected Macdonald-Laurier Institute says that Alberta is now the most likely province in all of Canada to face an EU-style debt crisis because of its high spending and overreliance on oil revenues. Minister, will you commit that you will not return Alberta to debt in order to finance your government's spending habits?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that as someone who purports to understand the financial situation of this province, the hon. member would not rely on that particular study. That particular study's methodology I would call into question. I would also suggest to you that nowhere in this country is there a province that has net financial assets except right here. We are in a net positive financial position. We are going to stay in a net positive financial position, and we will maintain a triple-A credit rating that is gold plated, the envy of all of Canada.

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I hope that minister knows that his friend Jim Dinning sits on the advisory council of that study. He's the guy who balanced the budget before. You may remember him.

Mr. Speaker, given that over the last few weeks this government has clearly been floating a trial balloon, that they're looking at using all kinds of different debt instruments to pay for tens of billions in new spending, will the minister commit that Alberta will not take on new financial liabilities just so this Premier can keep up her ongoing spending spree?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned one of the previous Finance ministers in this House, Mr. Dinning. I'm very pleased that I do consider Mr. Dinning a friend. In fact, I had one of my sit-down chats with the captains of industry with Mr. Dinning, and I can honestly say that Mr. Dinning is a hundred per cent in favour of the approach that we're going to take. Mr. Dinning is also a member of the Canada West Foundation. In fact, I would tell the hon. member that he should look at the legislation in this House. It is against the law for the government of Alberta to run an operating deficit, and we will not borrow for operating.

2:10

Mr. Anderson: Balance the operating budget. Way to go. Fantastic.

Mr. Speaker, let me ask what so many Albertans are asking right now. With oil revenues at record levels and with the oil patch pumping out so many jobs that every Albertan is employed because oil prices are so high, how can you possibly find a way to continually run record deficits, vaporize our savings, and now return us into debt? It takes real talent to mess things up this bad, and you've got talent, sir.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, it simply shows the ignorance of the financial situation of this province. We are in the best financial position of any jurisdiction, I would argue, in North America. We have net assets of close to \$12,000 per person in this province versus net debt in every other jurisdiction in this country. We have some of the best service delivery in the world, I would argue. We are a growing province. We have 3.7 per cent growth this year, leading the nation. Indeed, next year we will lead the nation as

well. We will continue to manage this province's finances prudently and effectively for all Albertans.

XL Foods Inc. Beef Recall

(continued)

Ms Fenske: Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, September brought about the largest beef recall due to E coli in our country's history. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency subsequently suspended operations at the XL Foods plant in Brooks. I understand that today the same agency has reinstated the plant's operating licence. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Could he please tell me: what does this mean to Alberta's food system?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, this has been good news for us today. We've been waiting for it for a while. It's good news for the people in Brooks and certainly for the workers there. When you have a community with 2,000 workers and 12,000 or so people, obviously it's a huge impact when they can't work. It's also very important for our producers, the people to whom I am responsible for reporting. So we're very happy, but this is just the beginning of a process. It's going to take some time before everything is up and running completely.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how can consumers be assured that beef products coming out of that plant are safe to consume?

Mr. Olson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that in the last number of weeks there is no plant in North America that has had more scrutiny than this one. When the CFIA has been very deliberate in getting us back to the point of recertification, I think that we can have lots of confidence that everything is being watched very carefully. In fact, I talked to Minister Ritz earlier today. He told me that for the time being there's going to be extra scrutiny of the plant until they're satisfied.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what does this mean for Alberta beef products moving to the United States, our largest trading partner?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to stress that this was one plant – a very large plant, a very important plant, but it was one plant – that had the U.S. border shut it down. All other plants in Alberta and across the country were still delivering beef across the border. Minister Ritz and I talked about that today, and we are focusing on that. One of our next steps is collaborating to make sure that we can get that border open for the XL products as soon as possible.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Dealings with Government by Former Ministers

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The stench of entitlement with this 41-year-old out-of-touch PC government is overwhelming. This past summer we saw that this government is more

interested in padding the wallets of their government family than fixing the real fiscal mess they've put us in. Evan Berger, after getting turfed by voters of Livingstone-Macleod, was rewarded with a fat, six-figure patronage appointment. Not only does this fly in the face of our ethics legislation; it is wrong and reeks of cronyism. Wildrose believes in accountability. Will this government do the right thing and, like the voters in his own riding, turf Evan Berger?

The Speaker: Hon. minister of agriculture, it wasn't directed to anyone in particular, but if you wish to answer, please do.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll certainly be happy to answer that question.

First of all, Mr. Berger had a distinguished career as an MLA. He is a logical person to be involved working for the department in terms of helping develop policy because of his expertise and because of his experience.

Now, when there was a discussion about Mr. Berger being hired to work for the department, the obvious first question was: does the Ethics Commissioner approve? All steps were taken to have this approved by the Ethics Commissioner before any step was taken to hire him.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Evan Berger's position as a senior policy adviser never existed before, that there was no job description, that there was no open job competition, and that even Evan Berger didn't know what his job was, could the agriculture minister please explain how this obvious conflict of interest ever passed the smell test?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I would have expected that this hon. member would know that the Public Service Act does allow for the hiring of employees of government without a competition when they have specialized skills, specialized knowledge, and that's certainly the case with Mr. Berger.

Also, the Conflicts of Interest Act is written in a way that does allow for the discretion of the Ethics Commissioner. If there was no discretion for the Ethics Commissioner, why would the provision be there in the act? He simply exercised his discretion, and certain members opposite, I know, have commented numerous times on how we should respect the decisions of the Ethics Commissioner.

The Speaker: Your final supplemental, hon. member.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Mr. Berger admitted in his own local paper that he'll likely run in the next election, will this government simply admit that it provided Mr. Berger with a soft landing so he can campaign on the taxpayer dime for, surely, another failed election bid?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I have over a thousand employees that work for my department. I don't know how many of them are interested in running in the next election. There could be dozens – I don't know – and that's not my concern. My concern is whether the department performs the work that it's supposed to do.

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

Highway 63

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to stand here today and ask my very first question in question period as the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. Highway 63 is a very vital transportation corridor for the continued economic growth of this province, and my constituents have significant concerns about their safety when they're travelling on it. Recent announcements on the acceleration of the twinning are very much appreciated by my constituents, but we know it will still take several more years. To the Minister of Transportation: what is the government doing in the meantime to educate, promote, and create a safer driving culture on highway 63?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo: we have been busy. We have increased signage, passing lanes. We've worked with industry to inform them and encourage their employees to behave in a safe manner. We've done our best to educate the public as we wait for the safe twinning of highway 63, which will be complete in 2016. The public expects strong government action to look after traffic and keep Albertans safe, and that is exactly what this government is providing them.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speed and dangerous driving habits are known to be a main cause of fatal collisions. To the same minister: will the government consider a significant increase in maximum penalties to help deter these offences?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, that's a good question, and I have to tell you that the government is looking hard at all options. One thing we do understand is that speeding is one of the main causes of accidents, collisions, and injuries to Albertans. We are committed to addressing serious speeding. We certainly have added law enforcement along that road. We have a good fine and penalty regimen. We haven't committed to other legislative changes at this point – we're considering all those – but we have beefed up our efforts, as is very apparent by the actions of this government.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental is to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. I recently read that the opposition wants eight new police officers on patrol on 63, but your department has already committed to 16. Can the minister advise this House when these 16 officers will be on the ground patrolling the highway 63 corridor?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to advise that there are already four new officers as of the end of August of this year already patrolling, and there will be an additional 12 officers – that's a total of 16 officers – at the beginning of January. I don't know why the Wildrose wants to reduce law enforcement here. I've read their report, and I look over and over again. Maybe it's because they didn't mention in

that report that they had consulted any law enforcement officers. Just a thought.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, you rose on a point of order?

Mr. Saskiw: Yes.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Environmental Monitoring

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. After a working group of experts to provide advice was established, they recommended an environmental monitoring agency be set up, but the environment minister then needed a management board to direct the creation of this agency. Still with me? Big promises, little results. To the Minister of Environment and SRD: how is the process more transparent when the cabinet took from June to October to review, vet, and – who knows? – rewrite this report before the minister released it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, this process has been very open and transparent. We received the report at the end of June, and we had the press release a week ago. Certainly, the writers of the report were very open in saying how quickly government responded to this and how quickly we responded to taking action on all of the recommendations, so the writers of the report themselves really commending us for the quick action that we're taking on this report.

Ms Blakeman: Yes, I know. Hand-chosen patronage is certainly arm's length.

Can the minister point out exactly where in the current budget the funding for the expert group and the management board can be found, and where and when exactly will the \$50 million come from to run this agency? Where's the money?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier, when I was appointed to this ministry, the first thing I did was to make sure that we would have money in our budget, \$3 million to be there, for the writing of the report and the implementation of this. As Mr. Speaker and as Albertans know, the industry has come forward as well and made commitments with regard to funding this, up to \$50 million each year for a maximum of three years. The money is there, and we have made a commitment under the leadership of this Premier – and so has industry – to make sure the funding is in place for environmental monitoring.

Ms Blakeman: Well, send me a copy of the budget with that \$3 million underlined because I'd like to see it.

Back to the same minister: why doesn't the minister see the conflict of interest created here when industry is supposed to fund and self-monitor, and if noncompliant, then it becomes: the polluter pays? How is this not a conflict of interest?

Mrs. McQueen: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's quite interesting. Those that were critics of ours, people like Dr. Schindler, who were

quite critical of us in the process before last week, are coming forward saying very positive things about, one, making sure that the financing is in place, making sure that there's an arm's-length board that will be reporting on the science and the data that will be arm's length, and making sure that we've put in the funding with regard to this. Our critics have come forward, brought things forward, and now are saying that this is the way that they see it going forward. Very positive comments from that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Environmental Monitoring of the Oil Sands

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say that not all the comments have been positive. Yesterday a coalition of oil sands investors released a report which stated, "The current approach to development, particularly the management of the environmental and social impacts, threatens the long-term viability of the oil sands as an investment." To the minister of environment: will she admit that her government's hapless management of environmental impacts just jeopardizes the sustainability of Alberta's oil sands?

Mrs. McQueen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about the things that we have been doing in this province with regard to land-use planning, about moving forward, the work that has gone on with environmental monitoring, the work that we've done with regard to the plan for the lower Athabasca region coming into effect September 1, which puts limits and triggers in place, making sure that we have triggers in place before we would ever hit any limits in this province.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, given that a report for the upcoming Shell hearing predicts approved oil sands developments will threaten certain species' habitats by up to 60 per cent and given that Albertans have waited years for regional biodiversity rules that are still MIA, will the minister admit that her government's long-standing failure to act threatens both the environment and the sustainable economic development of that region? When is the work ever going to get started?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's the whole point of land-use planning and regional planning and cumulative effects in the regions. We make sure that those limits are put in place, that there are triggers in place, and that as we develop the oil sands and we reclaim any areas, we've put aside as well good habitat space for caribou and other species. That is the point about regional planning, long-term planning to balance good economic growth in this province with strong environmental leadership.

Ms Notley: Well, the biodiversity limits are not in place. They're not developed. They're not there.

Given that it's been two years since the government's monitoring programs were discredited and that we are still years away from a credible replacement actually existing on the ground, how exactly does the minister expect development approvals ongoing right now to be remotely connected to the long-term sustainability of that region?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is the whole point about the lower Athabasca regional plan, to make sure that we're developing with regard to those limits. We are working now. The plan came into effect September 1. We are now working with area groups and stakeholders in that region to develop those. This is what long-term planning is about, involving Albertans and making sure that we set those limits and triggers so that as we develop the oil sands, we are thinking far down the road.

Speaker's Ruling Preambles to Supplementary Questions

The Speaker: Hon. members who have questions yet to be asked, could I just remind you to revisit the rule about preambles? I'll make a statement about that later. I know it's day one, and some of us may have forgotten, but there have been at least 12 violations. I've let some of them go because they were, mercifully, quite short, but some are getting longer and longer. Please, let's abide by the rules that you yourselves have made.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by the Member for Calgary-South East.

Health Services Local Decision-making (continued)

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose puts Albertans first. This means a local, patient-centred approach to health care. Our new AHS chair, Stephen Lockwood, agrees and is pushing forward for more hospital-based decision-making, acknowledging that it creates happier staff and better patient care. But just last month the Health minister shot down the idea of decentralized decision-making, saying: we are committed to the system in place, and there will be no restructuring. Albertans are wondering who is in charge. Will the minister finally admit that centralization has failed Albertans?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government some time ago set the structure for the Alberta health system as one health region to serve the province. Unlike the member opposite, who would clearly like to see us return to the 1960s and '70s, an era when hospital boards competed with one another to provide the same resources to the same people, this government is committed to and is supported by a board at Alberta Health Services that is doing exactly what we asked them to do, find better and more effective ways to support local health care workers and local facilities by giving them the tools they need to do their job, and they're doing that very well.

Mrs. Forsyth: Given that the AHS CEO, Chris Eagle, in a memo to staff agrees with the Wildrose again that we need to reduce the burden of bureaucracy, when will this minister start addressing the serious problem of the massive bureaucracy so money can start reaching the patients and the front lines?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the board of Alberta Health Services, supported by senior management, including Dr. Eagle, have done a very good job of reconnecting health care with local communities. The local health advisory councils, which serve the province, are doing an excellent job of having conversations at the local level, providing feedback to the board of Alberta Health Services on the quality of the services that are provided, on their ability to access those services, and some very valuable input to planning for the future. This is a health delivery organization that is connected to the community. It is providing

equitable and excellent results across the province, and we will support them to continue to do that work.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That answer fits nicely into my next question. Given that Chris Eagle in the memo fails to address the serious issue of staff engagement, which according to the most recent AHS quarterly update is at an all-time low – not high, Minister, low – will the minister finally do the right thing, listen to the Wildrose yet again, and expand the health inquiry to include the bullying and intimidation of our health care workers?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think my answer will fit very nicely with the second part of the hon. member's question. The answer, once again, is no.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East, followed by the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

School Construction in Calgary

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be here today and on behalf of my constituents of Calgary-South East ask a real question. I mentioned in my maiden speech in the spring session that in my constituents are educated above average for this province. [interjections] They either carry a degree or a postsecondary certificate. It's clear that they value education. [interjections] Calgary-South East is also unique in that it's projected to foster close to 40 per cent of . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, please. No interjections. The member has the floor.

Hon. member, I'm about to re-give the floor to you. I'm just asking for others to please quell the interjections. Start over, please.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mentioned in my maiden speech in the spring session that Calgary-South East is above average in the province when it comes to postsecondary education and degrees. It's clear that they value their education. [interjections] Calgary-South East is also unique in that it's projected to foster close to 40 per cent of all the city's growth and development in the coming years. It's possible that our population in Calgary-South East could grow from 53,000 today to well over 130,000 by 2019. The growth pressures are significant, and we're feeling it in our schools. Both separate and public schools in my constituency and surrounding area are at capacity, and my constituents are very concerned, to say the least. To the very hon. Minister of Education. I hear daily from my constituents about the concern with growth pressures in the schools in their communities. Can you tell us what you're hearing and what you intend to do about the issue?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. J. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have seen first-hand the growth pressures in southeast Calgary and in other areas of Alberta, and I can tell you that I've been there with the hon. member touring schools. There's not a day that goes by that he doesn't remind me about the growth pressures down in his area. I'm happy to say that this government has responded. There are six new schools in Calgary this year, and there will be more coming.

We have elected the right Premier. Albertans have elected the right Premier to respond to this. We've got a Premier that wants to

invest in families and in communities, and that's what we're going to continue to do.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: Hon. members, some members in the House are asking questions for the first time and need some reminding. The first reminder is to please not interject when people are asking the question so that the chair can hear the question and determine whether it's able to be received or not. That would help immensely. Please let's be fair to all other members and listen to their questions.

School Construction in Calgary *(continued)*

Mr. Fraser: To the same minister: when can we anticipate an announcement of a groundbreaking for a high school in southeast Calgary?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I know that these Albertans and many Albertans are eager to learn about the next round of capital projects. I can tell you that we're working with the 62 different school boards, that have all submitted their capital plans to us. We're weeding through those, and we're working with the ministers of Infrastructure and Treasury Board and Finance to try and look at those and weigh them across the province, which is not an easy job to do, and as well to try to combine those with potential other projects like libraries and municipal projects.

Mr. Fraser: To the same minister. The government has made a commitment to families to make sure that they can focus on their kids' education, not buildings and transportation. When can we expect an announcement about middle schools, junior highs, and elementary schools, when they'll be put in the ground?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, we know these projects are important not only to this constituency but to the whole province. The consideration of these projects is well under way, especially in light of the fact that our budgeting process is well under way right now, and that plays into this very importantly. It's my hope that we will be able to have announcements in the coming months, but all I can say to these concerned families and concerned Albertans is: stay tuned. When we do come forward with capital plans and capital projects, I know we'll have their support.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, followed by the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

Berry Creek Reservoir

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Berry Creek reservoir is a body of water vital to the farming area of the special areas around Sunnynook, where water is a scarce and valuable commodity. Several weeks ago the spill gate for the reservoir failed, leading to a dramatic loss of water. The majority of the water has already gone downstream, causing a catastrophic impact on the local ecology and the financial well-being of hard-working Alberta farmers. All my questions are to the minister of SRD. When will the province speed up its lacklustre response to this local disaster?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know the primary function of this reservoir is certainly to supply water for

irrigation and for farmers in the area. Our officials have been working with local constituents, your constituents, in that area to make sure that we are doing the repairs to the outlet gate. We continue to work with them in as fast a fashion as we can and in making sure that they are aware of the issues as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we hold local businesses, individuals, and corporations accountable when they are responsible for environmental disasters, will this out-of-touch PC government accept responsibility for this environmental disaster created by their government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are making sure that for the gate that has been broken, we're taking action and we are correcting that action. We are also making sure with regard to the fishery in the area that we're opening up the fishery to all Albertans and Canadians so that for a low licence of \$5 those folks as well have access to the fish in there. We are doing everything we can in as timely fashion as we can to make sure that this is looked after.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that the province has affected both the environment and the pocketbooks of farmers negatively, is the minister prepared to prioritize funds needed for the reclamation and rehabilitation of this critical body of water and to assist farmers who have been affected by this officially induced disaster?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are working with the local farmers and constituents in that area. We continue to do that, and our first priority is to make sure that we get these repairs done in as timely a fashion as we can. Certainly, we're always open to having discussions with Albertans and constituents in that area.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, followed by the Member for Little Bow.

