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The 28th Legislature
First Session

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Thursday, November 1, 2012

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The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (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)
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Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC),
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Smith, Danielle, Highwood (W),
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
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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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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

Anderson
Casey
Dorward
Eggen
Kubinec
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Sherman

Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Luan

Blakeman
Dorward
Fenske
Johnson, L.
McDonald
Notley
Saskiw
Wilson
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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Jablonski	Sarich
Jansen	Saskiw
Jeneroux	Swann
Johnson, L.	Wilson
Kang	Young
Kubinec	Vacant
Lemke	

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Brown
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Jablonski
Mason
Quest
Sherman
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Jeneroux	Swann
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Kubinec	

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Casey	Xiao
Fenske	Young
Fraser	Vacant
Hale	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 1, 2012

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Let us pray. Holy and divine Creator, we are grateful for Your guidance during this past week, and we ask for Your continued guidance and oversight of our actions and activities when we head home to see our families, our friends, and our constituents after today's work is done in this Assembly. Guide us safely along the roads that we must all travel. Be with us always. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four sets of introductions today, I guess a bit of a fan club, so bear with me, please. First, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly constituents residing in Edmonton-South West, Mr. Ani Seoul and his wife, Mrs. Trina Joshi. Trina Joshi is back again today. She was here yesterday with the Daughters Day delegation. Mr. Seoul is a police officer with the city of Edmonton. Mrs. Joshi works as a community support co-ordinator. With them as well are Mrs. Joshi's parents, Mr. Ram Sharan Joshi and his wife, Mrs. Madhu Joshi, who are visiting from the capital of India, New Delhi. I'm not done about Mr. Joshi. Mr. Ram Sharan Joshi is a retired journalist, who is a renowned writer celebrated in India. He has covered the Indian Parliament and the United Nations, accompanied state representatives across the globe, and has done extensive research on Indian tribes for over four decades. Mr. Ram Sharan Joshi has written over 15 books, earning him various literary awards. In 2007 he also chaired a delegation of Indian writers to the UN General Assembly. A very accomplished and, overall, really nice guy.

Number two, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of students and teachers from George P. Nicholson school, located in the new constituency of Edmonton-South West, that I'm so honoured to serve. Accompanying these 22 bright and energetic students is their teacher, Mrs. Maxine Sprague. They also just came from McKay Avenue school, where they were introduced to what the first session was like. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would like to ask the students and guests from George P. Nicholson to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to introduce to you and through you some smart, passionate Albertans from the University of Alberta Progressive Conservative Association. Here today in the members' gallery are Aurora Pounder, Aaron Pollock, and Natasha Soles. These are good friends of mine and, like I mentioned, very passionate Albertans.

To round out the fan club, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you my two assistants. Mrs. Jennifer Kirkelund, my legislative assistant, and my constituency assistant, Mrs. Kara Fuhr, are here helping with all these guests. If we'd all give them a round of applause.

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

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Gordon Smith. This gentleman takes citizenship to a new level. He has received numerous awards for his community involvement from the Silver Acorn, one of Scouts Canada's most prestigious awards, to the community service award from the Legion, of which he is a member, having served as a second lieutenant, to recognition from the city of Edmonton and the government of Canada. Gordon is trained as an educator and taught at NAIT. He taught economics, marketing, and a leadership class, and became the first recipient of the faculty emeritus award.

In 1989 because of a tumor in his spine he was confined to a wheelchair, and he was told he only had a 10 per cent chance of living. That never slowed him down. Mr. Speaker, the Liberals were told they had a 10 per cent chance of living in this last election. It didn't slow us down either. Amongst many other things, he owns businesses, engages in public speaking events, carves, paints, volunteers, and advocates for others. I'd like Gordon to raise his right hand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know how excited I get about introducing to you and through you to every member of the Assembly wonderful constituents from the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre. I'm truly delighted today to have three advocates joining us in the public gallery. Danielle Zyp has been an adviser to me on mental health issues since I got elected, and she has continued and grown into that role as an advocate overall. Danielle, would you please rise? With her today are two others, Karen Peterson and Cathy Smith. They have formed a little advocacy group on their own, working on the need for public education, breaking the stigma of mental illness. They're going to start an e-zine blog to discuss some of these issues, a nice way to do advocacy in the new century. They would like to see amendments and consistency of benefits and health care concerns and to maintain and increase funding to mental health programs. Thank you very much for coming down, Danielle, Karen, and Cathy. I appreciate it.

Members' Statements

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

Youth Advisory Panel

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged today to share some work that I've been doing as the newest chair of the government of Alberta Youth Secretariat. As a part of my duties as the Youth Secretariat chair I will form and meet regularly with the Youth Advisory Panel. The panel is made up of 18 of Alberta's youth aged 15 to 22 who will support our ongoing work. Together the panel and I have been tasked with providing feedback on emerging issues for youth in our province. The Youth Advisory Panel has been a successful initiative since the year 2000. We have the opportunity to ensure that youth have an ongoing chance to provide input into the future of the province as we create new public policy and programs.