Agriculture Policy Framework

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past year agricultural producers in Alberta have had access to strong and effective business risk management programs. Now, it's my understanding that the agriculture ministers from across Canada, including our own, agreed to a new five-year Growing Forward policy framework at their annual meeting. My questions are to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. What will this new Growing Forward framework support?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the general answer is that it will continue to support everything that has been in the previous Growing Forward agreement. There are two basic pieces to the agreement. One is the business risk management programs like AgriStability, AgriInvest, and so on. The other piece of it is the strategic initiatives. We did sign the umbrella agreement in September in Whitehorse, and we are now working on the

bilateral agreement. The agreement signed in Whitehorse was the multilateral agreement by all of the agriculture ministers across the country. What we are working on now is the bilateral agreement between us and the federal government for the programs specific to Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. Given that the current federal budget includes – it's my understanding – a \$252.9 million reduction in agricultural spending over the next three years, how will that specifically affect AgriStability and AgriInvest programs for our farm producers right here in Alberta?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, it is true that the federal budget did involve a decrease in the agriculture budget of about \$252 million over three years. That is going to impact on several of the programs. I want to point out that we spent the summer consulting with our producers in Alberta to hear what they had to say about what was important to them in terms of programming in the new five-year agreement. We are confident that there's a bit of a refocusing that will be more in strategic initiatives, but I think it will be a good balance.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

2:40

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question, again to the same minister: how will these changes ensure that we continue to have a strong and vibrant agricultural sector in this province considering this reduction in financial support?

Mr. Olson: Well, Mr. Speaker, there were some very interesting discussions about increasing insurance options, for example, and that's something that we heard loud and clear from our producers. We are also, as I mentioned at the end of my last answer, refocusing some assets on research, innovation, things like food safety, environment, marketing. These will all serve to support the industry. My feeling is that, again, we have a very good balance here given the financial constraints that we're all under.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Little Bow Continuing Care Centre

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll say that it is great to be back here for the fall sitting. Mr. Speaker, this summer residents of my constituency fell victim to an out-of-touch AHS superboard, who shut down the Little Bow continuing care centre. My question is to the Health minister. Given that the minister clearly did not have the facts in regard to any of the notices sent out to the public, the staff on this rushed closing, will you apologize to my constituents for moving our most vulnerable citizens, our seniors, based on little or no knowledge?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is true that Alberta Health Services made the decision to close the Little Bow facility. As the hon. member knows, there are a number of issues involved in the decision that AHS has talked about publicly, not the least of which is the age of the facility and the fact that it lacked many of the amenities that we would associate with providing the best possible quality of care for seniors in the province. Things like the lack of washrooms in some of the rooms, the lack of a full sprinkler system, the presence of asbestos in the building, leaking pipes, and

drafty windows: these things are not consistent with the quality of care that we wish to provide.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that the minister had only made one visit to this facility after I almost begged him to come there to look at the fact that the building was not falling down, the question is: will he provide us with an adequate reason for shutting this down? I have a report right here, that will be tabled later today, to show that the facility passed inspection from your own government.

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, it is true that the facility, when it was constructed, met the building code of the 1950s. As the hon. member is aware, any renovations to that building would involve the building being required to meet the building code of 2012, which, for the reasons I described earlier, is not achievable.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, our government is focused, as I said, on providing the highest quality of life for seniors across the province. This is a facility that has served the community well over the years. However, it has continued to dwindle in numbers of both staff and patients. These factors were also a consideration in Alberta Health Services' decision to close the facility.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be passing these out later to show what a great grade the place did have.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier of Alberta – I'm sorry. She's not here, so I don't know who I'm supposed to . . . [interjections] Sorry. Bad on that.

Given that one senior passed away just nine days after being moved, who will take responsibility to ensure that our Health minister actually protects our seniors?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, what would be clearly reckless, irresponsible, and, I would suggest, unbecoming of any one of us would be to speculate on the cause of death of any constituent. In particular, to attempt to connect the decision to close this facility with the death of one or more of these residents is not appropriate, and I'm not going to dignify it with a reply.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling Preambles to Supplementary Questions

The Speaker: Hon. members, we're going to resume with Introduction of Guests in a moment, but just two quick observations.

Number one, I'm going to ask House leaders if they would please review the rule about preambles in the 35 seconds, and I want to indicate why. It's very difficult for members to phrase a supplementary question that is 35 seconds long unless they're going to go into a whole bunch of "given this" and "given that" and so on. So I'd just ask you to please review that. If you don't have a solution, I might be able to be of some help to you in that regard. It just occurs to me that it's taking up valuable time in many cases. I could have interjected so many more times today. I hesitated to do so, so I'm just going to leave it up to the House leaders to please review that with your own caucuses and your whips.

Secondly, just a reminder to please ensure that you make it very clear as to whom you're asking a particular question. We had a

couple of members who were not so clear, and that causes a little bit of confusion.

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: Let me recognize for an introduction the hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. J. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions today. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a group of people who are in the building today. Although we were not able to get many of them seats in the Assembly for question period, I know they're watching on TV from another room. Here to join me today for first reading of the Education Act this afternoon are representatives from the Alberta Home Education Association; the Alberta School Boards Association; the Public School Boards' Association; the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association; the College of Alberta School Superintendents; the Association of School Business Officials of Alberta; the Alberta Teachers' Association; the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta; the Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools; the Federation of Francophone Parents of Alberta; the Alberta School Councils' Association, which is all our parents; and my Minister's Student Advisory Council. While they're not in the gallery, they are here in the Legislature and important nonetheless, and they certainly deserve a warm welcome from this Assembly.

I'd also like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly several gentlemen who are in the gallery, one of whom I had the privilege of working with over the summer when he joined my office as a summer intern. Robert Woodward is sitting in the public gallery. He was a wonderful addition to our team, and we're very happy to have him back in the building today even if it is just for one day. I'd also like to introduce to you two members from my constituency. Rick Cherniwchan and Randy Orichowski are also sitting in the public gallery, and both do an amazing job day in and day out representing the county of Smoky Lake. I'd ask those three to rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my lovely wife, Christine. I love my work, but when I head home, she's the reason there's a smile on my face. Christine is seated in your gallery, and I ask that she please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you. I note that the smile is mutual.
The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not positive that our guests are still here. Nonetheless, I'm pleased for the record to introduce them to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. They are the members of the Education Advisory Committee. This provincial committee offers pedagogical expertise to the visitor services office in their development of educational programming and represents elementary, junior high, senior high, and postsecondary education across Alberta.

With us today were Sandy Myshak from Edmonton public schools; Anne Marie Brose from Grant MacEwan University; Dr. Craig Harding from Calgary public schools; Nancy Crousset from Conseil scolaire Centre-Est in St. Paul; Dr. Carla Peck from the

University of Alberta; Corvin Urbach from Wolf Creek public schools in Ponoka; Constance Scarlett from the Alberta Museums Association; and Wally Diefenthaler, educational consultant. I'd also like to recognize Brian St. Germain from the aboriginal family and school program of Red Deer public schools, who could not join us today. I would ask that the members give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to introduce to you and through you two constituents from Calgary-Varsity. One of them had to leave, and that is Mr. Raphael Jacob. He's currently the vice-president external for the Students' Union at the University of Calgary.

2:50

As well, I'd like to introduce to you Mr. Jim McCormick. Many hon. members will know Mr. McCormick through his political activities, but in Calgary-Varsity we know him for different reasons as well. He's a tireless volunteer, a respected member of Calgary's business community. He has a passion for strengthening not just our community but our province. He's a dedicated family man who's just recently discovered the joy of twin grandchildren. I am so pleased that he came to the Legislature today. He's seated here in the public gallery. Jim, I would ask you to rise and receive a traditional greeting.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder on behalf.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly our guest, Mr. Petros Kusmu. Petros is this year's vice-president external for the University of Alberta Students' Union, vice-chair of the Council of Alberta University Students as well as the director of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. Petros was born and raised here in Edmonton and was also fortunate enough to spend nearly seven years in Eritrea in northeast Africa. I would now ask Petros to please stand and receive a traditional warm welcome from the Assembly.

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

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly three constituents from Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville who have joined us here today. Two of them are seated in the public gallery. Perry and Vernon Degen have been long-time, active residents in Strathcona county and have moved to the city of Fort Saskatchewan and remain in that constituency. I'm so pleased to call them friends. Also, in the members' gallery is our president of the Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville PC association, Mr. Glenn Hennig, who is a resident of the village of Hilliard. Glenn has been active on the persons with developmental disabilities board. Please stand. I would like to welcome them and ask that you welcome them as well.

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

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to all members of the Assembly the mayor and councillors from Sturgeon county and the deputy mayor and councillors from the town of Morinville. I would ask them to rise. They are Mayor Donald Rigney from Sturgeon county; Deputy Mayor Karen Shaw from Sturgeon

county; Councillor Tom Flynn from Sturgeon county; Deputy Mayor David Pattison, town of Morinville; Councillor Lisa Holmes, town of Morinville; Councillor Paul Krauskopf, town of Morinville. It's a real pleasure to have you welcome them to the House.

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

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking up in the galleries here, and I see three people that I recognize from Calgary. I think that they deserve some introduction here. I see Mr. Troy Wason, who is currently running as VP for the PC Party of Alberta – I think that we should give him a round of applause – and his lovely wife, Lisa Mackintosh, who is here today, a strong Conservative and a good friend, and also Ms Cynthia Williams, a long-time Progressive Conservative. They're all three here today to visit with us. I ask that they rise and that we give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

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

Mr. Harvie Andre July 27, 1940, to October 21, 2012

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With sadness I rise today to pay tribute to another distinguished parliamentarian who passed away this week. Harvie Andre was a dedicated public servant, serving five terms as the Member of Parliament for Calgary Centre, from 1972 until 1993. He worked tirelessly to advocate on behalf of his constituents as a member of the opposition, as a member of the government, and as a cabinet minister. I volunteered on several of Harvie's election campaigns and had the privilege of being on his ministerial staff in Ottawa and in Calgary.

During Harvie's time as an MP there were many issues facing our province and country, from the national energy program to constitutional discussions. He was a key player in the government of Prime Minister Joe Clark. Through it all Harvie displayed dignity and absolute commitment to his constituents and colleagues. I also would like to say that he was very determined to do what was right for Albertans.

Harvie was the minister responsible for the Royal Canadian Mint in the government of Prime Minister Mulroney. I can still remember sitting in a staff meeting as Harvie held up the prototypes for the 1988 Calgary Olympic coin program, which was a great success during those games. Harvie was also the minister responsible for introducing the one-dollar coin into circulation. What you may not realize is that the original design for the coin was to depict voyageurs in a canoe. Unfortunately, the masters were lost, and the alternate design, showing the loonie, was approved for production.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Harvie Andre was a master parliamentarian. He combined his managerial skills with a great understanding of politics within his party, his province, and our country. The consistent observation is that Harvie was a man of integrity, loyal to his friends and family, and respectful of parliamentary institutions. There are many of us in this Legislature who have connections to Harvie Andre and his family. We say thank you for his service, his commitment, and his example.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is great to be back here.

The Speaker: Excuse me.

Are you rising on a point of order?

Ms Blakeman: I was trying to, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to catch your eye.

I'm mindful of the time, and I would like to request the unanimous support of the House to waive Standing Order 7(7) in order for us to conclude the Routine of the day and allow the members' statements and tablings to continue. I would ask that you please present that option to the Assembly.

The Speaker: Essentially, the Member for Edmonton-Centre is asking us to waive Standing Order 7(7), I believe. This requires unanimous consent, so I'm going to ask one question. Listen carefully, and respond accordingly. Is there anyone who objects to the House continuing on with its Routine beyond 3 o'clock?

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition with her statement.

Wildrose Policies

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I say, great to be back here in the Assembly, and I speak on behalf of our entire Wildrose Official Opposition when I say that it is even better to see how many Wildrose ideas have made their way onto the legislative agenda. From top to bottom, with few exceptions, the government's fall agenda lineup reads like a page straight out of the Wildrose green book.

First, the revised Education Act. The original bill attempted to sidestep parents as the most important decision-makers in their children's education. It died when the Wildrose and families across Alberta rose up to defeat it, but the bill is back again, Mr. Speaker, with families keeping the rights that they always knew that they had.

Next, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act will make sure that all future transmission projects will be approved by the Alberta Utilities Commission, not the provincial cabinet members. Mr. Speaker, that also sounds awfully familiar. On we go. The Election Accountability Amendment Act, naming those political parties who broke the law by accepting illegal contributions. Sounds like Wildrose policy, too.

The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. Whistleblower protection: page 42 of the Wildrose platform.

And it's not just bills. Today we hear the health superboard chair say that he wants more local decision-making on the ground in Alberta hospitals. Not only that, but he has the full backing of the province to go ahead and start doing it. Mr. Speaker, I could fill a book with all the times that we called for that.

Now, I suppose that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but my Wildrose colleagues are wondering when the government is finally going to copy our single most important idea, a balanced budget and money in the bank. I've got to say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm somewhat less optimistic about that one, but I won't give up. After all, with a Wildrose caucus that's proven itself this effective so far, I believe anything is possible.

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

RCAF 429 Transport Squadron

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year the city of Lethbridge's 429 Transport Squadron, based in Trenton, Ontario, will be celebrating their 70th anniversary since being formed on November 7, 1942, at East Moor, England, during World War II. The 429 Bison Squadron was adopted by the city of Lethbridge in 1944. The city sent care packages and followed its wartime exploits. Lethbridge citizens served with the squadron during World War II. The squadron was disbanded there on May 31, 1945.

3:00

The squadron was re-formed as the 429 Tactical Transport Squadron in Quebec in 1967 and renamed 429 Transport Squadron in 1981, when they flew the Hercules planes. It was disbanded again and rebanded in 2007. The squadron now operates four Globemasters. These are beyond gigantic-sized planes. They fly personnel and huge equipment all over the globe.

In 2008 the city of Lethbridge renewed its ties with the squadron with the unique honour of Freedom of the Sky. This honour was the first of its kind in Canada.

The 70th anniversary celebration this year will be marked with a trooping of the squadron colours in Trenton, Ontario.

This year Lieutenant Colonel Jason Stark, commanding officer of 429 squadron, will be the guest speaker in Lethbridge's Remembrance Day ceremonies. A contingent of the squadron will parade at the cenotaph, and the Globemaster plane will exercise the Freedom of the Sky to the delight of the citizens in attendance below at the cenotaph. Each year our city looks forward to the arrival of our adopted squadron to visit our namesake city and continue to foster and strengthen ties while promoting our Royal Canadian Air Force heritage.

Thank you.

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

Bullying Awareness and Prevention

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a very prevalent and pervasive issue facing many school-aged children throughout our province. Last week many of us heard about the unnecessary and tragic death of a British Columbia teenager. This young girl was subject to cyberbullying on social media sites and torment from her school peers on a regular basis. Her story is heartbreaking but not unique. Many children and youth are familiar with the suffering this young girl experienced.

No matter the medium, whether it is vicious messages on Facebook to taunting and physical abuse on the playground, bullying of any kind is unacceptable. Schoolyard bullying can have devastating consequences for children and youth, including isolation, depression, and in extreme cases suicide. As the father of a school-aged child the safety and well-being of our province's youth is especially important to me.

Mr. Speaker, last November our government recognized National Bullying Awareness Week. We called on all Albertans to take action and stand up to bullying and to send loud and clear messages that bullying is wrong and needs to stop and, most importantly, that it should never be considered a normal part of growing up. Ending bullying in our schools and communities is the next step towards fostering a caring, respectful, and safe environment for our children to grow up in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

National Foster Family Week

Mr. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and acknowledge National Foster Family Week and share with you a story of two exceptional foster parents, Jennifer and Kristofor Spencer. Foster parents like Jennifer and her husband, Kristofor, are key members of a team dedicated to helping children, youth, and families. They mentor and support birth parents, help children to achieve success in school, and work with youth as they transition to independence.

Jennifer and Kristofor were named foster parents of the year by the Alberta Foster Parent Association in 2011. As a part-time college student and avid volunteer Jennifer has fostered for seven years. She takes pride in telling people that she is a foster parent and emphasizing that Albertans don't hear enough about the great things that happen in foster care.

My constituency is part of the northwest Alberta child and family services authority. There are 69 foster homes in this region and over 2,400 throughout the province. We need more foster homes in my region and across Alberta. I encourage any Albertan who is interested in learning more about becoming a foster parent to contact the Alberta Foster Parent Association or their local child and family services authority.

Like Jennifer and Kristofor, foster parents are caring and compassionate people who open their hearts and their homes to a child or youth in care. It is a rewarding experience that impacts the community as well as the family and the child. Please join me in recognizing Jennifer and Kristofor and all the other foster families across the province for their dedication to improving the lives of fellow Albertans.

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

XL Foods Inc. Beef Recall

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning we learned the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has given the green light to the XL Foods plant in Brooks to reopen. This is welcome news and a huge relief to the Alberta cattle producers and 2,200 workers who have been unable to work since the plant closed on September 27.

In the past few weeks I am proud to have witnessed such an overwhelming amount of community support to help workers and the cattle producers in my constituency of Strathmore-Brooks. I am proud to have worked alongside the city and county councils and local MP to move the situation in the right direction. This is about our community, and I'm happy to see all levels of government and the community groups coming together.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the federal agriculture minister for his hard work to get the plant online and for taking time to come visit Brooks. I would also like to acknowledge our Wildrose Official Opposition leader, who met with Brooks and county immigration services, affected employees, and city officials last week to learn about the situation and offer support. Thanks is also due to the provincial agriculture minister for coming down to Brooks and for making this a nonpartisan issue as well as to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark for making the journey and offering his support.

This weekend I hosted a town hall meeting with producers from the area and learned a lot about how the plant shutdown has affected their operations. This shutdown has had an enormous economic impact on the entire area, on both businesses and the Alberta cattle

industry. We had many livestock producer groups that attended with the common goal of getting the plant reopened.

My thoughts go out to those who were affected by the outbreak of E coli. It should have never happened, and hopefully the review to follow will identify the shortcomings which led to the situation.

As the local MLA I can say how great the community has been throughout all of this. Seeing all the many groups working together with one common goal and ensuring laid-off employees were looked after has been very rewarding.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, may we revert briefly to the introduction of guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education.

Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, thank you. In perhaps the most important introduction I will ever make in the House, I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the House my inspiration, my motivation, my everything: my family. Seated in the members' gallery are my wife, Raelynn, my son Mick, and my daughter Sasha, and we have the pleasure of my father-in-law, Barrie Burton, joining us today. I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Notices of Motions

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

Ms Blakeman: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 30 I wish to advise you and all members of the Assembly that at the appropriate time I intend to move the adjournment of the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely

the actions of the Ethics Commissioner, an officer of this Legislature, in appointing a defeated MLA to a specially created position without that MLA observing the one-year cooling-off period mandated by the Conflicts of Interest Act and [importantly] the resultant breach of public trust and loss of confidence in the implementation of the act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:10

Introduction of Bills

Bill 3 Education Act

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise today to introduce Bill 3, the Education Act.

This new legislation comes as a result of many years of discussion and consultation with Albertans across the province about the future of education in Alberta. In fact, Mr. Speaker, representatives of many of the groups who have worked with us to create this legislation are in the building with us today although many of them are outside the gallery, and I introduced them earlier. To all of them – the students, the school boards, the parents, the teachers, the leaders from our private and charter schools, and our home educators – I want to thank you for your

contributions. I also want to thank the thousands of Albertans who provided their input over the last several months and years.

Albertans are truly passionate about education, Mr. Speaker, and that's a good thing. The result is a piece of legislation that will help us focus education where it should be focused, on the student. In a nutshell that's what this bill is all about, putting students first.

This bill is also one of the first in the country to formally recognize the role of the family and the parent in education. As a parent that's an area I am particularly proud of. I'm also very proud of the focus we've put on ensuring our schools are safe, welcoming places for our children, places where diversity is respected and bullying is not tolerated. Of course, the Education Act empowers local school boards to be responsive to local needs.

In short, the Education Act will help all of us who support Alberta's children, help them realize their full potential as engaged thinkers who are ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Bill 6

Protection and Compliance Statutes Amendment Act, 2012

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to introduce Bill 6, the Protection and Compliance Statutes Amendment Act, 2012.

If passed, this bill will provide significant new protections to Albertans at home, in the marketplace, and on the job. It will also raise awareness about the responsibilities associated with workplace health and safety, safety code requirements, and fair trading practices. Bill 6 seeks to amend three pieces of legislation: the Safety Codes Act, the Fair Trading Act, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act. It will add new administrative penalties, strengthen existing ones, and significantly increase the fines that can be levied against those who would jeopardize the health and safety of Albertans or would part them from their money through unfair business practices.

Mr. Speaker, we've consulted with Albertans, and they have told us they support our efforts to improve these protections. I'm confident the changes that can be effected by these amendments will go a long way to showing Albertans that we value their contributions to our communities, to our workplaces, and to our economy. The amendments in this bill ensure that those who would take advantage of the hard work and trust of Albertans will be held accountable and that the cost of flouting these laws is now too great to be deemed simply the cost of doing business. These amendments will result in increased protections for Albertans and increased compliance with legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 6, the Protection and Compliance Statutes Amendment Act, 2012, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Bill 8
Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2012

Mr. Hughes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 8, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2012.

In 2009 legislation passed in this House approved four critical transmission infrastructure projects and gave government the authority to designate and approve future critical transmission infrastructure. Bill 8 removes the government's power to approve future critical transmission infrastructure, meaning all future transmission infrastructure projects will require need and routing approval from the Alberta Utilities Commission. Given the enthusiastic speech from the Leader of the Opposition earlier, I am sure we all look forward to a speedy passage of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

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

Bill 9
Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2012

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 9, the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2012. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

This act requires changes to ensure that Alberta maintains a fair, equitable, and competitive tax regime. Changes are also needed to implement changes to the scientific research and experimental development tax credit that was announced in the budget. The proposed act will keep Alberta's legislation both current and effective.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I talked in my questions about the reports that the government has so cleverly taken off their own web pages now, so I'm tabling this today for every member on both sides to be green, to help out Rachel so nobody is mad, to make sure that we can actually see what the reports were that show in what good shape the Little Bow Continuing Care building was.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a report produced by Ceres on behalf oil sands investors. The report outlines and discusses the need for improved environmental and social performance in the Canadian oil sands in order to promote and secure investments.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Is it the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre on behalf?

Ms Blakeman: No, sir. They're my very own tablings. I have two of them today. The first one: I wouldn't usually do this, but I will be referring to this specifically later, so I am going to give you

copies of an article by editorialist Rick Bell, who writes for a Calgary paper. I will table that.

I'd also like to table a number of posters that were presented to me during the Edmonton Pride awards. They're very cleverly done by a group that is trying to speak out to young gay, lesbian, and transgendered kids and say: you have a voice. They're making fun of the supposed slur that something is gay, meaning something is bad. They're talking about history in here. They do say: "You have a voice! Be a part of speaking out against hate crimes! Encourage your school to create & support Gay/Straight alliances!" There's a series of six of these posters. They're excellent.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, please.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of two tablings. One is a report by CBC relating to the AHS chair wanting hospitals to make more decisions.

The other is an e-mail dated October 16, 2012, addressed to all AHS, a message from the CEO. It's titled From Good to Best-in-class, about local decision-making.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a blog posted by McMurray Musings writer Theresa Wells entitled An Ocean of Tears, A Ribbon of Road: Highway 63, and 2016. The blog highlights her personal thoughts and feelings about an announcement made by the government of Alberta on Friday, October 19, on the completion of twinning of 36 kilometres of highway 63 near Wandering River and our commitment to twinning the entire length of the highway from Fort McMurray to highway 55 by the fall of 2016.

3:20

The Speaker: Thank you.

I wish to table with the Assembly a report by Alberta's Chief Electoral Officer as required by section 44(1) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act and his accompanying letter to the Speaker dated October 18, 2012, concerning compliance with the election campaign financial reporting requirements.

As well, pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act I would like to table with the Assembly five copies of the following orders passed at the June 7, 2012, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: one, Members' Services Committee Order 04/12, Constituency Services Amendment Order, No. 25; two, Members' Services Committee Order 05/12, Transportation Amendment Order, No. 11; three, Members' Services Committee Order 06/12, Members' Allowances Amendment Order, No. 23; four, Members' Services Committee Order 07/12, Executive Council Salaries Amendment Order, No. 8; and five, Members' Services Committee Order 08/12, Members' Committee Allowances Amendment Order, No. 09.

Please note, hon. members, that all of the aforementioned orders which I'm now tabling are deemed effective April 23, 2012.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of

Mr. Young, hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, 13 memoranda dated August 17, 2012, from Scott Ellis, senior financial officer and director, financial management and administrative services branch, Legislative Assembly Office, to 13 Members of the Legislative Assembly regarding return of committee pay relating to their service on the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

The Speaker: Thank you.

We're now ready to entertain the point of order. I believe it was the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is my first point of order, and I'm sure there won't be too many more. I stand to raise a point of order under section 23(h), (i), and (j), and it is in regard to a comment that was made about permanent police officers on highway 63. The comment was made by the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and was echoed by the Member for Calgary-Acadia, and it's regarding a report that I and the Infrastructure and Transportation critic from Cypress-Medicine Hat presented about a week ago. It's actually entitled Getting It Done, twinning highway 63, and it included many things, one of which was demanding a timeline, which we were very satisfied that the government has finally taken our lead on.

In it as well as that after consultations with stakeholders, with first responders, and with families that have suffered from tragedies on highway 63, they all told us that they want eight more permanent police officers, and they want them now. Mr. Speaker, the comments made by the Member for Calgary-Acadia tried to infer that, you know, there are 16 permanent police officers that the government has put on that highway when, in fact, that's not going to happen until 2013. The people that we talked to, the people on the ground, the first responders and families, want those permanent police officers now. It's completely incorrect for the minister to make that comment. It is not only an allegation against myself as a member but also those families, and I'd ask him to retract that statement.

Mr. Denis: If anything I said was incorrect, I would retract it, but with respect to this member nothing I said was incorrect. I do not have a copy of the Blues, Mr. Speaker, but when I answered the question in that exchange, I indicated clearly that currently there are four new, additional enforcement officers on highway 63 and that there would be an additional 12 by the early part of 2013.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really at a loss as to what this member has a point of order about. He called a point of privilege last time, which was ruled out of order. I'm really at a loss.

The Speaker: Well, hon. member, as we all know, there are frequently varying interpretations of the facts. I don't think there's a need to get into a long debate on this. I will recognize two more speakers quickly, one from the government side and one from another party if you so wish. But, again, this just might be a dispute over the facts.

First, the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't get into the facts at all; I'll get into the standing orders. This point of order was brought under Standing Order 23(h), which is, "makes allegations against another Member." No member was mentioned in the response. They mentioned a party. As we've heard in the House, unfortunately, year over year over year, a party is not a member.

There was no allegation against a member. There was no imputation under (i) of "false or unavowed motives," and there was no "abusive or insulting language of a nature . . . to [cause] disorder" under (j).

One of the things that we need to do, I think, in the House is make sure that when we raise points of order, we don't lapse into the practice that has become way too common in this House of leaping up and yelling out "23(h), (i), and (j)" and thinking that that's a foundation for an argument.

The Speaker: Anyone else who wishes to chime in?

Well, hon. member, I've already commented that frequently we find two different interpretations of what some perceive to be facts and others perceive to be something else. Let's be mindful that a point of order should not be raised merely for purposes of extending a debate or continuing discussion. As such, given that it's your first point of order, hon. member, I'll just say that we're going to accept the clarifications that have been offered, and we're going to move on.

Request for Emergency Debate

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre under SO 30, I believe.

Dealings with Government by Former Ministers

Ms Blakeman: Yes, indeed. Thank you very much, sir. I would like at this time to move the motion that I believe has been circulated to everyone, and that is:

Be it resolved that this Assembly adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the actions of the Ethics Commissioner, an officer of this Legislature, in appointing a defeated MLA to a specially created position without that MLA observing the one-year cooling-off period mandated by the Conflicts of Interest Act and the resultant breach of public trust and loss of confidence in the implementation of the act.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you and I well know, the point of Standing Order 30 is its urgency. I would argue that this is an urgent matter for us to consider. This is our first opportunity to address it. It's the first time we've all been together in the House and the House has been called since this matter came up.

While we're talking legalities, I did investigate, and to the best of my knowledge and as far as I am able to determine, there is no open investigation under section 24(6) of the Conflicts of Interest Act which would preclude any other discussion. Just briefly for people, under the Conflicts of Interest Act if an investigation has been asked of the Ethics Commissioner by anybody – a motion of the Assembly, a minister, or an individual member – that investigation has to take place. You can't do anything else, raise a question or anything. To the best of my knowledge and my investigation I cannot find that that has indeed happened.

I think that this is an issue of ongoing credibility and a loss of confidence. When I look in the instructions for Standing Order 30, or emergency debates as they're called, under the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, they specifically state that the issue has to be specific, which is indeed what we're dealing with here, the actions very specifically on a specific case about the Ethics Commissioner, that it be urgent and important – and I think that conflict of interest is important, that act is important, and the upholding and the credibility of it are important – and that it requires urgent consideration. If we continue to go forward with this, it will not be resolved, and I think it's important that it is.

When we look at *Beauchesne's* 387 to 389, that's indicating that

the primary issue is the urgency of the debate. Specifically, there's a section that talks about the opportunity to debate this issue under the rules and provisions of the House. This runs you into a checklist. I've looked to see where else we could be discussing this issue. The Legislative Offices Committee, to which this particular position would report, does indeed have a meeting scheduled more than a month from now, toward the end of November, which is a very long time to go with the public out there wondering just how ethical we all are here and how much credibility we put in that act that we're all supposed to be abiding by.

Of course, this issue is not currently before the courts. It wasn't mentioned in the throne speech. There's nothing on the Order Paper as a government bill, nor has it been specifically talked about in any kind of government release or website. There's no private member's bill or motion that's dealing with it. The budget is not affected by this, and there's no supplementary supply budget this time around, thank goodness – that's unusual – no government motions except that there is a motion to convene a discussion of or a review of the Conflicts of Interest Act in its entirety. That motion is sitting on the Order Paper. It hasn't been moved. I have no idea when that committee would be charged to meet although I notice, in reading the notice of motion, that it will be charged to report back within a year, which, again, I would not say is a speedy resolution. Again, I'm addressing a very specific incident here, not the entire act.

3:30

There was an attempt to ask a question today in question period, and it was, to put it politely, blown off by the government, so that's obviously not a useful debate. We're not supposed to be debating here in question period, but it wasn't a useful forum for us to try and dig to the bottom of this and discuss it as an Assembly.

In *Beauchesne* 389 it says that the issue has to be so pressing "that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention," and I would argue that is indeed the case with this. *Beauchesne* 390 is also saying that "the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately," which would be now, rather than, for example, waiting and discussing it under a review of the act, however long that takes to be called into place.

The situation we have is a breach of the public trust and a loss of confidence in a critical piece of legislation that affects every member in this House and how everyone views us and the work that we do. How serious is this as an issue that the Assembly should discuss it? Well, I think it's a very serious issue. For example, if this particular MLA or any MLA had knowingly breached this act without the knowledge of the Ethics Commissioner, according to the Conflicts of Interest Act they are subject to a \$50,000 fine. I think that is underlining how seriously it was intended that that cooling-off period be taken. That fine is specific to breaching the cooling-off period in the Conflicts of Interest Act, so clearly it was meant to be taken very seriously.

How seriously do I take this? Well, we have the commissioner in question stating publicly that the member was – and I've got air quotes happening here – a member of the family, which is why, Mr. Speaker, I did table a copy of a newspaper article, which I wouldn't usually do, but it is referenced a number of times in here. It's the Ethics Commissioner's own words, and he has not disputed that this is inaccurate in any way, shape, or form, but he does go on to say that the member was "within the family, [within] the government family," which as you well know, Mr. Speaker, is only involving members who are on the side that elects the most members and forms government, so that rather sets up a

difference between that member and other members of this Assembly. That in itself, I would argue, is a breach when we're talking about private members.

He does go on and get quoted quite a bit about how he believes that it's okay to be a member of the government family, and there's no conflict of interest there. I think that needs to be discussed by these members because it affects all of us.

Part of the criteria for decision is on page 695 in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, and that is whether a timetable of the House has prevented any discussion in a timely manner. I'll also just note that it says, "events which [had] taken place in the past, in that they might precipitate a course of conduct which, if allowed to continue unchecked, would certainly classify itself as an emergency and of pressing consideration." I argue that that is also relevant in this particular matter.

I ask the Speaker to find that this is a matter of urgency and should be able to be debated by the Assembly. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I would invite you to find this notice of motion out of order. It's not in order for a number of reasons, but I would direct your attention specifically to *Beauchesne's* 493 under the heading Protected Persons.

493. (1) All references to judges and courts of justice of the nature of personal attack and censure have always been considered unparliamentary, and the Speaker has always treated them as breaches of order. Members have been interrupted in Committee of the Whole by the Chairman when they have cast an imputation upon a judicial proceeding.

Now, obviously, the Ethics Commissioner isn't a judicial proceeding, but there is a very strong comparator in that somebody is set up in an office to make determinations, in this case an officer of the Legislature, and it casts into disrepute that office if you allow people to make this type of aspersion on the actions of the officer.

It goes on to say:

(2) When a judge has been employed as a Royal Commissioner, it is proper in the House to criticize the report but not its author.

Now, in this notice of motion it's specifically the actions of the Ethics Commissioner. It's not the report. It's not the decision. It's the actions of the Ethics Commissioner that are called into question. That would clearly be out of order under 493(2).

(3) The Speaker has traditionally protected from attack a group of individuals commonly referred to as "those of high official station." The extent of this group has never been defined. Over the years it has covered senior public servants, ranking officers of the armed services, diplomatic representatives . . .

Et cetera.

(4) the Speaker has cautioned Members to exercise great care in making statements about persons who are outside the House and unable to reply.