Recruitment has ended as of yesterday, and the selection process is well under way. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that we've received a number of applications from around the province. I look forward to introducing the new members to the House when the selection process is complete. I also look forward

to working with these young, inspired leaders. I'm eager to share my findings as I spend time meeting with these youth. I truly believe that there is no limit to what we can learn by listening to young Albertans and working side by side to find solutions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tax Reform

Mr. Hehr: A report released today by the Parkland Institute acknowledges what many other think tanks and economists have already reported, that Alberta's fiscal structure is fundamentally flawed and does not let this province do what it needs to do today: build schools, hire teachers, teach children, ensure a vibrant middle class, and provide dignity and hope to those living in poverty. The report acknowledges that the state of this province reads a lot like a Dickens novel. It is the best of times for some and the worst of times for others. The report clearly shows that inequality exists and highlights that other jurisdictions are doing more in this regard.

The report points out the ludicrous nature of our tax structure. One of society's most important tools for ensuring economic equality and, in my view, for this province to be able to save for the future is a progressive tax system. Alberta currently has a flat-tax system. By the way, Mr. Speaker, we are the only jurisdiction in North America that has one of these. In Alberta we ask an individual who makes \$30,000 a year to pay the same rate as a person making a million dollars a year. Not only is this silly, as the report point out, but Albertans with lower incomes actually pay higher rates than most other Canadians while those at the top pay the lowest rates in the nation.

1:40

Further, the report also notes that we have the lowest corporate tax rates in the nation. As a result of our broken fiscal structure the Alberta government is not able to build the schools and roads, hire teachers and nurses and the like, and has the least generous social supports of any Canadian province. It's a trite saying, Mr. Speaker, but societies are judged by the fair and equitable treatment of those who have the least.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Parkland Institute for this report and for bringing this and many other issues to light. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Calgary-Hawkwood.

MADD Canada Project Red Ribbon

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a moment to recognize an important milestone being achieved today by MADD Canada. Today marks the official start of MADD Canada's 25th annual Project Red Ribbon. This campaign promotes sober driving during the holiday season. For a quarter-century MADD Canada chapters and community leaders have gone into their communities around the holiday season to distribute red ribbons and to raise awareness about the dangers of impaired driving. From November 1 until the first Monday after New Year's Day MADD Canada volunteers will be out there with their red ribbons. They'll be asking the public to tie the ribbons to vehicles, key chains, purses, briefcases, or backpacks as a reminder that it is never okay to drive impaired by alcohol or other drugs.

The red ribbon is not only a reminder about the importance of driving sober; it is also a strong and meaningful tribute to all victims who have been killed or injured in impaired driving

crashes. Every year between 1,250 and 1,500 Canadians are killed and more than 63,000 injured in impaired driving crashes. I am sure that I'm not alone in the Legislature in knowing the pain of the consequences of such accidents. When we know that this crime is completely preventable, even one death or injury attributed to impaired driving is too many.

By raising awareness and reminding the public about the risks of impaired driving, MADD Canada hopes to ensure that this year's holiday season is free of impaired driving tragedies. MADD Canada encourages all Albertans to get their red ribbons and wear them proudly as a symbol of your commitment to driving sober this holiday season and all year long. With everyone working together, we can make our roads and our communities safe. MLAs have been given a red ribbon to wear and show support for a safe holiday season.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

Speak Out Student Engagement Initiative

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and speak to you about a wonderful initiative that is engaging Alberta's youth in their education. Since 2009 Speak Out, the Alberta student engagement initiative, has given our province's students the opportunity to share their thoughts, concerns, and ideas for the future of our education system. I'm proud that the government of Alberta cares what students have to say about their education.

Through the Speak Out website students are empowered to share their thoughts in a safe and welcoming environment. There are fascinating dialogues happening on the Speak Out discussion boards right now. Young people from across the province are debating many of the same things that we are discussing in this Legislature, things like whether teachers should be able to assign a zero, whether the value of standardized testing is appropriate, and whether what they're learning in class is relevant to the future of their work and career.

Another important part of Speak Out is the Minister's Student Advisory Council. I know the hon. Minister of Education had the opportunity for an initial meeting with those outstanding young Albertans in September. The 24 council members come from across the province and represent a broad spectrum of rural and urban youth aged from 14 to 19, each with a unique perspective on education. One of the council members, Mr. Cyril Binny Kuruvilla, is a grade 11 student at St. Francis high school in my riding of Calgary-Hawkwood. Last week I had a chance to speak to Cyril about his experience involved with this council.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by Calgary-Bow.

Whistle-blower Protection

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on another broken promise of this government. Previously the Premier had said that we either have open government or we don't. Well, it's clear that with Bill 4 we don't. For starters I refer to part 1, section 3(2), which states, "This Act applies only in respect of wrongdoings that occur after the coming into force of this Act." Even if there were nothing to hide, this section quite clearly gives the impression that this government is hiding something. Bill 4 needs to include retroactivity to protect whistle-

blowers who may be compelled to blow the whistle yesterday, tomorrow, or even today.

In question period yesterday the Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation said that Bill 4 allows whistle-blowers to go to anyone they wish. Bill 4 tells a different story. This bill stipulates that the public interest commissioner would handle all whistle-blowing complaints and that the whistle-blower will report to the designated officer or chief officer, the deputy minister. People should not have to navigate their own organization to blow the whistle.

While this bill covers breaches of the law and gross mismanagement, Bill 4 would not apply to ethical behaviour. Government and its departments should be responsible for the totality of their record, not the narrow definitions under this bill.

Particularly alarming is the exemption clause in section 31(1). Albertans are wondering if the commissioner will use this to exempt friends and members of the government family. Albertans have seen how exemptions are given to the government's friends, and this only fosters a culture of cronyism. Albertans are sick and tired of seeing this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bowness Ratepayers/Bowmont 169 Scout Group Hall

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the new Bowness Ratepayers Lions and Bowmont 169 Scout Group hall. It celebrated its grand opening on October 20. Construction of the hall just began this year, and I'm proud to say that the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in this project paid off because it looks absolutely amazing.

There would be no new hall without the hard work and dedication of people like Dale and Kally Streit, the Lions Club, and so many other community members who gave hundreds of hours of their time. As well, Allan Markin and Jim Thorogood generously assisted us in financing the hall, continuing the tradition of ex-Bownesians giving back to the community where they were raised.

I think it's important to stress that the majority of the labour was done by community volunteers. I am very proud of how one of my Calgary-Bow communities came together to build this hall with everyone giving their time, labour, and money according to their capabilities. It is facilities like these that will continue to give back to the community and serve as symbols of co-operation and strength.

I am pleased to say that the community spirit of Bowness along with the Alberta government community initiatives program and community facility enhancement program grants have created a gorgeous building that will serve the Scouts, Lions, and people of Bowness for many years to come.

I want to congratulate and thank everyone involved in the building of the new hall. I know that it'll be well used and valued by the community.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

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

Chief Electoral Officer Investigations

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Chief Electoral Officer believes he is barred from releasing the results of any investiga-

tions, and the government seems to go along with that, or at least they did up until yesterday. Originally we understood the Deputy Premier said no to releasing anything about the Katz affair, but later the Premier, under heavy pressure, gave an answer that could be interpreted to indicate a willingness to release the investigation results, or perhaps not. Let's give the Premier the opportunity today to be transparent and accountable. What exactly will she release?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier. [some applause]

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always good to be back in the House, and I'm glad that the opposition is so enthusiastic, but one thing I didn't miss is the fact that our Premier was very clear yesterday. She said yes, absolutely, and for sure. I don't know how many other terms she could have used to convince the Leader of the Official Opposition or at least have her understand that this government will be transparent. When we receive the findings in the form of a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer, we'll not only share it with this Chamber but with all Albertans.

1:50

Ms Smith: That's very encouraging, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Premier now commit to applying the same openness and transparency to releasing the results of the investigations that exposed 45 cases of illegal donations to a political party?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, we already did better than that because if that member actually cared to do a little bit of research, she would find that the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta had already released on its website in May of 2012 a list of all donations that had been found to be inaccurate and returned.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking: when will they publish the list of donations that they had to return?

I will be tabling that soon.

The Speaker: I can see where this is going, hon. leader.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We don't have any illegal donations to publish.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier talks about openness and honesty a lot. In one speech she wanted to keep raising the bar on transparency and accountability. Can the Premier square that comment with the evidence of secrecy and cover-ups on things like those illegal donations?

Mr. Lukaszuk: I'm glad to hear, Mr. Speaker, that they will say on the record that they don't have any illegal donations, but let me remind you that in the 2004 election one individual donated 75 per cent of their campaign funding, in the 2007 by-election that very same individual funded 99.7 per cent of the cost of their entire campaign, and in the 2008 election that very same individual funded 23.3 per cent of their campaign. It's a matter of interpretation.

Speaker's Ruling

Questions about Political Party Activity

The Speaker: You know, it's becoming exhausting to stand up as many times as I have to stand up and interject and remind you of some of the rules. Now, I'm not going to take the time to read them all again. I may later. Please, let us not stray too far into this right now because it is against the rules to ask about issues pertaining to political parties in the way that some questions have

been phrased and some answers have been phrased. So let's be doubly careful.

Airdrie, you rose on a point of order, and that point of order has been noted. Thank you.

The hon. leader. Second main question.

Fiscal Accountability

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government is patting itself on the back for another consultation, and, surprise, it has delivered exactly the results that they were hoping for. Another surprise is that it's exactly the opposite of what Albertans said about debt when they were polled this summer. In that same speech I mentioned, where the Premier talked about raising the accountability bar, she also said this: we need to ensure that our actions are fair to this generation and to those that follow. To the Finance minister: how does racking up more debt and borrowing more money square with that statement?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, we actually went out and we did six different ways of doing consultations so that we could make sure that what we were getting was an accurate representation of what Albertans were telling us. We did the online survey, which the hon. member alludes to. We also did electronic submissions. Just to name a few, I had in-person discussions with people like the chair of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce; the board chair emeritus of the University of Calgary; the chair of the public policy institute, University of Calgary; the former dean of the School of Business, U of A; the managing director of the national bank. In addition to that, we also did presentations by mail. We had one-on-one meetings. We had online open houses. We did a number of these things.