Mr. Speaker, there's a very good reason for that section in *Beauchesne's*, and it is that we need to respect our courts, we need to respect our legislative offices, we need to hold them in high regard, and we need to not be casting aspersions on the offices or the officials that hold those offices.

There's no question that from time to time there are appropriate ways to deal with the issues that are contained in a report or decision but appropriate ways. What might those appropriate ways be, Mr. Speaker? Well, we do have a Leg. Offices Committee of the House. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has indicated

that there's no timely basis to move to the merits of the notice of motion itself in terms of urgency, that there's no timely way to deal with this issue. Well, I would submit to her that she has provided no evidence that she's asked for a meeting of the committee of the House to deal with this issue and no evidence that the chair has refused to hold a meeting of the committee to deal with this issue.

In fact, I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that the most appropriate place for an issue of this nature, if anybody has a concern about a report of an officer of the House, is for it first to be addressed is at the standing committee that provides oversight for Leg. officers. Why would that be the case, Mr. Speaker? Well, because one of the rules we have in this House is that one shouldn't make comments about people who cannot be here to defend themselves.

At committee, of course, the committee could ask the Ethics Commissioner or another legislative officer or others to attend before the committee and to discuss the issue at hand, the issue in question. But, of course, in the House if this motion was passed, we could spend all afternoon debating a specific officer and a specific officer's actions with that officer having no ability to appear, to present, to put into a context what reasoning might have been utilized, or anything of that nature.

Mr. Speaker, I'd say it's clearly out of order, and not only is it clearly out of order, but if you were not to agree that it was out of order, then I would say that the wording of the motion itself is rather questionable in that it's asking us "to discuss . . . the actions of the Ethics Commissioner . . . in appointing a defeated MLA." It's clear on the face of it that the Ethics Commissioner did no such thing. He did not appoint a defeated MLA to anything, so the plain language of the motion is out of order in that it calls for us to debate something that didn't happen.

Thirdly, the question of urgency, which is also important: this has to be something that there is no other way to deal with appropriately in order to adjourn the business of the House. There's clearly another way to deal with it appropriately if the hon. member wished to do so.

Any member could ask for the committee to meet, could ask for the committee to deal with this as an issue, and that committee could then quite appropriately ask the Ethics Commissioner to attend to discuss with the committee the context of the decision-making and why the decision-making was made, which would be, in my humble submission, a much more logical and appropriate way to deal with an issue of this nature than suggesting we adjourn the ordinary business of the House and proceed to discuss it in the absence of the Ethics Commissioner, with no opportunity for the Ethics Commissioner to put the whole decision into context or to provide information as to why he made the decision the way he did.

This begs the question as to whether it ever is really appropriate, once you've appointed somebody as a judge or as a commissioner to make rulings based on an act and independently of the House, for us to second-guess those decisions. But that would be a discussion for another day, Mr. Speaker.

3:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, briefly, please. Thank you.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd first like to commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre for her timely and responsible motion for an emergency debate. Of course, section 30 sets out the various prerequisites to have a motion pass. My understanding is that 30(7)(b) through (f) has been satisfied

completely, so in our respectful view the motion comes down to whether there is a matter of urgent public importance. That meeting is further defined in 30(7)(a), which states that "the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration." Of course, guidance to interpret these rules and also previous precedents can be found in *Beauchesne's* from sections 387 to 398 as well as the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, pages 689 to 690.

Before going into the question of urgency, the matter must also be specific. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the question in this motion is specific to the exact incident of this government appointing Mr. Berger to the position for which he may not be qualified. The question must also require urgent consideration. Every day that passes, the taxpayers are paying for the potentially improper appointment of a defeated MLA. I know that this government certainly doesn't think that every time taxpayers get hosed, we have to have an emergency debate, or we'd be having one every day. However, this issue goes much further. It goes to the very root that ethics legislation may have been violated, or there may have been a loophole created that violated the spirit of the act.

In terms of urgency, if the matter is not dealt with now, it sets a precedent for a government to continue unethical practices, and stopping this is of utmost importance, or during summer sessions we're going to continue to have taxpayers pay for insiders and former government MLAs.

Finally, it's noted, Mr. Speaker, that the Speaker may but not must take into account the general wish of the House to have a debate, and I ask you to consider this motion and to allow the House to discuss this matter. Thank you.

The Speaker: Is there anyone else who wishes to chime in? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, again briefly if you would, please.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. I will not go over in great detail some of the comments made by the Government House Leader except simply to point out that constitutionally the role of judges is significantly different than someone who is appointed through this Legislature by a vote of this Legislature to be an officer of this Legislature. I think that it's quite unfortunate to confuse the constitutional foundation of those two roles and to try and use the protection accorded to one person to protect another.

Regardless, I want to simply speak to the issue of urgency, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that Albertans are increasingly concerned with issues related to the way in which MLAs in this Assembly are compensated both before and after their time in office. This is a matter we have heard quite a bit about recently, and I believe it was the Premier who talked about how, you know, a transition allowance in any form, by any name is a transition allowance.

Now, if you take a former minister of agriculture who loses his seat and then give him a new job that has just been created for him with no precedent, then that looks a lot like nest feathering. The problem is that that goes to the credibility and the public faith that all Albertans have in this Assembly and the public faith that all Albertans have in all MLAs in this Assembly. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, those of us on this side are getting a little tired of wearing the excesses that are perpetrated by those on the other side.

This is a matter of public urgency because Albertans need to have faith that decisions here are made in their best interest and not in our best interest, and that is the issue that is currently

outstanding as a result of a decision made by a minister of this government to appoint his predecessor into a specially created position to allow him a nice transition to the next time he runs for office. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: All right. Thank you.

The Speaker listened very intently to all arguments which have been eloquently presented by the members. Could I just make an observation before I make my ruling, that once a number of previous speakers have already indicated how compliant the motion is with the rules, we not go through the exercise of repeating how compliant they are. That would help.

It's quite correct that Standing Order 30(2), as referenced by various members, provides that "the Member may briefly state the arguments in favour of the request for leave," and the hon. member did that. Subsequent to that, "the Speaker may allow such debate as he . . . considers relevant to the question of urgency," and we've done that. Then the role of the chair is to "rule on whether or not the request for leave is in order."

Hon. members, the chair is prepared to make a ruling with respect to leave for this motion to proceed or not pursuant to Standing Order 30(2). The Member for Edmonton-Centre for the record has met the requirement of providing at least two hours' notice, and I would note for you that the request was in fact received in the Speaker's office at 9:39 this morning.

The motion reads as follows:

Be it resolved that this Assembly adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the actions of the Ethics Commissioner, an officer of this Legislature, in appointing a defeated MLA to a specially created position without that MLA observing the one-year cooling-off period mandated by the Conflicts of Interest Act and the resultant breach of public trust and loss of confidence in the implementation of the act.

The relevant parliamentary authorities on the matter of whether an urgent or emergency debate should or should not be permitted are cited on pages 689 through 696 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, and in *Beauchesne*, sixth edition, paragraphs 387 to 390, as various members referenced.

Hon. members, while the chair is aware that the Member for Edmonton-Centre is clearly very concerned about a particular decision made by the Ethics Commissioner, the chair must also caution all members that with the protection of freedom of speech that we all enjoy in this Assembly must also come a responsibility to ensure that persons outside the Assembly are not unfairly disparaged as they do not have the opportunity to respond here.

Beauchesne, sixth edition, at paragraph 493 reads – I believe the hon. Government House Leader quoted this as well, and I'd like to reiterate that quote – "The Speaker has cautioned Members to exercise great care in making statements about persons who are outside the House and unable to reply." Furthermore, *Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice*, 24th edition, at page 266, discourages not only acts that tend to obstruct officers in their duties and activities "but also any conduct which may tend to deter [officers] from doing their duty in the future."

Before ruling on whether this matter constitutes a genuine emergency and, as such, should pre-empt all other items of business for today, the chair would also like to note that the member in her proposed motion states that the Ethics Commissioner appointed a defeated MLA. For the record the chair notes that while the Ethics Commissioner has the ability to waive compliance with the cooling-off periods in the Conflicts of Interest Act if certain conditions are present, he has no other

involvement with the hiring of an individual to a government department.

The chair is aware that this was the first opportunity for the members to bring forward such a point, and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has done so. For those of you who are new members to this Assembly, you are here to observe first-hand the procedures that have to be followed in making a request for an emergency debate. It is the chair's role under Standing Order 30 to determine whether a matter is of urgent public importance and cannot be brought before the Assembly within a reasonable time by any other means. As noted in *Beauchesne*, sixth edition, at paragraph 390, "urgency does not apply to the matter itself" but, rather, to the urgent need for the debate. Standing Order 30(7)(a) provides that "the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration." The chair cannot find that this matter constitutes a genuine emergency by that definition, and I am guided by various precedents and authorities in that determination.

3:50

Finally, in finding this request to now not be in order, I will note that there is a motion on notice on the Order Paper today to appoint a Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, which other members also have referenced. In fact, the Member for Edmonton-Centre happens to be one of the members proposed for appointment to that committee, and the chair presumes that she will have plenty of opportunities during that review to raise any concerns regarding the provisions contained in the Conflicts of Interest Act.

Accordingly, the chair does not find the request for leave in order, and the question will not be put.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure – well, pleasure might be stretching it. It's my duty to move Government Motion 12.

Evening Sittings

12. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the 2012 fall sitting unless on motion by the Government House Leader made before 6 p.m., which may be made orally and without notice, the Assembly is adjourned to the following sitting day.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Oh, my apologies. This is not a debatable motion.

Ms Blakeman: That's just what I was going to ask.

The Speaker: Yes. Sorry. Pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) this motion is not debatable.

Thank you for the rapid reminder, Mr. Clerk.

I should note at this time, however, that our Clerk is celebrating an important anniversary, and you can see why. He's very quick and ready. I would ask you to please join me in congratulating and thanking our Clerk, who this week is celebrating his 25th anniversary of service in this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Thank you, all, for that.

[Government Motion 12 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move Government Motion 13, which states: Be it resolved that a Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be appointed to review the Conflicts of Interest Act as prescribed pursuant to section 48 of that act consisting of the following members; namely, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo as chair, the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood as vice-chair, the Member for Edmonton-Centre, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, the Member for Calgary-Glenmore, the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky . . . [interjection] Mr. Speaker, I believe it's improper for me to refer to names in this Chamber.

The Speaker: Sorry. Are you asking for some clarification on a point here, hon. member? I was distracted.

Mr. Denis: Yes. I believe it's improper for me to refer to members by name in this Chamber. I just wanted to continue.

The Speaker: Well, in this circumstance the names are already printed there, and we'll allow it. So proceed.

Mr. Denis: If you'll allow it in this case, I will just go ahead here. It almost feels like I'm breaking the rules, Mr. Speaker.

13. Mr. Denis moved:
Be it resolved that

- (1) A Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be appointed to review the Conflicts of Interest Act as provided in section 48 of that act consisting of the following members, namely Mr. Allen, chair; Mr. Luan, deputy chair; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Dorward; Ms Fenske; Ms L. Johnson; Mr. McDonald; Ms Notley; Mr. Saskiw; Mr. Wilson; and Mr. Young.
- (2) Reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid subject to the approval of the chair.
- (3) In carrying out its duties, the committee may travel throughout Alberta and undertake a process of consultation with all interested Albertans.
- (4) In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may with the concurrence of the head of the department utilize the services of the public service employed in that department or the staff employed by the Assembly or the office of the Ethics Commissioner.
- (5) The committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned.

- (6) The committee must submit its report, including any proposed amendments to the act, within one year after commencing its review.
- (7) When its work has been completed, the committee must report to the Assembly if it is sitting. During a period when the Assembly is adjourned, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, section 48 of the Conflicts of Interest Act states:

By December 1, 2012 and every 5 years after that, a special committee established by the Legislative Assembly must begin a comprehensive review of this Act and must submit to the Legislative Assembly, within one year after beginning the review, a report that includes any amendments recommended by the committee.

The House leaders from the other parties were advised of this review and have provided members to this committee, and we have honoured their requests. I look forward to the work of all members from all sides of the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this motion is debatable. Are there any others who wish to participate?

Seeing none, hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, I'm sure you've offered some comments, but if you'd like to officially close debate, I would invite you to do so.

Mr. Denis: I again would just move that the debate be closed today.

[Government Motion 13 carried]

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 31: Mr. Quadri]

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, you have some time remaining with respect to the comments that you were making pertaining to the throne speech when we adjourned in the spring. Should you wish to continue, now would be the time for you to do so and to conclude with the time you have remaining.

Mr. Quadri: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I think I concluded my speech before I adjourned the debate, so I completed it last time.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others who wish to participate? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to deliver my maiden speech. I'd like to introduce myself to those of you who I have not yet had the pleasure to shake hands with. My name is Ian Donovan. I live in the small hamlet of Mossleigh, just

south of Calgary. I grew up on the family farm. At the age of 17 I took over the farm when my parents moved to town after my father had a stroke. He passed away when I was 19, and the farm was left to me to look after to provide for me and my mother.

I've been part of the Mossleigh Lions Club and an active community member my whole adult life. When you live in a small town, you help build it. You support each member in any way needed because one day it's going to be you that needs the support. I started on county council at the age of 19. I worked for the people in my county the last 17 years, two of those years as reeve. Deep roots in my farming community have played a huge part in making me the compassionate, approachable, and understanding man that stands here before you today. I'm a man that prides himself on listening to the people who need to be heard and searching for reasonable solutions to issues that arise.

Now I have the opportunity to thank a few people. Today I'd like to start with my wife, Serena, who has been first and foremost an important supporter. Together we decided to start this journey. To say that my wife is amazing is an understatement; she is truly my everything. Our five children, who I don't get to see as much as I'd like: I love them with all of my heart. [interjections] I know.

To the many people who helped knock on doors, put up signs, talk with strangers, neighbours, and friends, and believed I should be their MLA; to Jodie Gateman, my campaign manager, who put all of her heart and soul into making my dream come true; to former MLA Barry McFarland, who has done a wonderful job for our constituency over his 20 years of service – filling his shoes will not be easy; I appreciate his support and his listening ear – it is very humbling that I stand here to thank each and every one of them for where I stand today. I intend to make all of my constituents proud.

Today I can confidently say that I am very proud to be a part of this team. Not just any team – I've been part of numerous teams in my life – but I'm proud to be part of this team, a group of 17 MLAs that have different backgrounds, different ideas and goals, but we all work together as one when it comes to this province.

4:00

Without our staff our jobs would be next to impossible. To all of our Wildrose caucus staff I'd like to say thank you, with a special thanks to my staff in my constituency office, Lois McLeod, and my leg. assistant, Cody Johnston. Their experience and their knowledge have been an enormous asset to me in these last few months. Even though they work in the background and they may not always be seen, they have a huge effect on all Albertans that we represent.

I've been an MLA for just a mere six months, and I've already experienced and learned many things. Today I get to touch on a couple of them. The first thing I have learned: do not always believe what you are told. I watched my colleague the Health minister believe all the lies AHS told him about the Little Bow continuing care centre in Carmangay. There are lies about the care not being good enough for seniors and the building almost about to fall down around them.

This government did not take the time to meet with the families of the residents and explain that closure would be in the near future. Neither did they take the time to go through the maintenance logs and the inspection logs. Had they taken the time, they would have seen that although the building was indeed aging with the people that were inside it, it also had been maintained with integrity and pride. They would have also seen that all these families wanted was what was the best for their family members and their loved ones. Each of these families was willing to work

with the system and find the answers to the problems and find suitable placements for their loved ones.

In our small towns in southern Alberta we don't expect money to be frivolously thrown away and spent on things that are not necessary. We look for accountability, and we take pride in the jobs we do. The staff that was employed in this facility went above and beyond to provide the level of service in this centre, and you would be hard-pressed to duplicate it in any city facility.

You can't re-create a sense of small-town camaraderie. It is made by the very people within it. I think we all witnessed this this summer when we had over 300 people in Carmangay stand up for what we felt was right.

You would also be hard-pressed to find any other facility that runs under budget in this spend-all society. You'd be hard-pressed to find any parts of the building that were actually falling apart. The maintenance man, Roger Burke, had dedicated over 25 years of his life to making sure that building was in sound shape.

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

You see, we small-town folk take pride in every aspect of our lives. We small-town folk remember each and every day that these seniors, who suffer from terrible diseases like dementia and Alzheimer's, were the very people that built this province, and without them we would be nothing. We appreciate the simple things in life, and sometimes the simple things are being able to walk across the street, take a piece of pie to your neighbour, and just say, "Hi," just because you can.

You see, the issue that happened in my riding, in one of my small towns, is near and dear to my heart. My mom was a resident in the High River hospital in the long-term care unit. We had recently celebrated her 80th birthday, and like the 18 residents in Carmangay she suffered from dementia.

An Hon. Member: Just take a deep breath.

Mr. Donovan: I'll drink Wilson's water, too.

While we were on the stairs of this very building on April 23, in the facility of Carmangay my mom passed away. So I do care for every person in my constituency. I will go to whatever lengths it takes to make sure that each and every one of them, even though they might not even remember their name, is treated with the respect and the dignity they deserve.

As a Member of this Legislative Assembly, whether you're just an MLA or a minister in the government, it's our responsibility to speak up for all of those who cannot speak up for themselves and protect those who need protecting. I can honestly say that as a son and as a member of the community, and – right on. Always nice to have water. Where was I at? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. That can be in *Hansard*, I think.

I did what I said to make sure that my mom and the 18 residents of Carmangay had the best care and were treated with the dignity and respect they so deserve. I'm thankful my mom wasn't facing a move at the end of her life into another facility that was not a home.