The Speaker: The hon. leader. First supplemental.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The research done in June by Think HQ did a scientific poll of a thousand Albertans and found that only 7 per cent thought that going deeper into debt was a good idea – that's just 7 per cent – yet the minister wants us to believe that his consultation gives him the green light to spill more red ink. Why does he still insist that going into debt is a good idea?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. Think HQ is the same one that thought that they were going to be the government next time.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, in 1971 Albertans rejected Social Credit finance policy and chose Progressive Conservative policy. In April of this year Albertans rejected Social Credit finance policy and chose Progressive Conservative finance policy.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier is committed to raising the bar on transparency and accountability, will the Finance minister obey his own law and disclose the full picture, all the details, in the next fiscal update?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I did, I will, and it's going to be a great one.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Justice System

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, Alison Jones is a constituent of mine who has a daughter who says she was sexually assaulted for eight years by an individual, starting when she was just nine. This man was charged in 2009. Due to delay tactics and the Crown not having

adequate staffing to deal with its caseload fast enough, the judge threw the case out because he felt it was taking too long to come to trial. Premier, I want to know what kind of pathetic excuse for a justice system charges an individual for violating an innocent girl for eight years and then denies that victim her day in court.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hope this issue is not still sub judice. No?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I was just going to say that I think this is an appropriate question for an MLA representing their constituency to ask. I won't make political hay of this. I won't respond at this point in time. We'll look into this matter and provide appropriate comment back.

Mr. Anderson: Albertans are tired, though, of the excuses and the refusal by this government to take responsibility for its actions and inactions on a number of files, spending millions on trips and corporate handouts, yet we have things like this.

Premier, you were the Justice minister during the time of this debacle. Why is the provincial Crown prosecutors' office so grossly understaffed that somehow this girl's case was delayed and deferred to the point where now she will never see justice done for the unspeakable crimes perpetrated against her?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I do not actually believe that this is an appropriate question to be raised in such a political manner. We have said that we will look into the facts of this case, and we will provide a fulsome response.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I don't know where you're going with your third and final supplemental, but I hope it's not a repeat of the first two. Please govern yourself according.

Mr. Anderson: These questions are entirely appropriate, and you'd better start thinking about the girl instead of your political skin. I want accountability on this. [interjections] This girl is a citizen of Alberta and, as one of the most innocent victims, deserved better than this. Everyone here had better . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, please. [interjections] Hon. members. Very nice. Thank you.

Let us move on, please, to the leader of the Alberta Liberal opposition. [interjection] Please, have a seat. Please. [interjection] Please.

Mr. Anderson: I have a legitimate question.

The Speaker: I'll deal with you and your issue at the end of question period. I'll clarify for you where this is not supposed to go. You can see the eruptions that occur, okay? Please. If you wish to rephrase the question, I'll allow you to, briefly. You have a rephrasing?

Mr. Anderson: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay. We'll listen carefully. Proceed.

Mr. Anderson: Premier, will you launch a full investigation into this matter, determine what on earth went wrong here, what steps will be undertaken to ensure it doesn't happen again, and will you personally call this victim to comfort and apologize for a justice system – a justice system – that entirely failed her? This is unacceptable. It cannot happen again in this province, and you have the power to do something about it, Premier, so do something.

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I stand by my comments in this Chamber, and I will follow up.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Alberta Liberal opposition. [interjection]

Hon. Member for Airdrie, please. [interjection] You've made your point. [interjection] You've gone a little bit further than I would have preferred to allow you to go, and now, as I'm speaking, you're still continuing. Now, what would you like me to do about that? I have an idea. Why don't you and I meet at the end of this and have a little chat. All right? Thank you.

The hon. leader of the Alberta Liberal opposition.

Social Policy Framework

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the best of times and the worst of times. According to a report from the Parkland Institute titled A Social Policy Framework for Alberta, Alberta has quickly become home to both the wealthiest and poorest citizens in the country. Alberta has the highest poverty gap, and our indigenous community is overrepresented in the poverty group. Poverty is driving inequality off the cliff in our society, and we are footing the bills for mental health, addictions, violence, courts, policing, prisons, lower high school graduation rates, and lower health outcomes. To the Premier: how is the government's social policy framework going to address growing levels of poverty and the worsening inequalities in our society?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm more than delighted to talk about the fact that we are engaged in a social policy framework discussion with Albertans because it's something that matters to all Albertans, and all Albertans have to be engaged in that topic. As the hon. member raised in his question, it's not simply about income disparity, but it is about income disparity. I was privileged to hear a report about a meeting that some members of our caucus had, for example, with Women Building Futures, a wonderful organization that's helping with some of that wage gap because they're helping women find better jobs and get some of those higher paying jobs that traditionally have been in the purview of men.

I was also today at a family violence prevention thing. That's another part.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, this issue has been going on for decades, and they're having discussions? Albertans want action. They wanted it 10 years ago, and they want it today.

To the Premier: why do you insist on regressive policies that download costs to hard-working Albertan families in the form of user fees, mandatory school fees, higher tuitions instead of a progressive tax rate that would see the wealthy pay their fair share, the same policies that Peter Lougheed had? Why don't you implement those, Premier?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to how proud I am of our Minister of Human Services, who has undertaken a comprehensive consultation with respect to the social policy framework. One of the things that I learned when I was Minister of Justice was that the foundational work with respect to community development and building families, ensuring that families were empowered to provide support for their children, were given support through programs, through institutions, through education and health care to ensure that every child had

the opportunity for success, was fundamental. This government introduced a social policy framework to lead that discussion, and I'm looking forward to seeing the results of that.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, given that we have more than 70,000 children in poverty, I want to say how proud I am of hard-working Albertans who go to work each and every day to build this great province. To the Premier: given that our greatest resource is their children and given that today we have a golden opportunity to develop a just, fair, and inclusive society where we can all benefit from our resource riches, why does your government insist on keeping the benefits of Alberta's great wealth in the family instead of implementing truly progressive revenue reforms?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what truly progressive reforms are. Truly progressive reforms are raising AISH payments by \$400 a month so people on AISH can live with dignity. They're some of the people who have among the lowest income. [interjections] Truly progressive policy is raising the daycare qualification income amount to \$50,000 so that low-income Albertans can have quality child care, with standards, while they're at work at those jobs. [interjections] Truly progressive policy is supporting organizations like Women Building Futures so that they can help women get the skills that they need to get those high-paying jobs.

The Speaker: Let us remember the rules and the courtesies regarding interjections and not discussing things across the bow. The Speaker is doing his best to maintain order here. I wish 86 others would join me.

The hon. leader of the New Democratic opposition.

Political Party Financial Contributions

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government simply can't be trusted to be straight with Albertans about election finances. Yesterday the Premier said that the Chief Electoral Officer's investigation into the massive donation from an unnamed person would be made public, yet she refuses to publicly release evidence. This morning I asked NDP staff to dig up a cancelled cheque from a campaign donation I received, and they took less than an hour to get it to me. My question is to the Premier. Why has she refused to release the cancelled cheque or cheques from Mr. Katz?

Mr. Lukaszuk: I'm not surprised it took them five minutes. There are only three cheques, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear, and you know best. We have officers of this Chamber, and one of them happens to be the Chief Electoral Officer. He has undertaken to do a full investigation. It's in the interest of this Chamber and in the interest of Albertans that we allow him to do this review. We have been very clear. We will release anything and everything that he wishes to have available to him during this investigation, and we'll go one step further. Once he sends us a letter with his findings, we will share that letter with this Chamber and with Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, our party is not the party of the shrinking campaign donations. We're actually growing, unlike that party.

Given that this Premier when she was Justice minister buried efforts to include donations for leadership races in disclosure legislation and given that she is apparently wilfully blind when

dealing with the Katz donation, how can Albertans trust her and her government to clean up the financing of politics in Alberta?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, as Justice minister one of the privileges I had was to be able to ask an all-party committee of this Legislature to make recommendations with respect to leadership fundraising rules. I'm very proud of the fact that every single member of our leadership campaign competition, which is what it was over those 12 months, who is sitting in this House publicly released all of their campaign contributions. We are committed to transparency, and we'll continue to be committed to transparency.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the committee the Premier refers to did make recommendations. They were never acted on. It's not voluntary disclosure we're looking for; it's legislated disclosure.

Given that Albertans' confidence in the financing of our political system is now at an all-time low, will the Premier attempt to restore confidence in her government and introduce legislation which prohibits corporate and union donations to political parties?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, knowing the rules of this House, I cannot pre-empt a piece of legislation that hasn't been tabled yet, nor will I spoil Christmas early, but I can tell you that this member very soon, within a matter of a few days, will be able to debate a bill that will speak to many of these issues.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, followed by Edmonton-Riverview.

No-zero Grading Policy

Mr. McAllister: Never a dull moment in here, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. The voice of Albertans is loud and clear on the no-zero policy that's employed in some schools in this province. Albertans think it's, frankly, ridiculous. It doesn't allow teachers to do their jobs. It penalizes them for it. It penalizes students by not preparing them for life. I think most members of the PC caucus probably agree it's a bit ridiculous. Why say one thing and then do another? To the Education minister: why wouldn't he support our amendment to put an end to this no-zero policy?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about saying one thing and doing another. Let's talk about saying, "We respect local autonomy," and leaving out the condition, "unless we disagree with their decision." Let me be very clear because we said this over the hours of debate the other night. The province of Alberta, the Ministry of Education, does not have a no-zero policy. We assess students four times during their K to 12 life with PAT exams and diploma exams, and if students don't show up to write those exams, they get a zero. We expect students to earn their way through the system. We expect there will not be any free passes.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I was pretty certain that the Education Act was a guideline for boards and teachers to reference. My apologies.