I hope that if you ever find yourselves in the same particular position that I did, there are injustices happening around you to the people you love, you also stand up for what is right and do not take the lies and the padded answers. I hope you demand accountability, responsibility, and fairness. For us small-town folk it's just called respect.

Another thing I've learned in this short time is that this government is not considerate of how Albertans seem to be and where they live and the ability to read a map. It is interesting to me that they would have some of their MLAs enter into ridings

that aren't even theirs and publicly proclaim: I'm your MLA. These MLAs live five or six hours away, and they weren't even on the ballot in the riding that they were about to visit. It is interesting to me that there are some in this room that assume these constituents, these voters, are not intelligent enough to recognize this proclamation as untrue and outright rude. I do not believe it makes a difference whether you live in a rural riding or an urban riding. These people, these voters, these Albertans are not morons, and they need to be treated with the respect that this province should be demanding.

I think there are times for teams to join. I think there is a lot of information that can be shared. Other MLAs want to come tour a neighbouring riding or see similar ridings with assets and issues, but keep respectful and professional relations. Please know that if you ever enter into my riding and proclaim something as silly as being the MLA, you're basically slapping my voters in the face and telling them that their democratic rights are meaningless. That is not a message I want my voters to hear or any voter to hear. Remember, they voted for me, not for you. Your name wasn't on my ballot, so unless I'm standing here today in error, this shows how Little Bow did vote. Look around this room. This is how Albertans voted on April 23. With no immediate pending election there's no reason to be out campaigning, so please don't have your Deputy Premier introduce you as "your MLA" in my riding. I think it's a bit rude.

The most concerning thing I've learned in the last few months is that there are good people on this side of the floor, and there are good people on that side of the floor. The concerning part to me is that even though we have good people sitting around the tables at meetings, governing this province, we still seem to work against each other. I personally hope to be able to work with you, not against you. I hope I can find solutions to the problems that we face in this province instead of the power struggle that we seem to be stuck in.

A few weeks ago I showed up at a press event the Premier was attending in regard to the E coli issue in this province. I being the agricultural minister, or agricultural critic – that's next term. Sorry. Just planning ahead. Along with my colleague and friend Jason Hale from the Strathmore-Brooks riding we attended to show support for the residents of his riding as well as him being a beef producer himself.

We were told by the press secretary for the Premier, "This is our event; you guys stay away," meaning that as opposition we couldn't possibly work with the Premier and her ministers for Albertans; meaning that we couldn't possibly have anything important to contribute to finding a solution; meaning that even though one of us, Mr. Hale, lives in the riding, we couldn't possibly shed light on the background of things to help the employees of this Brooks plant; meaning that showing up couldn't possibly have an effect other than negative for Albertans to see that MLAs, no matter what party they are from, do all work for the common good of Albertans. We were at the event to support the Premier and the livestock producers and to show that we are a unified Alberta. The agriculture minister took the time to thank us for coming and recognized that our intentions were honest.

I would like these bullying tactics that I've witnessed so far to stop. I would not use them with you, but I can if I need to. I feel that if we all work together when we leave this room, we'd be acting as a positive force for all Albertans, not as a negative one on the outside. I've told many people in my riding: I don't care who you voted for on April 23, whether it's NDP, Liberal, the PCs, or the Wildrose. I'm here to work for them. I'll do my best for every person who calls or writes. I'm a very optimistic person.

I believe we should respect each other and our differing views. I believe we can and should look past our differences and do what's best for Albertans, all Albertans. That's what we're supposed to do, all 87 of us who were voted to be in here.

4:10

Madam Speaker, I look forward to the next three and a half years of lively debate and respect for each other in this room and outside of it. To all of you that have talked to me about wanting an actual free vote and not a whip vote, you still have a chance. You can come and join our team and be part of the Wildrose government of 2016.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Very passionate maiden speech. I found myself agreeing with some of your comments.

Now, hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of questions and comments. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. I'm wondering what specific issues the member is looking to move forward. Let's say two or three from your constituency and two or three from your other interests in life. What are the issues that you're looking to drive forward in the next three and a half years?

Mr. Donovan: That's an excellent question. Well, there are quite a few things we could start off on. I think balancing a budget is key and crucial. I'm a farmer by trade. I'm not as smart as some of the other members that live in different ridings around here, but I think we've got to look at the fact that – in my business I have to run a balanced budget. I think this is a business, and we have to run a balanced budget.

In all fairness to the current government they've pulled out about six items that we brought up while we were campaigning, so I think we are bringing some of the things to the table, and I think we can work with them on some items. I think we have to find some continuity in this government and try to figure out how to work together. I like to argue with the best of them, but at some point you have to move forward.

How much time would you like?

Ms Blakeman: Three issues. Three and three. Personal and from your constituency.

Mr. Donovan: You want constituency? Well, I guess we'd like to have to some roads down there. There's an overpass in Nobleford that needs to be built. That's one of the key ones.

It's been touched on before, and I don't know if everybody noticed it or not, but a long-term care centre in Carmangay happened to be closed over the summer. I would like to work with the Minister of Health to figure out what to do with that building now, whether there be a pilot project, whether there be a private owner to come in and buy it, and take care of that because right now that has crippled that town. Don't get me wrong. It's not going to kill them because they will get back up, and they will stand up, and they will fight, and they will survive. The point of it is that there's a perfectly good building there. They say – I can show the studies here and all the numbers that they did themselves – that these are things that need to be done.

The schooling in our riding is very diverse. We have home-schools, we have private schools, we have lots of religious schools, and we have public schools. I think they all need the right to be able to learn what they want to learn and to be able to teach what they want to be able to teach.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

We still have a few minutes on Standing Order 29(2)(a). Would anybody else like to participate?

Seeing none, we'll move on to our next maiden speech. I would ask the Minister of Energy.

Mr. Hughes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm deeply honoured today to rise in my place to give my inaugural address to the Legislature of Alberta and to respond to the Speech from the Throne. The Speech from the Throne focused on reaching new heights, supporting Albertans, strengthening our economy. When I listened, I could not help but think about my own family and its history in this province. I thought about how far our province has come, but most importantly I reflected on the fact that in 2012 we still hold the same values and virtues as the men and women who built this province.

If I were to put a title on my comments today, it would be We're Albertans by Choice. My family has been in Alberta since before Alberta was a province. Like many Albertans, my forebears made a choice. Their choice to come to Alberta was a deliberate act. In some cases it was actually a deliberate, informed act, but in some cases it was to escape circumstances with less opportunity, more difficult lives, or constrained social circumstances.

My mother's father, William Gardner, passed through Alberta in 1896 and two years later returned because he felt an irresistible attraction to the foothills and the mountains. Alberta presented an immense opportunity to carve a ranching life out of the foothills at the turn of that century. He was one of the first people in his area to put up a barbed wire fence to keep his cattle in and other people's cattle out. Not everybody was happy with that. William Gardner, though, had a choice. He'd been in the British navy. He'd been around the world. He travelled immensely, including once as a young sailor accompanying a royal delegation to attend a czar family wedding in St. Petersburg and later crossing the Panama isthmus on foot while the Panama Canal was under construction. The world was his oyster, so to speak, but he chose Alberta.

He met a young daughter of an Irish doctor practising in Calgary, Sarah Waddy, and they were married in a small church on the Tsuu T'ina reserve in 1901, adjacent to the boundaries of the constituency I now represent. Together they made a choice. They chose to put down deep roots, raise their family in Alberta near the Chain Lakes, south of Longview. Amongst those children born on the ranch was my mother, Mary.

My own father, Jim Hughes, was born and raised in Hereford county in England. The Hugheses and the Hereford cattle have been closely linked for several generations of both species. My father and his family members all knew Hereford cattle well. Before he left England, he spoke to people who shipped cattle all over the world from Herefordshire. He could have gone anywhere, but at the end of his research seeking the best cattle country in the world, he chose Alberta and arrived here in the late '20s, joined soon thereafter by his brother Tom.

Now, Jim and Tom made their respective choices. They had tough times, and they had good times. They built a cattle business through the Dirty Thirties. They never forgot the value of a dollar or the value of their family or the value of their community.

My parents were married in 1939 and chose to raise our family, again, in the cattle business. Alberta was good to them. They lived long and healthy lives, my father to 100, my mother to 95. So I'm sticking around. In so many ways their lives reflected the lives of so many others who also chose Alberta. They worked so very hard, overcame immense challenges of nature, and carved out a life here. Together with others they formed a community that

came together when needed and respected each other's need for space the rest of the time.

Denise, my wife, emigrated from Ireland to Canada as a very young child. She never made that particular choice, but her parents certainly did. Denise chose to stay in Alberta, and I must say that I'm very pleased that she did and so are our three teenage children, Aidan, Carlan, and Eamon.

I share these stories, Madam Speaker, as they are stories that are common to so many Albertans who live here today. People came to seek opportunities: some for adventure, some to build a new life, some to find a job that would support a growing family, some to escape the social and economic constraints of the old country.

Now, the earthly remains of all of those members of our family who came before us rest for eternity in the cemetery in High River. Their spirit, however, propels us forward with conviction and determination to continue to build that which they started. Each generation has the same choice. Each generation in our case has so far made the choice to stay and build a life in Alberta. By so doing, they help build the Alberta story and our community and, as an extension, our nation and the wider world.

Where does this lead us, Madam Speaker? It leads us to today, to our own current choices, to our own desire to continue to build an Alberta so that future generations also will choose to come to Alberta. What are the values we share that will allow us to continue to build that province, that magnet for humanity, that beacon of opportunity? What will guide our choices? First, we highly value our landscape and our environment much as did my grandfather. The test is this: if we were to be here in 50 or 100 years, would we be proud of what Alberta looks like? I'm honoured to be part of finding that balance here in this very Legislature in the near future. I'm proud that this government understands and has outlined the need for responsible development and the means to achieve it.

Secondly, we as Albertans are a community which has a special brand of consensus politics going right back to 1905. We can disagree greatly, but at the end of the day we can also consistently come together as Albertans in a way almost unlike any other province in this country.

4:20

As a personal aside, Madam Speaker, at least in my family – and I know this is true for many others – politics is just one expression of living in this community. Seldom a full career or calling; rather, it is a way to build the community beyond the personal needs of one's own family or business. For example, my father together with newspaper publisher Charles Clark of the *High River Times* worked to recruit signatures to recall Mr. Aberhart in the 1930s. Ultimately, it was an unsuccessful democratic exercise, but it was an engagement in community. My uncle Tom Hughes, whose daughter Maxine is in the gallery today, ran on the Peter Lougheed ticket in Okotoks-High River in 1967, narrowly missing out on becoming the eighth new Progressive Conservative member in that Legislature. I have the evidence here to prove that he was actually a candidate at that time with this campaign brochure.

In short, Madam Speaker, public service is an honourable calling.

Incidentally, Maxine is joined in the gallery by my niece Dr. Sarah Hughes and her husband, Dr. Andrew Simmonds, both of whom have also chosen to do their medical leading-edge research here in the province of Alberta.

Now, I cannot mention the Hon. Peter Lougheed without adding to the mountain of tributes rightfully sent his way. He was a pillar

of our province, a leader of our nation, an icon of public service, and the very definition of the public interest in his conduct.

I must also echo the recognition delivered earlier by our colleague from Calgary-Glenmore with respect to the late Hon. Harvie Andre, a former Member of Parliament. Harvie was a dedicated and spirited servant of the people of Canada, a fierce defender of the interests of western Canada in a strong and united Canada. We will miss him dearly.

Madam Speaker, the third common value that we as Albertans believe in is the importance of free enterprise, of the market economy, the creative genius of individual enterprise because it has served us well as a community, as a province.

Fourth, we believe in supporting those who need assistance in our communities. There's a common commitment to social justice in this province that sees business leaders taking on a challenge like ending homelessness in this province within 10 years. I am proud this government has increased AISH payments and that we are taking the needed step of supporting first responders.

Fifth, Madam Speaker, increasingly we are recognizing that we as Albertans are citizens of the world. When I wrote the birth announcements for our own children in the mid-1990s, I said that they were lucky to be born Canadians with the opportunity to become citizens of the world. Now, within less than a couple of decades, we all need to become citizens of the world. We are defined by our connectedness to others in this world by virtue of our need for markets for our products – agricultural, forestry, or energy in nature – and by virtue of the fact that the citizens of Alberta have come from around the world to join the First Nations people who arrived here more than 10,000 years ahead of the rest of us.

Now, Madam Speaker, in 2011 our eldest son and I joined a group of 35 other Albertans on a climb to the roof of Africa, Mount Kilimanjaro, raising a million dollars for orthopaedic services in this province and leaving behind a substantial contribution for health care training in east Africa. I'm still recovering. This is just one example of how Albertans are becoming citizens of the world.

Building on those fundamental values is how I will seek to guide my conduct in this House and beyond. I'm honoured to be one of only 34 Albertans who has served in both this Legislature and in the House of Commons of Canada. One of the first was Mr. R.B. Bennett, who started here and later became Prime Minister of Canada. I have no such ambition, Madam Speaker. I look forward to working with members from all sides. Some of my best work when I served in the federal House of Commons was accomplished working with all parties. Good ideas can come from anywhere. All we need is the goodwill to turn ideas into good work. I will work hard to treat colleagues with respect. I will work hard to ensure we always meet that important test in any choice we face, defined by the question: what is the public interest?

I particularly look forward to representing my constituency of Calgary-West, one represented by former Prime Minister R.B. Bennett in the federal House, by former Premier Peter Lougheed in this House as well as many others in this Legislature.

The communities of Aspen Woods, Christie Park, Discovery Ridge, Sienna Hills, Signal Ridge, the whole Signal Hill area, the Slopes, Springbank Hill, and Strathcona Park are vibrant, young, growing communities. They represent some of the fastest growing communities with all the needs that that implies. People work hard, raise families, and they love their communities. I'm proud to work with them to help ensure that those communities continue to flourish as a strong element of this great province.

I ask all members of this Legislature and Albertans beyond to help build a province which will continue to be a community of choice as selected by the citizens of the world. When I looked at where I wanted to live and raise a family, I chose Alberta, and I will continue to choose Alberta. I do so as a proud Canadian.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much for that very fascinating history of your family and another excellent inaugural speech. I don't think you prefer maiden speech.

As we all know, Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in, and it allows for five minutes of questions and comments. I think the Member for Edmonton-Centre would like to comment.

Ms Blakeman: Yes. Thank you very much. That was very interesting, and thank you for sharing a bit of your background. I have a funny feeling that my grandmother is buried in the same pioneer graveyard in High River, Millarville, somewhere. There's a pioneer graveyard with a log cabin, and evidently you can only be there if you've been approved as a pioneer family, so she's there.

I would like to ask you the same question. Why did you run for public office? Now, you served federally as well. What is the issue you're trying to accomplish? What are you trying to move forward? How are you trying to change the world in the period of time that you're going to be in this next session?

Mr. Hughes: Thank you for that question. It's a great question, actually, Madam Speaker. I did have a choice. I was serving in my own business capacity for many years, and things have gone exceedingly well. We've been very fortunate. But I felt that at this stage in my life I could make a contribution to this province. Having served in the House of Commons for five years, you know, you learn that your time is shorter than you think it's going to be, that you need to have a sense of urgency as a member in any Legislature, that you need to be committed to an objective that you're trying to accomplish.

From my perspective my goal is: I would be pleased if I could make a contribution with respect to finding that balance between economic development and environmental protection. I come, obviously, with a deep and long-standing multigenerational appreciation for the landscape and for the land in this province. From those roots and from that background I have a deep commitment to ensuring that we do the right thing by the environment in this province so that our kids and their kids and their kids for several generations out look back and say: you know, they did the right thing.

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

Ms Blakeman: No one else wants to question?

You at one point – it was one of your major pieces of why Alberta is great – talked with great emphasis on the free market. I'm always interested in why there is such emphasis put on that private sector and no accompanying recognition of the NGO and public sectors. You have been a public servant; you have served the people before. I'd like to hear why you don't talk about the contributions of the charitable sector, the recreation sector, youth, culture, health care as a public sector, teaching, education as a public sector. None of those are ever mentioned. It's always how wonderful business and the free market is. End of discussion. So I'd like to hear why you don't talk about the other half of Alberta.

Mr. Hughes: Well, Madam Speaker, I would say that, you know, my own life has been an example of a deep commitment to public

service. I paid for my own way to go to Harvard to get a master's degree. I came back with a pickup truck and \$60,000 debt to my name.

4:30

I've demonstrated through time, through service in the federal House, through commitment through my service as the inaugural chair of Alberta Health Services, through commitment to helping with a group of other friends to organize the first World Cup in cross-country skiing, to being quite active in the community – it's a lifestyle to be active in the community. It's part of the community of which I spoke in my comments earlier. It is an important part of it, but the fundamental underpinning of our society is that we have to create the ability and the capacity to have all of these other opportunities for ourselves.

The free-market enterprise that we all see demonstrated in this province probably more than in any other province in the country, that we're so proud of, is actually the fundamental underpinning. The economy is the fundamental underpinning of having the ability to ensure that we treat everybody fairly and that everybody has opportunity and that we have a cultural capacity in this province which exceeds a lot of other places in the world, that we can celebrate that and we can enjoy it and we can make the most of it. You know, the charitable communities, obviously, are all important institutions in the community of which I spoke.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I'd now ask the Member for Calgary-McCall for his response to the throne speech.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the throne speech. It is an honour to have the chance to rise and respond on behalf of the people of my riding of Calgary-McCall. Before I begin my remarks, I would like to thank the residents of Calgary-McCall for once again putting their faith in me and giving me their trust. It was hard work to gain their trust, but I thank them again for giving me their trust. Their support is precious to me, and I will work very hard to serve them as well as I can.