Given that right from the act, a couple of examples, a student must comply with the rules of the school and policies of the board, given that the board as a partner in education has to be accountable to students, parents, the community, and the minister for student achievement of learning outcomes, Mr. Speaker, doesn't the minister agree with Albertans who think this is a little bit hypocritical to not get rid of this amendment?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what amendment he's talking about. We expect, like I said, students to earn their way through the system, and we entrust the day-to-day grading, the day-to-day assessment of students in the classroom to teachers and the administrators of those schools. That's what's in the Education Act. If we want to micromanage the day-to-day assessment and actually put that in legislation, I can't imagine how many times we'd be running back to this House to change legislation based on new research, based on hypothetical situations, or based on one-off issues that may come up to allow teachers to actually grade kids based on their professional judgment within the day-to-day operations of the school.

Mr. McAllister: I didn't realize, Mr. Speaker, that PC stood for pathetically cowardly, but I think that's what it does with this policy.

Mr. Speaker, why is the Education minister seemingly standing up for a bureaucrat or an educator that came up with a policy that nobody agrees with instead of standing up for Albertans, who are in droves asking this Legislature to do the right thing and get rid of this no-zero policy?

2:10

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I guess I'll say it a third time. There is no no-zero policy. At the local level with the school in question that he's talking about, that school division is working with parents to talk about their grading policies as we speak. That's where those discussions should take place with respect to the day-to-day grading policies. We absolutely agree with Albertans that kids should not be progressing through the system just based on their social age. They should be earning their way through the system. We're developing curriculum and assessments that are going to get us to that end. We believe that is happening in the system today, and we want that to be happening in the system tomorrow.

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, you rose on a point of order?

Mr. Hancock: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It has been noted.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, I realize that a lot of us are new in this Assembly, but I'd really caution you to please review your words and choose them, perhaps, as carefully as you can. I'm sure that's what the point of order will likely be about. It just consumes time, as you're seeing. I know we can all do a lot better than that. We all took an oath. I thought we had all agreed that we would try and elevate the decorum in this Chamber, so let's try and stick to that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Impaired Driving

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November 1 is MADD Canada's red ribbon day. The MADD Canada red ribbon project has been promoting safe, sober driving for 25 years. My question is to the Minister of Transportation. How has this government been working with MADD Canada to make roads safer?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to say that this government has an excellent relationship with MADD Canada, and their input was invaluable when we were updating our impaired driving legislation. We look forward to working with them in continuing to find ways to make roads safer for Albertans and every other person that travels on roads around here. The efforts of MADD Canada and our other traffic safety partners – the police, the food and beverage industry, and other Albertans – have been instrumental in helping us make judgments that way. MADD Canada has been a very good contributor to helping us formulate good legislation.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. There's been a lot of discussion about the changes to the administrative suspension periods in the Traffic Safety Act introduced earlier this year. Have these changes been effective in promoting safe decisions about the consumption of alcohol and driving?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Time will tell whether the legislation has the desired effect, but I can tell you that most Albertans have gotten the message that the limits haven't changed but the penalties have. Those few Albertans that choose to make bad decisions know that the consequences are greater than they were. We have actually, as I said, partnered with Albertans, including the hospitality industry, who are really working with us to not scare their clients like the opposition chose to do in some of their comments on the legislation but, rather, to try to educate their clients to behave responsibly and tell them that they can enjoy themselves as Albertans and still get home safely if only they make a plan.

Mr. Young: My second supplemental is to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. While I certainly support the stance the government has taken on drivers who record alcohol levels of between .05 and .08, what are we doing to get tough on drivers who record blood-alcohol levels over the Criminal Code limit of .08?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that question because just this week I was in Regina at the national justice ministers meeting. Of course, as this member knows, drunk driving over .08 is a federal matter. We brought up an issue about tougher sentences for drunk drivers over .08 involving serious bodily harm or death. I'm really pleased that the federal government appears to want to act here. I would definitely like to see mandatory minimum sentences. So would many of my counterparts across other provinces. Let's make this a reality federally.

Hospital Occupancy Rates

Mrs. Towle: Mr. Speaker, last February the Health Quality Council recommended that Alberta Health reduce hospital occupancy rates by 85 to 90 per cent. This means freer flow through emergency departments and progress toward hitting the eight-hour wait time benchmark that everyone agrees is a critical measure of success. The Minister of Health ordered Alberta Health Services to reduce occupancy rates to 95 per cent by

October 31. That was yesterday. Has that target been met? Yes or no?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report to the House that Alberta Health Services has made tremendous progress toward meeting those targets. They are in the process of preparing a final report, which I'll be pleased to share with the Assembly, regarding the results on that directive as well as the one on reducing the number of alternate level of care patients in our major hospitals. They have done this through a collaborative effort at the site level, where administrators and clinicians and other support staff have worked together to design processes and procedures to achieve these objectives locally.

Mrs. Towle: Mr. Speaker, hospitals typically see a major reduction in emergency department visits over the summer months, when major health issues like influenza and pneumonia aren't as prevalent. How will the minister move toward hitting a target of 85 per cent during the much busier winter season?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, we make no apologies as a government for setting aggressive targets within our health care system. We are very well supported by a health delivery organization, Alberta Health Services, which is committed to doing that. As I've said, there will be a report forthcoming from Alberta Health Services describing the very, very good work they've done across the province through empowering our clinicians and our support staff and our administrators to work together to deliver better results for Albertans. They've done so in the past. They will continue to do so in the future.

Mrs. Towle: Mr. Speaker, this government constantly claims to be open, accountable, and transparent, but it's almost impossible to track the progress on meeting many of these Health Quality Council recommendations. Will the Minister of Health commit today to tabling in this House regular monthly updates of occupancy rates of all Alberta hospitals?*

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health Services and the Alberta health system is one of the most open and transparent in the country when it comes to sharing data. As the hon. member should know, there is information readily available on a variety of topics on the Internet with respect to waiting lists, with respect to time to treat for various procedures, and with respect to our progress in primary care among many other topics. The information is available. It's available to the hon. member without the benefit of question period. I encourage her to review it and perhaps succeed in asking a better question.

Community Development Funding

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, when I meet with nonprofit organizations in my constituency, one of the consistent concerns I hear is the need for more funding for community-based projects. Now, the lottery fund helps address some of the need, but those dollars are finite, and the programs are oversubscribed. My question is to the Minister of Culture. How can the minister justify giving \$5 million in funding to a radio station when there are so many other projects that need funding?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's always more demand for our tax dollars, but to me this is an example of how partnerships can make the dollars go further. The government

*See page 496, left column, paragraph 4

recognizes that every dollar invested in cultural projects is nearly doubled in economic impact. That's exactly how we see the potential of CKUA. I'm proud to support that project. It's an important cultural project and an important historical project as well.

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, my second question is again to the Minister of Culture. How does a new building in Edmonton benefit my constituents in Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an investment for all of Alberta because CKUA broadcasts Alberta-wide and world-wide. As a matter of fact, they were the first Canadian radio station to broadcast over the Internet. It helped launch the careers of such internationally renowned artists as k.d. lang, Corb Lund, and Jann Arden. CKUA will have a new space in the National Music Centre in Calgary.

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, my final question to the same minister: how are those decisions on who does and, more importantly, who does not receive funding made?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My department assesses grant applications based on strict eligibility requirements. When projects don't meet those criteria, they're not funded. It's a fair and equitable program and supports projects all over Alberta. At the end of the day these projects provide safe community places for our children and our families, and this government believes in investing in families and our future.

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

Teacher Working Time

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This November 1 we learned that there's maybe a trick but there's no treat for the school community as the deadline for three-way talks between teachers, the province, and school boards has passed without an agreement. Teacher workloads, classroom sizes, and support for students remain the main issues. To the Minister of Education: given that teachers are working longer than ever under worse conditions, can you tell us why you and the school boards won't consider some kind of cap on working hours for teachers?

2:20

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I think that's a great question. We've had long discussions with the ATA and the SBA, and I've been in many schools talking with teachers. What I can tell you is that a hard cap on how many hours a teacher can work throughout the week – 31 hours is the request – over the whole province, one cookie-cutter approach, is not the right way to go. I can point to the fact that over half of our teachers already had these hard caps in place, and those teachers in those jurisdictions are just as vocal in their concerns about the workload as the ones that don't have it, so it's obviously not the silver bullet.

Mr. Hehr: Well, obviously, that's classroom teachers, not the overall workload.

One of the reasons given why there will be no discussion on this is the fact that rural school boards are already suffering a shortage of schoolteachers, and they feel that any discussion on this will

impact them even further. What are you doing about the fact that our rural school boards don't have enough teachers, and what are you doing to try and recruit more there?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, just to clarify, we are talking about the overall workload. The 31 hours is 23 hours of instruction and eight hours of assignable time. That's the parent-teacher interviews, the staff meetings, the supervision, and all those pieces that are in that workload. I do sympathize with teachers because they have a real challenge today with the diversity in the classroom and all the skills that need to be kept up with respect to technology and the collaboration that we expect or hope to be done. So we want to tackle this in other ways. We want to have solid discussions with the teachers on what pieces of the business are they doing today that don't bring value that we can peel back to provide time for them to prepare so that we can have the best-quality teachers in front of our kids.

Mr. Hehr: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it slightly disingenuous that the minister keeps referring to these 31 hours a week that teachers are allegedly only working. Minister, you're aware of a recent study that points out that the average teacher is working 56 hours a week in this province, are you not?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the 31 hours are not mine. They're the hours that are in the agreements and the hours proposed by the ATA. We can talk about the hours that we're talking about, that other folks may be talking about, or we may want to calculate, but let's talk about the implications for rural Alberta. You just can't put hard caps on the number of minutes a teacher will work in rural Alberta when, literally, we have some schools of 20 kids with two teachers hundreds of kilometres from the next school. How do you manage a workforce that way? With a hundred kids in one school and half a dozen teachers, how do you get a teacher to come in for .3 of a job, five subjects over the course of a year, and situations like that? Rural schools will close.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Social Policy Framework

(continued)