I would like to thank the many volunteers who worked day and night on my re-election campaign, and I'm very thankful for all their support. I would also like to thank my staff for their hard work and dedication. It was the hard work and the dedication of my staff which made my re-election even possible. Without their support it wouldn't have been possible for me to do my job.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their extraordinary patience and love over the years. Without their support I could never have entered politics, and I certainly couldn't continue in politics. I'm sure all members of this House understand what I mean when I say that.

It has been months since we heard the throne speech, but my concerns have remained the same. There was no mention of eliminating our structural deficit so that we can safeguard and improve the vital services we all value such as health care and education. There was no mention of improving seniors' care. We need more home care and long-term care beds so we can cut down the wait times in the hospitals. There was no mention of improving the provincial government's relationship with our cities, towns, and villages, of giving them the reliable and predictable funding they need, or of treating them with the respect they deserve. We need to build more schools, Madam Speaker. My riding, Calgary-McCall, needs a high school and a junior high very badly, and we also need a kindergarten school. However, these failures of this throne speech have already been discussed,

first during the short session immediately following the spring election and then throughout the summer, when the Alberta Liberals continued to hold this government accountable for their actions.

Now I would like to speak of a failure that has not been properly discussed, the failure to support new Albertans, Madam Speaker. My riding of Calgary-McCall is incredibly diverse. Many immigrants to Canada have made it their home, and many more immigrants continue to arrive every day seeking to make a new and better life for themselves and for their families. It is an incredible place, where you can hear many different languages, explore many different cultures, celebrate many different festivals, and enjoy many different foods. Calgary-McCall is home to new Canadians from Pakistan, India, the Philippines, China, Africa. You name it, and they are there. They are hard-working people who want to contribute to their new communities, but it is difficult for many of these new Albertans to reach their full potential and, as a result, to contribute their best to Calgary and to this province and the country.

The main reason for this is the language barrier, Madam Speaker, and as I have mentioned, this is something that is not addressed in the throne speech, support for new Albertans. This lack of support for new Albertans is most unfortunate. To understand why, think of it this way. Just imagine what Alberta would be like if we suddenly decided to leave our oil buried, underground, how poor we would be. Of course, we do not do that because it would be foolish to waste such a precious resource.

Unfortunately, however, this government is leaving massive resource wealth untapped, and it is costing every Albertan money. This government is failing to develop our human resources by neglecting to help new Albertans develop the language skills they need. This government's failure to invest in English as a second language, or ESL, is just plain foolish, as foolish as leaving the oil in the ground. This government's failure to value human resources as much as they value natural resources means that we are leaving billions of dollars of potential wealth untapped. That is why we encourage this government to properly fund ESL training for new Albertans and for their children.

Proper ESL funding will help new Albertans to better integrate in and interact with the broader community. By increasing funding to traditional ESL as well as Internet and mobile ESL, this government would not only tap into the knowledge and skills new Albertans bring; it would also help to unburden our social services, our teachers, and help newcomers to reach their full potential. The great thing is that increasing our investment in ESL would cost far less than the value of the benefits it would bring. A 50 per cent boost in ESL school funding would require an investment of only \$56 million a year. An additional investment of \$20 million a year would allow us to meet the needs of workers and their employers by providing Internet and mobile ESL. The throne speech fails to offer this kind of support.

Other ways to help new Albertans to contribute all they can to our province would be to provide more settlement funding and to get serious on foreign credentials so that we could have foreign-trained doctors, engineers, and other professionals fully contributing to our economy. None of these supports are offered either. This is very shortsighted when you think of it, Madam Speaker, because while our past wealth came from developing our natural resources and much of our present wealth comes from developing our natural resources, as we move deeper and deeper into the 21st century, more and more of our wealth will come from developing our human resources. This government needs to get serious about this, and I hope this government will take Albertans' concerns to heart and start making decisions that benefit all of us,

not just those who sit across the floor from me. Just as leaving oil underground is foolish, so is leaving knowledge and skill untapped due to a lack of English skills or a lack of recognition of foreign credentials.

Madam Speaker, it is disappointing to see that the throne speech focused more on crafting delightful sentences than presenting a plan for Alberta. I would have preferred more concrete language offering support for our cities, towns, and villages, for families, for students, for seniors, and for new Albertans, so many of whom live in my riding of Calgary-McCall. This throne speech fails to offer a vision to support Albertans, those who were born here and those who moved here from other provinces and from all over the world, as I came from India to Alberta in December of 1970. I know more needs to be done for all Albertans and all new Canadians. The speech does not meet their expectations, so I simply cannot support this throne speech.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you for your comments, hon. member, and thank you for helping us to understand your constituents better.

Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) would anyone like to comment or question the hon. member? The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

4:40

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just wondering if the hon. member could comment on the status of the airport tunnel, that he was such an ardent advocate for, and what his next great cause will be after the airport tunnel is completed.

Mr. Kang: Thanks for the question. Importantly, I think I was the only MLA in the House who was advocating for the airport tunnel. Thank God, touch wood, I was successful. The airport tunnel will be open in 2014, and you will know the benefits of the airport tunnel when it's open because you will be able to drive from the northwest all the way down to Stoney Trail in 2014. So fewer greenhouse gas emissions. In going to the airport, you won't be stuck in the traffic for hours and hours because there will be another access to the airport.

My next mission? We all know that our schools are bursting at the seams. We need more schools in Calgary-McCall, in Chestermere, everywhere, so my next mission will be education and balancing the budget because we are spending our future generations' money. We should be looking at saving some. Now with – I'll say it – the nonsense, you know, of that study going on, I don't know what's going to happen to the heritage trust fund. I'm afraid because the sustainability fund is almost all gone, and I don't know what the future of the heritage trust fund will be. Those are my concerns. We should be saving for future generations so they can have better, if not the same, living standards than we have today. That's my concern, and that's what I'll be fighting for.

The Acting Speaker: There are still a few minutes left under Standing Order 29(2)(a). Are there any other members who would like to question or comment?

Seeing none, I would ask the Minister of Transportation to present his response to the throne speech.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the 808th member of this Assembly, far from number 1, I thank you for the opportunity to rise today and honour the tradition of new members delivering their maiden speech. It's especially nice to do this on

the six-month anniversary of becoming the MLA for Calgary-Hays as part of a strong, stable, majority PC government.

I would be remiss if I did not congratulate the Speaker on becoming the 12th Speaker, I believe, of the Assembly. His place in the history of our great province is well earned after 19 years serving in the Legislature, and I'm sure he will distinguish himself as an unbiased and wise referee in the years to come, something his hockey official training has no doubt prepared him for.

By way of introducing myself to the House, I would have you know that I became an Albertan at 9 p.m. on July 26, 1981, when the plane I was on landed in Calgary. I am proud to say that I chose Alberta, and my employer of the day granted my request to relocate.

I'm also proud to have grown up in Woodstock, Ontario, as the fifth of seven children in a working-class home, the son of a welder and an office worker. The endeavours of my parents would have fit quite nicely in the Alberta economy of that day and today as well. In fact, my parents still inspire me today. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that if I have any success debating issues in this House, it's due in large measure to the best and most basic training in debate and negotiation I received while living in a household of nine people with only one and a half bathrooms.

Both my parents and all four of my sisters still live in Woodstock. The three brothers McIver have all lived in Alberta at some point. Today my older brother is in Petawawa, Ontario, and my younger brother in Red Deer, Alberta.

I'm blessed today to be married to my beautiful and inspiring wife, Christine, who makes me smile and who is the founder and chief executive officer of the Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta. Between us we have four children, all in Calgary. We're also blessed to have two grandchildren, Quinn and Zander, who quite simply remind us why it's so important to leave the province and the world in better condition than we found it.

Politically, Madam Speaker, I will lay claim to being determined and persistent. My first inspiration to serve publicly came from the father of a high school friend. A fellow named Bill Allen operated a lumberyard in Woodstock and served as mayor there for several years. During the teenage years, when I was hanging out with his son and a lot more interested in serving myself than helping others, he shared some of his inspirations for and experiences in public service. Despite my efforts to ignore the positive message, some of it seemed to stick.

Back in '98 I first ran for the position of alderman in the city of Calgary, where my dreams were crushed in a sound thrashing at the hands of the inimitable Sue Higgins, who today remains a legend of Calgary city hall. This was followed by another loss in a by-election, and finally in 2001, thanks largely in part to the retirement of Ms Higgins, leaving an empty seat on city council, I got elected.

The next nine years were filled with terrific opportunity, one after another, to serve Calgarians by both supporting and bringing forward positive changes and, in turn, fighting off proposals not in the public interest. During this time I had many chances to interact with the Alberta government. I was able to work, interestingly enough, with Alberta Transportation to co-ordinate the construction of interchanges on the Deerfoot Trail, where traffic signals had been the bane of the existence of thousands of citizens for years. Today, of course, the Deerfoot is ready for more improvements.

For eight years I served on the board of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, working with many ministries on legislative improvements as well as funding programs culminating in the municipal sustainability initiative, which stands today as the very highest standard of infrastructure funding for municipalities

across Canada. I'm so pleased that our Premier has committed to extending this program, giving municipalities more certainty in their funding plans.

I've also had the privilege during that time of serving with the Calgary Police Commission for two years and chairing the Calgary Housing Company for three years, which, interestingly enough, is the largest landlord in the city of Calgary, at that time serving well over 25,000 people.

I was also fortunate to serve on the Metropolitan Calgary Foundation, providing housing for seniors; chairing the Community and Protective Services Committee, overseeing emergency services; and leading the family and community social services committee.

Madam Speaker, the greatest gift I have received from public life is that I have been required to decide what I believe. Through being asked to explain over and over again into a media microphone what's important and then to live with that record and defend it, something great happens. A set of firm beliefs develops. This guides my thoughts and words and actions and gives me at least a chance to succeed in public service.

Madam Speaker, I don't want to miss this chance to thank the people of Calgary-Hays for the absolute honour of representing their interests in this Legislature. Members may know that Calgary-Hays consists of the communities of Quarry Park, McKenzie Towne, McKenzie Lake, Douglasdale, and Douglas Glen. The riding is bordered on the west by the Bow River, on the south by the 22X, on the east by 52nd Street, and on the north by the community of Riverbend. I had the opportunity in my past political life to have an impact on the planning and development of this riding, and I look forward to working with both my municipal and federal counterparts in securing the infrastructure and legislative needs of the area, including recreation facilities, the LRT, improvements to the Deerfoot Trail, completing the ring road, and the full opening of the south Calgary health campus.

I would like also in this Assembly to express my gratitude to the Premier for her confidence in asking me to serve as her Minister of Transportation. Although I have much more to learn than I know today, I understand the importance of the portfolio. Transportation is a cornerstone of our economy and our quality of life as Albertans. Transportation is our link to the rest of the world and our very lifeline. Only with a strong transportation network can we secure the future of our children and grandchildren.

The entire province needs to be listened to and worked for in this portfolio. Many projects which are not in the headlines of the media are nonetheless urgent to Albertans across this province. I recognize the need to listen twice and speak once to Albertans. Madam Speaker, I pledged a few short months ago to carry out these duties to the best of my abilities. I shall remember that promise.

With the support of our Premier and this government we have already committed to completing highway 63 from highway 55 to Fort McMurray, and I say "we" because nobody does this alone. We have put in place important infrastructure in Sylvan Lake, Medicine Hat, Cochrane, and Diamond City amongst other places. We have in place commitments to complete 100 per cent of the Edmonton ring road and 70 per cent of the Calgary ring road, with more to follow.

4:50

In short, Madam Speaker, this government is listening to Albertans and acting on their priorities from north to south and east to west. I'm very excited about the future of Alberta. God has blessed our province with resources, agriculture, great people, and

terrific neighbours. It's now our duty to manage those blessings wisely.

I look forward to working with all members of this House and all Albertans to create together a future where we can truly say four years from now and then, indeed, 40 years from now that we left it better than we found it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I agree with you about leaving it better than we found it. Thank you for your very articulate speech.

Standing Order 29(2)(a). Anyone wish to question or comment?

Seeing none, we'll move on to our next speaker, and that would be the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Hale: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a distinct honour to speak in this session of the 28th Legislature of the great province of Alberta. I want to thank the constituents of Strathmore-Brooks for giving me the privilege to represent them and share their successes as well as their concerns here today.

I would also like to recognize a friend and mentor by the name of Fred Mandeville, a long-time MLA in my constituency. It was people like him who inspired me to become active in provincial politics.

I take great pride in sharing with you some highlights of what makes the Strathmore-Brooks constituency truly great. Dinosaur provincial park is a United Nations educational, scientific, and cultural organization heritage site. It's located northeast of the city of Brooks along the Red Deer River. Dinosaur provincial park contains some of the most important fossil specimens discovered from the age of dinosaurs period in the Earth's history. The property is unmatched in terms of the number and variety of high-quality specimens, which date back over 75 million years. The park contains exceptional riparian habitat features as well as badlands of outstanding aesthetic value.

The John Ware cabin is also located in Dinosaur provincial park. A true pioneer, John Ware was an African American born cowboy who established his reputation in frontier society with deeds rather than words. His skills in the saddle and straightforward honesty earned him the respect of fellow cattlemen, First Nations, and entrepreneurs. John Ware was the first of many immigrants from a multitude of nations who live and work in my constituency.

Madam Speaker, water is the lifeblood of southern Alberta, and the Bow River is critical to the urban and rural health of this region. The western and eastern irrigation districts have roots which are firmly planted in the history of Alberta. In order to attract settlers to the area, the Canadian Pacific Railway began construction of a network of irrigation canals and reservoirs, starting with a diversion weir across the Bow River in Calgary in 1904.

On May 1, 1935, the Eastern irrigation district was formed. Originally the CPR had planned on closing the western section of their irrigation system, but after two years of meetings between the farmers and the CPR the Western irrigation district was born on May 1, 1944.

Madam Speaker, irrigated farmland provides the world with 40 per cent of all food produced. We are indeed fortunate to have two irrigation districts within my constituency that provide water to 400,000 acres of farmland. In addition, irrigation water is provided to 1,900 farms, over 25 industries, and a number of large feedlot operations.

The Strathmore-Brooks constituency is proud to host the Brooks Kinsmen Pro Rodeo in June and the Strathmore Heritage Days pro rodeo and chuckwagon races in August. I would like to

invite all residents of Alberta to these events, which allow us to preserve and enjoy our rich western heritage.

The Strathmore-Brooks constituency is home to numerous recreational opportunities: the Crawling Valley campground, Kinbrook Island provincial park, and Rolling Hills campground, just to name a few.

We are home to the Rosebud School of the Arts. The Rosebud school is famous for its first-rate theatrical productions while developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of other students in a Christian context. I would also like to recognize the Brooks campus of Medicine Hat College. The parents and the students of my constituency value the opportunity to be educated in their own homes.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take a few moments today to address a crisis that has affected my constituency. Over the past month the Brooks area has been crippled by the E coli incident found within XL beef and the loss of work which has been associated with it. While this is an unfortunate situation, I am proud to have witnessed such a positive and overwhelming amount of community support to help the workers and the Alberta cattle producers. I am proud to have worked alongside the city council and our MP in a collaborative effort to move the situation in the right direction. This is about our community, and I'm happy to see all levels of government and community groups coming together.

Every MLA in this Legislature has a story about how and why they're here today. I would like to share my story. My great-grandparents settled in the Bassano area in 1910, and my family has been living, working, and raising our children there ever since. My wife, Maggie, and I along with our two sons, Levi and Blu, are currently running a cow-calf operation near Bassano. We along with other hundred-year farm families treasure the agricultural legacy that five generations of blood, sweat, and tears have provided.

Madam Speaker, it saddens me to tell you that I know of a hundred-year farm family in my constituency who is returning their Alberta government hundred-year plaque. They are no longer proud to receive recognition from a government which they believe is taking away their property rights.

My constituents and I are concerned about Bill 19, Bill 24, Bill 36, and Bill 50. The current government has methodically and incrementally eroded Albertans' right to own property or to be compensated in a fair, reasonable, and transparent way, and this government's throne speech showed no commitment to change their ways. Madam Speaker, the reason I am standing here today is because my constituents want good government, a government they can trust to look after their best interests. It's my commitment to the people of Strathmore-Brooks to stand up for their rights and represent them in this great province.

When it comes to advances in civilization, it is said that we all stand on the shoulders of giants. I suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that the seniors in Alberta are our giants, and we need to be more respectful and appreciative of their contributions. I have talked with many seniors who are struggling to make ends meet. In this time of rising food and energy costs seniors have little protection due to minimal or nonexistent cost-of-living adjustments. Without these types of adjustments the Alberta government is taking away their dignity at a time in their lives when dignity is the thing they hold most dear. I am fully committed to standing up for the rights of our seniors and ensuring they live the life they deserve.

Madam Speaker, I graduated from SAIT with a diploma in chemical technology, and I'm an oil field consultant with hands-on experience in the oil and gas industry. I have worked in

Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and yes, I have worked in Fort McMurray. I have seen and I know the reality of large national and international oil companies building and running multibillion-dollar enterprises under very difficult conditions. As the Wildrose Energy critic I will look forward to holding this government accountable when it comes to defending and supporting the oil and gas industry in Alberta, and I look forward to holding them to account on their misguided Canadian energy strategy.

I believe that education is essential to Alberta's future. There are challenges we face as a growing province. I along with the Wildrose caucus am committed to ensuring Alberta's students are ready to be leaders in a changing global economy. I believe that educational decisions that affect our children should be made locally. I also believe that important core values taught to us by our parents should resonate and be supported by the educational curriculum and the teachers. Madam Speaker, what is more important than the development of successful learners, confident individuals, and responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society?

I am concerned with health care, as most of you are. As a family we've had many experiences within the current system. My father was a quadriplegic and in a wheelchair for 40 years. We have endured many visits to numerous clinics, hospitals, ERs, ICUs, and, last but not least, home care. Madam Speaker, I must emphasize that it's been my experience that the professionals who provide the care are excellent, but the system they work in needs significant repair.

Yes, Madam Speaker, I was a professional bullfighter. I've had the opportunity to travel all over western Canada. Through the years I've had the pleasure of meeting great men and women, indeed great Albertans while visiting many towns, villages, and cities in this province and others. Although the faces are different, the characteristics are the same: good people working hard, each taking pride in being an Albertan. They tell me how government is encroaching more and more on their way of life. More importantly, they tell me how helpless they feel when it comes to influencing government decisions. In the past they have sent government MLAs to Edmonton, but those MLAs were forced to vote the way the Premier told them to. Their voices weren't heard because the government wasn't listening.

Madam Speaker, I can tell you that politics is not exclusive to government. As a husband and a father with a large extended family, as a volunteer community coach, as a businessman competing for contracts, I've experienced a lot of politics. I've learned that it's not always easy but is critical to be able to listen to different people's points of view, to try and see both sides of an issue, and to work towards reasonable compromise. After all, isn't this the essence of democracy?

5:00

It is clear to me that Alberta has a democratic deficit. We need less big government telling us what to do. We need more transparency and more accountability. Franklin D. Roosevelt once said: "In politics, nothing happens by accident. If it happens, you can bet it was planned that way." I believe that democracy does not happen by accident. We need to rebalance the existing system of government with a clear bias towards transparency and accountability.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to quote the Member for Highwood, the Leader of the Official Opposition, who said, "Alberta has a rich and proud history of producing great men and women to champion the democratic causes of voting rights for women, senate reform, government accountability and provincial rights."

I would like to finish, Madam Speaker, by saying this. There's often a tension between ideology and common sense. I believe the exception to that rule and what makes the Wildrose caucus special is that our ideology is common sense.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, for your response to the throne speech. That showcased your community, especially the inspirational description of how they pulled together during a time of crisis.

Now 29(2)(a). If anybody would like to comment or question, this is the time.

Seeing no one, we'll move on to our next member responding to the throne speech, and that would be the hon. Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's truly an honour for me to move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne, presented by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta. As he set forth the vision for the 28th Legislature, I couldn't help but be struck by what his remarks meant to me. As a cabinet minister, as an MLA with the privilege of representing the constituency of St. Albert, and as someone who grew up in this province and is extremely proud to be an Albertan, I realized that that was a moment in time made possible by some very special people, whom I can only refer to as remarkable human beings.

The first remarkable human being is the man who delivered the throne speech itself. His Honour is nothing short of a Canadian hero. For people in parts of the world where they have not known the peace and security and freedom that we are graced with here in Canada, these people think well of Canadians because for them His Honour and his fellow peacekeepers have been the face of Canada, for his distinguished military service all around the world, for his service, after he retired, in African refugee camps delivering aid to the poorest of the poor, and for his current service as Lieutenant Governor as he has courageously shone a light on Albertans' struggle with mental health.

When he shared through the Speech from the Throne that Bill 1 would guarantee workers' compensation coverage for first responders suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder, he brought the full significance of his service to that announcement. For those of us who are new to this Chamber, I can't think of a more fitting bill to be our first on which we have the privilege to vote. To me, it's the kind of bill that made me want to serve my constituents in the first place, and it was put forward by the kind of government I want to be a part of, the kind of government that was inspired by another remarkable human being. I'm speaking, of course, about the late Hon. Peter Lougheed.

I enjoyed the honour and privilege of speaking with Premier Lougheed on two occasions. Although those conversations were brief, the impact of his words will last a lifetime. I know I'm not the only person in this room who enjoyed that experience. He was the kind of visionary who inspired Albertans no matter how they made their living or on which side of the political fence they sat. Madam Speaker, I can't express what it means to me to actually be a part of the team that continues Premier Lougheed's legacy, his vision.

That brings me to the third remarkable human being of whom I thought as I heard the Speech from the Throne. Like so many of us, Premier Redford says that she has been shaped by Lougheed's Alberta. Inspired by his predisposition to look outwards beyond Alberta's borders, she has played key roles within the international community, advising on human rights and democratic systems in some of the most desperate regions of the world so that she could bring broader understanding back to

Alberta, from which we may all benefit. Like His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, she has seen a need and said: let me help. I'm proud to serve a leader of such conviction and vision, and I'm proud to serve with all my caucus colleagues as well as my colleagues across the aisle.

Of the remarkable people I speak of today, the most remarkable, in my humble opinion, are my parents, Ash and Sharon Khan. They started their lives together as college sweethearts with a newborn son, with very little means but very big dreams. They are both children of parents who were not born in Canada. My grandparents on both sides of my family dreamed of a better life for their children, and it was their quest for this better life that led them to Alberta. It led them to building a home in Alberta. My parents took turns putting each other through university here in Alberta and made tremendous sacrifices to fulfill the dreams of their parents by striving to make an even better life for their children, my sister and me.

My parents are an Albertan success story. They have truly exceeded the dreams that they held as a very young couple beginning their life journey. The life and opportunities that they afforded my sister and me have truly been remarkable. It is now my turn, my obligation to my parents, to my grandparents, to my wife and two children, to the remarkable Albertans I've spoken of this evening, to my constituents in St. Albert, and to all Albertans who strive for the dream that their children will have more, that their children will have an even better life full of untold and remarkable opportunities. I believe it is the challenge of all my colleagues in the House to work with purpose and diligence so that our children in Alberta and our grandchildren and the future generations of all Albertans one day will experience a quality of life that exceeds all of our wildest dreams.

Madam Speaker, the Speech from the Throne outlines how our government intends to go about this important work. My team at advanced education and I are ready to help. In fact, I believe we're already there. The throne speech celebrated the fact that Alberta is the most economically free jurisdiction in North America. It promised to make the most of what we have and demonstrates that this is a government which will never be complacent, a government absolutely committed to improve on what we have built. There is a recognition on this side of the House that it is our investment in the ingenuity, creativity, and intellectual wealth of our citizens which will propel our province to its next plateau.

Our resources do not define us. Our geography does not define us. Our institutions do not define us. Our Alberta is, has been, and will always be defined by our people. We must continually invest and reinvest in our people to ensure that we are able to make the most of the opportunities which we currently enjoy.

Albertans are fundamentally entrepreneurial and have been since the first ranchers settled here, since the first rig was built, since the first store opened on Perron Street in St. Albert. Albertans know the concept of return on investment. They are bold but prudent investors. An investment today in our youth, in our entrepreneurial class, and in our innovators is such a vital component of our public investment portfolio. The return will sustain many generations.

Madam Speaker, my team and I work every day to further those freedoms so business, especially small business, can continue to drive our province's prosperity because the role of small business in Alberta's economy cannot be understated. Alberta has one of the highest numbers of small businesses in the country on a per capita basis, composing 96 per cent of all business in Alberta and providing more than a third of the private-sector employment in the province. That's why our government is committed to ensuring they have access to the supports they need. Madam

Speaker, there are so many services out there for small businesses; they just need to know how to find them. So we're creating an environment that does just that. We want to point small business in the right direction, connect them with the services and expertise they need, whether they're offered by our government or within the community, and then get out of their way so they can do what they do best.

Madam Speaker, the throne speech also stated that our government will partner with industry on research and development through a second Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority, which has been referred to as AOSTRA 2, to maintain a competitive world-class economy for the 21st century, to grow the marketplace for clean energy, and to protect the jobs so many Albertans depend on. AOSTRA 2 will do more than perpetuate Premier Lougheed's vision of financial security for Alberta. It will build on his vision, Premier Redford's expansion of it.

5:10

While Alberta's resource-based economy may be dominated by the hydrocarbon energy sector, we know that other important and promising sectors have much to contribute to Alberta's energy future: forestry, agriculture, construction, machinery, petrochemical manufacturing, and the technology sectors.

As a result, AOSTRA 2 will couple an economic vision with the principles of sustainability. AOSTRA 2 will also strengthen Alberta's position as Premier Redford leads us looking outwards in building bridges with the international community.

While the vision of AOSTRA 2 may be ambitious, I know we can turn that vision into reality. I know that for a fact, Madam Speaker, because I've spent the summer meeting with and, more importantly, learning from the incredibly talented and intelligent and motivated people within Alberta's postsecondary institutions, within industry, within the business community, within my ministry itself, and, of course, within the best constituency in the province of Alberta, in my humble opinion, St. Albert. These people have been invaluable, and I have learned the craft. Thanks to them I'm ready to take the task before us with the same enthusiasm and commitment as our stakeholders.

Rising to move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne, I can't help but think of all the good that has been done here for the people of this great province, the historical, lasting, society-changing contributions which have been made by our predecessors in these chairs from both sides of the aisle. Our predecessors have created high expectations for us, and those of us in the Chamber should have high expectations of each other.

Some of those expectations have been outlined for us in the throne speech. At the core of the speech is recognition of our good fortune. We are the most blessed of the provinces in this wonderful country. We have in abundance the most valuable of natural resources. We have a growing human capital base, which is among the most highly educated and technically expert in the world. Our education system and our health care system and all of our public institutions are not beyond scrutiny. We can never rest in our quest for excellence. However, our public institutions are envied by countries around the world. Our entrepreneurial class is world competitive. In short, we have the tools to build a great modern society. We can do better, we must always strive to do better, but never has a province been given such resources to employ in the cause of improvement.

Yes, we're going to meet some challenges along the way. Having served as a cabinet minister yourself, Madam Speaker, you know that's part of the job. When those challenges come up, I look forward to the privilege and honour of addressing those

challenges with my colleagues in the House. I'm looking forward to sharing this adventure with all of those currently in this Chamber and walking confidently down the road which has been laid out in the throne speech. It is the right path. It will lead us to a better place. As we work together to refine and achieve the objectives identified, I hope we all remember that we are the voice for all. We are the audience for all. We are servants all. We are leaders all. I believe we walk this path with the intent and hope that all Albertan families, too, can exceed their wildest dreams.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. It was very reassuring to hear that the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education has a strong belief in Alberta's entrepreneurs. Once again, another informative and inspirational speech.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. Anybody who wishes to comment or question now has the opportunity.

Seeing none, we'll move on to our next response to the throne speech. The Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise with some enthusiasm to make some comments on the throne speech. Now, I guess it's been five months or so since we actually were here before to listen to the throne speech, so I think it's important to review some of the elements that were in that speech and to talk about those intervening five months, I think, and, more importantly, as well about where we spent time in our constituencies and looked and listened to our constituents and found out what were the most pressing concerns and issues for themselves and for their families.

What I saw and have heard when I was travelling around Alberta this summer was not unlike what we had been seeing previously in the province of Alberta, not just in Edmonton-Calder but right across the province. First and foremost, what I saw and heard were concerns and issues around our public health care system. Quality public health care doesn't just provide us with the emergency needs that we might encounter in a hospital or at a doctor's office, but it also provides us with a sense of security to know that that public system is there when we need it for ourselves and for our families. Over the last number of years we have seen that security or that sense of security be compromised by a continuous sense of upheaval and continuous revolution, I would say, of how our public system is being delivered here in the province. We heard this during the election as well. I think what we heard from health care workers especially, who actually deliver public health, is that they were looking for some sense of a pause in this tumultuous change of administration and so forth that they have been undergoing over the last four years.

I just put that forward first and foremost as a caution because we heard just this morning that there is another change in the works in terms of decision-making and responsibility in our public health system. While we might welcome some aspects of more local control of how decisions are made to deliver public health in our province, I think we need to be conscious of just how much tumult and confusion and chaos those same health care workers and the public have dealt with over the last four years and to go forward in a reasonable and measured sort of way so that we don't end up with the chaos that we had to live with over the last four years.

Second, I heard quite loudly and clearly about the need to address utility costs here in the province of Alberta. Delivering affordable electricity I think is part of our public purview here in the Legislature, and it's very important that we get that right because at this point, again, that sense of security and stability to

know what our electricity and power bill is going to be from month to month has been pulled out from underneath us here in this province. We've seen tremendous fluctuations, from the brownouts that we saw in June to the high bills that are coming into our mailboxes here in the late fall, going into winter. The absolute necessity for us to re-regulate and govern those electricity rates through this Legislature I think has never been more clear than we see it here today, in 2012.

It's not as though we're dealing with a commodity that's the same as other things that we might buy and sell in the marketplace. I'm as much of a fan of the marketplace as any person when we're dealing with things that might benefit from competitive markets. But with electricity, number one, it's an essential service, that we just can't do without. I think there's hardly anyone that is not using electricity in quite a profound way in their daily lives, and it's just part of our lives here in a modern industrial society. To suggest that it can be left open to the vagaries of an open market I think is just not appropriate at this time in our province's history. The market is not there as a free market anyway. There are only a few players. At the end of the day lots of Albertans end up paying much more than they can afford for this essential service.

Third, I heard quite strongly and clearly as the Education critic just the importance of strengthening our public education system across the province of Alberta. As a teacher of long standing and with my own children going through the public education system, I recognize the value and the quality of the education system that we do have in the province. I can say without bias that over these last 20 years or so the public educators have become just that much more professional and interested, and they deliver a strong pedagogical system when they are teaching our children in our public schools, so hats off to them.

We are here again to support public education delivery in the best way possible through legislation. Here we are again with Bill 3, the Education Act, appropriately named, and I certainly will commit to trying to make sure that we do get the best possible new Education Act out of this legislation. We only get to do this once in maybe 20 or 30 years, however, so let's make sure that we do it right, that all aspects of Bill 3 are looked after in a fair and impartial way so that we get a new Education Act that we can all be proud of.

5:20

It was just delivered to our tables here today. I spoke on it today, and there are a couple of areas that we need to address, certainly, before we can pass this in good conscience. In dealing with section 16 of this act, I think it is very important for all of us to ensure that we permeate this document with a sense of social justice and equality that extends to all Albertans and in the best way possible. So you will certainly be debating that, I hope, in a constructive and productive way over these next few weeks.

The issue about our environment and the interaction between our primary industry in the province of Alberta, which is oil and gas and energy production, and that balance between that and protecting our environment: again, these are themes that we all know and have heard over these last years and even decades, but now more than ever we have to take a long, sober look at whether or not we are in fact reducing the gap between sustainability and the accelerated production of our energy system in this province.

It's clear that the oil sands are becoming more and more of a driver of our economy, and we recognize the essential elements of how many people are employed in that industry and how much royalty it brings back to the public purse, to the public good in this

province, and then, finally, how we are managing the oil sands resource for the future.

I think we have some serious decisions to make, and we will lay the groundwork for those decisions here in this House over the next coming years. I hope everyone takes the gravity of that situation seriously and looks past just being a cheerleader for whatever certain special interest they might be looking towards and looks for the common good that's best for all Albertans for now and for the future as well.

You know that there are two secrets that we can use to solve a lot of our problems locked in the oil sands and the oil sand industry. Number one, if we can build a capacity to increase our secondary processing of bitumen here in the province of Alberta, upgrading it to synthetic crude and other products, we know that that is a big job driver, a big producer of equity for our province, and helps to diversify our economy, too.

When we talk about raw bitumen exports, we can't let that other element of industrial development be passed by. If we're not building upgraders in the province of Alberta, someone else is getting that value-added upgrading capacity somewhere else and often in another country. I certainly will use my seat in the Legislature here – and I hope many of you will, too – to advocate to upgrade more bitumen, to upgrade it to other products here in the province of Alberta for the sake of all of us and our economy and our future.

It's interesting that with the recent passing of Peter Lougheed we all are reflecting on what this gentleman and his administration did during their tenure to build Alberta to the level of success that we enjoy here today. Certainly, I was a fan of the way that Peter Lougheed approached our energy wealth and developing that energy resource into wealth and equity for all Albertans.

I was reading an article written by Andrew Nikiforuk in *The Tyee* magazine a few weeks ago. I suggest that everyone take a look at it because it sort of goes back and outlines six basic concepts that Peter Lougheed used to help govern the choices he made when he was governing. We know many of these things, but it's worth while to go back and think about it. You might find it interesting to hear it from a New Democrat, but these are basic ideas that help to service the public good. That's why I'm here as a social democrat, to service the public good and to enhance it, and I think that these ideas help to augment that position.

First, Lougheed challenged Albertans to think like owners and to look at our natural resources as ours and not just something we sell off to industry. Unfortunately, we have had this concept compromised very seriously in this province over the last 30 years, and it seems as though it's very large international oil companies that are the presumptive owners of our energy resources rather than Albertans, which is the actual legal definition of who owns those resources.

Secondly, Mr. Lougheed told us that we need to collect our fair share from royalties. You know, being a member of the heritage trust fund committee, it became patently obvious to me and many other members that our contributions to the heritage trust fund went down in close proximity to how our royalty rates were going down as well. So as we collected less in royalties, we were less able to save in the heritage trust fund for the future, and we're all the poorer for it.

You know, I like to use the Norwegian example, that some people were having some problem with, but at the very least let's look and see just how much the Norwegians have saved in their heritage trust fund over the last number of years. It's in the range of \$600 billion. One of the members of the heritage trust board told us that the interest from that much money would be enough to

run the expenses of this province of Alberta on a year-by-year basis.

Madam Speaker, I'm so happy to be back speaking on the throne speech and, as I always say, as a humble public servant of my constituents in Edmonton-Calder but also of all people in Alberta. I look forward to working together with all of you to build constructive legislation that serves the common good. I've heard that theme a number of times here today. Let's put it to the test and ensure that everyone benefits equally in a just manner here in the province.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, for your thoughtful comments and your thoughtful response to the throne speech.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) for anyone who would like to ask a question or make a comment. The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a question, please. Going back to the member's comments about the Norwegian savings fund, I think it's the general pension fund. A couple of things I'd just like to ask about. First of all, that is an energy revenue fund that is made up of a lot of different components, including Norwegian pensions. I think it's important to point out that the fund that AIMCo manages on our behalf, including the pensions, is close to \$70 billion. Based on the fact that the Norwegians have a 25 per cent value-added tax or sales tax, a 1 per cent asset tax, amongst the highest corporate income taxes in the world, my question to the member would be: in order for us to grow our heritage fund at a similar rate, would he support those taxes?

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. I did hear the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park articulating this at our meeting as well, and I appreciate that. I'm only using the Norwegian example as an illustration of what you can do to save. I'm not suggesting that we become Norwegians although I am one and proud of it, third generation, but I am suggesting to just imagine the possibility of even having a fraction of that money in the bank.

We asked Leo de Bever – right? – to give us a sense of how much money we would need in the heritage trust fund so that we could run the whole operation off the interest. He said pretty much the number that was what the Norwegians had in the bank. So I found that to be serendipitous and, you know, insightful.

5:30

I'm not suggesting that we take the whole package of what the Norwegians have put in place, but certainly there is a strong sentiment in the province of Alberta right now to start saving long term using the heritage trust fund as Peter Lougheed, Progressive Conservative, had originally intended.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

We still have two minutes under 29(2)(a). Any other questions? The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Xiao: I would like to ask the hon. member a question regarding the so-called heritage savings. Do you know how much the Norwegians have in the bank? What's their income tax rate? I understand my colleague has probably just asked that question.

Also, since 1966 how many tax dollars has Alberta sent to Ottawa?

Mr. Eggen: Well, I believe that the Norwegian trust fund, whatever they call it, is in the neighbourhood of \$600 billion. They chose to structure it so that most of the royalty benefits they're getting from their oil and gas are going to that. It was more of a design to regulate the economy so that they were losing some of those vagaries of the boom-and-bust cycle that we see from a petroleum-based economy, right? I think we can learn something from that.

This whole issue about Norwegian taxes is completely misleading and irrelevant. I mean, I'm sure they pay taxes. I'm pretty sure that they, you know, have many benefits from that, too.

Once again, I'm suggesting there are other savings plans around the world, right? We don't have to be stuck on this one thing. There are lots of ways by which we can take best practices, using evidence-based reasoning to take those elements back here, and build something better for the future. I mean, I don't know, maybe I'm living in a different place from you, but you know that Albertans want to save for the future using the heritage trust fund right now. Anybody who doesn't think that, then, is missing the proverbial boat.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you for those questions and comments.

Now we'll hear the inaugural speech from the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just for the record I'm Irish, but I married a Norwegian.

Allow me, Madam Speaker, to congratulate you on being elected to your position and also to congratulate you and all our fellow members on their election to this Chamber. Many like me take our seats for the first time, and we've been united by our shared sense of awe at the responsibility that I think we are just starting to understand.

There are many returning MLAs to be thanked, many of whom have taken the time to answer my questions and all of whom have offered a warm welcome to newcomers in this Assembly. I'd especially like to thank colleagues on the all-party Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship for their support as we chart a new course in policy development, one that includes all points of view.

To the Premier: thank you for the opportunities you've created for me and for all Albertans through your leadership.

Sincere thanks are also due to my constituents in Calgary-Varsity, the people who sent me here. I'm inspired by their will for positive change and their enthusiasm about their role in democracy.

Finally, I extend heartfelt thanks to my husband, Laurie, and our sons Graydon, Mitchell, and Liam. There's a special place in heaven for mothers of three sons. They have given me faith and unwavering support. I hold them always in my heart.

The first time I entered this Chamber and every time since, I am acutely aware of and grateful for the diversity of this House. So many of us come from such different backgrounds. We come from different occupations. We were born in different parts of this province, this country, across the world. We represent different political philosophies, different cultural heritages, different age groups. It's right that we are so diverse because Alberta is also diverse and is becoming more so with every passing year.

The diversity in this House, the diversity in this province is also reflected in Calgary-Varsity, my home for the past 20 years. The median age of people living in Calgary-Varsity is over 60, making us one of the wisest in the province. Our seniors are vibrant. They are essential players in our complete community. What is even

more remarkable is observing how these seniors live alongside the thousands of students who daily attend over 26 public, separate, charter, and private schools in our constituency and those who come from across the province and across the world to study or train at the University of Calgary, nearby SAIT, even Vecova.

Calgary-Varsity is now considered by many to be an inner-city constituency. That's a hard thing for long-timers to accept. We have four light rail transit stops within our boundaries and significant density now emerging along our transportation corridors, yet we are also cradled by Nose Hill park to the north, Bow River valley to the south, and the grandeur of the Rockies to the west. Many, including myself, have rural and farm roots.

Calgary-Varsity is a constituency recognized for its valuable contribution to the well-established business community in downtown Calgary. Ties to the energy sector are powerful, yet our innovation is not limited to oil and gas. We're an entrepreneurial community creative in emerging energy technology, in medical R and D, and in the arts.

This diversity is remarkable. It's a gift. Yet this diversity is not necessarily easy to navigate. It takes resolve and sometimes even courage to build the dialogue and coalitions needed across all lines, to first understand and then to bring together our creativity, our history, our education, our business acumen, our faith, our culture, and our vast resources.

My challenge as a representative of Calgary-Varsity is to engage all citizens in creating and operationalizing a shared vision of our community and our potential, one that must constantly change by connecting bottom up to top down, formal leadership to grassroots. Getting to this shared vision will require much dialogue and plain old hard work. We can't just sand down our differences. It's tough sometimes for us to live with disagreement, to transcend the divides between urban and natural, young and old, established and new. Sometimes we just have to hold ourselves in that very uncomfortable space to allow the tension, the creative suspension, the breathing space because it is in the tension that the as-yet-unimagined solutions lie.

This leads me to the excitement I feel for the potential of our all-party Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. Together members of all four parties can reach out to Albertans, seek their input, and explore solutions on issues that matter. Yes, I expect there will be disagreements, but if we can stand together through the tensions, I believe we will find fresh solutions to big issues like how to find markets for oil and gas and how to build and maintain social licence to operate. I believe this is what Albertans expect. It is what Albertans deserve.

For nearly three decades now my work has afforded me the opportunity to work with diversity, connecting for-profit and not-for-profit organizations to grassroots realities in projects here in Alberta and around the world. As a lawyer and a businesswoman representing Canadian energy companies, I've been negotiating and managing projects with a wide variety of host governments and communities for the last 28 years. In the not-for-profit realm I founded a voluntary organization, Bridges Social Development, 10 years ago responding to an invitation from female and youth leaders in Yemen and First Nations communities here in Canada, training these local leaders who want to build their own capacity and lead their own change.

5:40

Now, in this newest chapter of my life, I'm humbled to be serving in government, honoured by this opportunity to work with you, Madam Speaker, and others here in ways that reflect the values of Albertans and the magnitude of the potential available to

us. I am deeply grateful to be part of this government in this province at this time.

I'm the typical Calgarian. I was born into a farming community near Tillsonburg in southwestern Ontario – and, yes, my back still does ache when I hear that word – where my parents and siblings continue to farm. In my lifetime I have watched Ontario move from a have to a have-not province. Over the course of my career I have worked on projects in more than 35 countries, many of them emerging democracies in emerging markets. I know with absolute certainty that we are the envy of most of the rest of the world. What we have here in Alberta is precious. We are not entitled to this wealth. Many people have worked hard over the years to create the conditions for prosperity and a sound economy in Alberta, and we need to keep working hard, bringing this province's diversity to the table and never yielding to complacency.

What I offer you, Madam Speaker, and my colleagues on both sides of this Legislature is the same thing I offer to residents of Calgary-Varsity. I will listen to you, I will learn from you, and I will work hard with you to move Albertans' priorities forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, for that response. I believe from listening to you that you will be able to transcend the divide that you spoke of in your speech, of old and new and young and old. It's a pleasure to work with you.

Standing Order 29(2)(a). Anyone wishing to comment? The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to say that what has been presented by the Member for Calgary-Varsity has certainly been very inspirational. I was just wondering at this time if the hon. member could share with all of us here in the House a little bit more insight. She had mentioned that she's listening very carefully, and some of the highlights and attributes of her particular constituency are the diversity of people who live there, very common to other constituencies across the province of Alberta. I was wondering, since she had spent quite a bit of professional time and otherwise in the oil and gas sector, if from being elected to present day she had learned anything more about the expectations of her constituents regarding a focus on diversifying the economy in Alberta apart from the oil and gas sector.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you for that question. Madam Speaker, it's interesting. Having spent 28 years in the energy sector and being known for that and being quite outspoken about how Canadian companies can and should operate here in Canada and abroad, I now find myself in a very different situation, acting in an elected role. What I'm observing is an understanding from my constituents and from others that while we must diversify – and my children are under the age of 25. Do I expect them to do the same work I do? No. Nor do others. Yet there still is an acceptance that our province is a province rich in energy resources. That is where our expertise lies. I think, first and foremost, that while we talk about diversification, we still have to focus on diversification on the basis of our strengths, building on those strengths.

The conventional oil and gas that we worked in and I worked in at the beginning of my career is so different than what we have today, and I expect that 30 years from now it will be different again. We can export that knowledge to other parts of this country, continent, and the world, but I think the energy sector is still the basis of our uniqueness in this world.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, we'll move on to our next hon. member, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to start by taking this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment. I'd also like to express my congratulations to all of those like myself who are newly elected to this Assembly. I also believe that it's important to recognize the former Member for the Lacombe-Ponoka constituency, Mr. Ray Prins, for his many years of public service. I wish him a long and enjoyable retirement.

Today it's my honour and privilege to stand and give my maiden speech in this Chamber. I'd like to thank the voters of Lacombe-Ponoka for their support and confidence. I am both honoured and humbled by their choice to elect me. As their representative I hope to be a strong voice for my constituents in this Alberta Legislature. With this opportunity I extend my sincerest gratitude to my friends, family, and volunteer team. Without their tireless effort and unwavering support I would not be here today.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to introduce myself and the Lacombe-Ponoka constituency to my fellow colleagues here in the Legislature. I am proud to say that I am a born and raised Albertan who was brought up in the town of Whitecourt. What is it they say about Alberta beef? It's raised right.

As a child and a teenager I watched my parents build a thriving trucking business. Watching them taught me that hard work, perseverance, and integrity are the keys to building a better life. The stories of my grandparents reinforced this lesson. They told me of their trials and tribulations, how they overcame them and looked to build something better for themselves and for our family. These sentiments are no different than anyone else who came looking for a better life here in Alberta. This is our history as a people, a people who continually persevere and overcome.

My grandfather also told me that I wouldn't know who I was or where I was headed in life unless I understood where I came from. The same applies to governance. We must have a reverence of our history to understand where it is we're going to go in the future. Talking to Albertans, I have heard the same story told a number of times. It is this story of hard work and success from our ancestors that has given me an appreciation of what it is we have here in this province today.

You know, after graduation I began to read political history books, specifically the memoirs of Sir Winston Churchill. This reading opened my eyes to the power of politics as an agent of change. I find it ironic that at the same time I found political history, Canadian politics, Alberta politics, discovered me.

Being an MLA will be a new and challenging experience, though I must admit that politics is not. Over the past number of years I have been a loud advocate in federal politics, serving on the federal electoral riding association of Wetaskiwin and holding a number of key positions such as financial agent, policy director, and president. In addition to these efforts, I sat as a member of the Lacombe economic development board and helped found the Wildrose Lacombe-Ponoka Constituency Association in 2009. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to use my talents and knowledge in the service of Lacombe-Ponoka. However, I must admit that my talents are heavily overshadowed by the achievements of the people in my constituency, both past and present.

The town of Lacombe was founded by Father Albert Lacombe, a French-Canadian missionary who is now remembered for brokering peace between the Cree and Blackfoot, negotiating the

right-of-way for the Canadian Pacific Railway through Blackfoot territory, and securing a promise from the Blackfoot leader to refrain from joining the Northwest Rebellion in 1885. Alberta's Famous Five – Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby – also have deep roots in the Lacombe-Ponoka area.

5:50

Before Mrs. Parlby helped the five advocate for the rights of women at all levels of government, she made her home near Lacombe with a rancher she had wed after arriving here in Alberta. Mrs. Parlby was elected to the Alberta Legislature under the banner of the United Farmers of Alberta and pushed through 18 bills to improve the plight of women and children in our province. She was named as a cabinet minister without portfolio in 1921, becoming the second woman ever to hold a cabinet position in the whole of the British Empire. She became the president of the United Farm Women of Alberta and a staunch advocate for rural women in Alberta. It is because of the pioneering work of women like Mrs. Irene Parlby that we have reached this historic moment in Alberta where both the leader of the government and the Leader of the Official Opposition can be and are women.

The Rt. Hon. Roland Michener, the 20th Governor General of Canada, was also born in Lacombe. His distinguished career included appointments as high commissioner to India and Canada's first high commissioner to Nepal. Mr. Michener was also the first appointee to the Order of Canada as well as its first chancellor and principal companion. On top of this, he was also the second of only two people to be presented with the Royal Victorian chain, a personal gift of the monarch, awarded by Queen Elizabeth II.

It should be noted that the accomplishments of the people of Lacombe-Ponoka are not only found in the pages of history. Anna Maria Kaufmann, Germany's most popular soprano, hails from Lacombe. The opera singer's big break came as the female lead in *The Phantom of the Opera*, which she has performed more than 500 times. She has performed with operas and orchestras from around the world and has also used her talents to honour great sporting events such as singing the national anthem for a global audience of 1 billion people during the 2006 World Cup in Germany. She still has not forgotten her home. We have a cafe in the Lacombe Memorial Centre named in her honour.

Former MLA Jack Cookson from the Lacombe riding said it right when he stood up in this very Assembly and commented that "our ancestors, who really were responsible for developing Alberta and Canada, did not do so by merely sitting on their butts."

Aside from these great people, the riding of Lacombe-Ponoka has a long history of excellence in many fields. Two that I will highlight today are agriculture and health care. I am proud to say that our constituency is home to the Lacombe Research Centre, which is one of a network of 19 national agricultural research facilities operated by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The centre conducts research in field crops and livestock production relevant to the central Alberta region. The centre's main research focus is on ante- and post-mortem factors that influence red meat: yield, quality, safety, and preservation. The centre also develops integrated sustainable crop and animal production systems as well as crop varieties for the short season environments of the parkland and northwestern Canadian regions. The Lacombe Research Centre holds the distinction of developing the very first breed of livestock developed in Canada, the Lacombe hog.

Even though the riding of Lacombe-Ponoka has been a leader in the field of agriculture, our constituents are right to be concerned

about the future of this industry. As municipalities grow, both farmers and municipalities need to work in a co-operative fashion whereby the activities of one do not hinder the activities of the other. As the MLA for Lacombe-Ponoka I will advocate for farmers and ensure that local agriculture is not strangled by cumbersome and erroneous red tape.

While on the subject of agriculture, I would like to tell you all about the second largest rodeo in Canada. It has been mentioned by some to be Canada's best rodeo and an annual hallmark of the constituency. It's the Ponoka Stampede. Also in Ponoka I was privileged to attend the grand opening this summer of the Canadian Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame.

The Lacombe-Ponoka constituency is also home to a number of outstanding health care facilities such as the Centennial Centre for Mental Health and Brain Injury, the Northcott Care Centre, the Rimoka Housing Foundation, and the Halvar Jonson Centre for Brain Injury, a centre which was named in honour of another long-serving, great political leader from the Lacombe-Ponoka constituency.

The Centennial Centre for Mental Health and Brain Injury deserves further recognition as it is one of the most modern mental health referral centres in western Canada. The centre is also home to the Grant MacEwan University school of registered psychiatric nursing. It is a growing training centre for medical and applied professionals in the psychiatric, geriatric, and brain injury specialties.

I believe that we can all agree that citizens are the greatest resource this province has, and their greatest resource is their health. I am also quite certain that we can agree that when health care services are needed, they're needed today, not tomorrow. In the throne speech we were told that this government wants to give

Albertans the tools and guidance they need to take charge of their health, but our current health care system is in desperate need of reform as Albertans continue to wait in bureaucratic queues and on long waiting lists. Like so many Albertans I have seen the pain of loved ones as they wait for service from our system. Albertans are hurting and dying on these long lists, and urgent changes are needed so that Albertans can take charge of their health today.

Our province is great, but there is a lot of work to make it even better. I believe in voter-driven democracy, and I look forward to helping my constituents. We must never forget that we are here on an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, and ever-improving journey. While I campaigned, the message I shared with my constituents was: it's time your MLA was your voice in government. My conviction in this style of democracy shall remain and grow strong.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to address this Assembly. I look forward to the tasks at hand and the opportunity to hold this government to account.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Your constituency was blessed with a number of great leaders, and you'll have the opportunity to show that you, too, can be a great community leader.

We have just a few minutes, but we can move to Standing Order 29(2)(a).

The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Horne: Madam Speaker, I was going to move that we adjourn debate until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:58 p.m.]

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