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to a sobering report released today by antipoverty advocates, Alberta has the most intense poverty and the highest poverty gap in the country. In short, we have the dubious distinction of being the Canadian leader in inequality. My question is to the Minister of Human Services. When will this government recognize what the IMF, the World Bank, and the Conference Board of Canada have already recognized, that heartless social policy is also bad economic policy?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, that was recognized by this government many years ago and has been continually part of the way that we construct our policy and our relationships with social agency in the community. It's one of the reasons why we're refreshing that social policy with an intense discussion across the province about social policy framework. Fundamentally, we need as a community to own the issues about what causes poverty in a community and how we can come together to overcome those causal issues. Income disparity is a very big concern. Alberta has the unenviable privilege of having some of the highest paid people because we have such great jobs. Now we have to move to get everybody else up to that level.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. Given that the Conservatives' policies mean that Alberta leads the way down the wrong road, with the lowest minimum wage in the country, the most intense poverty, the lowest rates of postsecondary enrolment, and bankruptcy rates that are twice that of the average Canadian, when will the minister admit that his policies are driving Alberta's families deeper and deeper into poverty?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, of course, the policies that we have in this province and the quality of life that we have in this province mean that we have the highest growth, the most people coming to live here because it's the best place in the world to live, but that doesn't mean that we can forget that there are people who need a hand up and help from time to time. So we have Alberta Works, which helps people find better jobs than they have, helps people get the skilling that they need to get those better jobs. As I mentioned, organizations like Women Building Futures are helping people get the skills that they need to get some of those higher paying jobs so that we can close the gaps. Yes, we have some of the highest income. Yes, we have some of the best social programs to ensure that everybody has a part of Alberta's opportunities.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, intense discussion does not feed families, so given that Alberta has the highest percentage of working families in Canada who are forced to use food banks, why won't the minister, at the outset of his epic consultation process, make a concrete gesture of good faith and immediately raise Alberta's minimum wage to at least \$10.30 an hour for all workers?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, that's one of the problems with the social policy discussions. People move immediately to the wrong answers instead of really looking in depth at what makes a difference for people in a real way. There is a very small percentage of people in this province who are earning minimum wage. A lot of them are not the people that she's talking about: the single-parent families that are living below the poverty line, the working poor. Those aren't necessarily the people who are on minimum wage. Just raising minimum wage is an easy placebo that doesn't really reach the depths that the social policy framework discussion that we're having is going to do.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Edmonton-Manning.

Ferruginous Hawk Habitat

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll let the blood pressure drop a little. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Environment and SRD a specific question regarding the irresponsible and unlawful violation of the Canadian Species at Risk Act. ATCO removed multiple nesting sites of a protected species, the ferruginous hawk, in direct contravention of the act. To the minister: will you be open and transparent and admit that your ministry – your ministry – is responsible for giving permission to ATCO to remove these nesting sites in violation of federal law?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will say that a mistake was made by ATCO, but it was identified quickly. [interjections] ATCO has been working with us to rectify the situation, as I said. The situation, which was unfortunate, has led to several positive outcomes, including more nesting platforms, 34

from 13, and significant improvements to artificial nesting structures, which ensures their serviceability and longevity in more strategic locations. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: Hon. members, we can do without the groans and the moans on either side here. It's not helping the debate at all. It's not doing anything to maintain, much less elevate, the level of decorum that we've asked for. Please, can I ask you for the last time today: let's not have any more of this across-the-bow stuff. These members on this side or private members on that side have the right to ask questions. Government members, ministers, associate ministers: you have the right to answer them. Let's all respect each other a little more today if we could, please.

The hon. member.

Ferruginous Hawk Habitat (continued)

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that ATCO just felt the bus run over them, will the minister do the right thing and hold those responsible accountable for this unlawful decision and uphold and enforce our existing laws?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When potential compliance concerns arise as a result of incidents like this, discussions typically occur at the field level between our wildlife staff and their enforcement field services colleagues. If, in the opinion of those field staff, enforcement is required, we have a range of options available to us to bring an individual or a company back into compliance. In this case we chose to use the situation as an educational opportunity for the company, as a more effective way to rectify the situation. I'll say, as I've said for the last two days, that the situation will be rectified to move from 13 to 34 nests.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that that's the longest no I've ever gotten and given that the commission has not approved a licence and has not approved the location of the transmission line, to the Minister of Energy: how can the public have any confidence or faith in this government or a commission hearing process when the ministry of SRD interferes and contaminates the process by having the nesting sites of a protected species removed prior to the commission's evaluation and determination of the transmission line location?

Mrs. McQueen: Mr. Speaker, I'll take that question for the Minister of Energy. We have a great deal of confidence in the AESO and in the AUC, who look after those regulations on where the power lines go. We will continue to have a lot of co-operation with them, and certainly we look to them to provide the direction in that area.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by Medicine Hat.

2:30

Apprenticeship Training

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are 31 optional certification trades in Alberta. For those trades, apprenticeship

training programs are not required. Instead, their skills can be recognized by their employers without any formal training. This may leave Albertans vulnerable to those who do not have formal training in their trade. My question to the hon. Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education: please, Minister, could you tell us what this government has done to regulate optional certification trades in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for that question. Here in Alberta we have quality and appropriate standards for both optional and compulsory trades set out in the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act. The hon. member is correct. For optional certification trades such as cook or baker there is no requirement for a tradesperson to be certified in their trade; however, they always have the option of obtaining a journeyman certification within our system here in Alberta.

I'm very proud to let you know that Alberta is clearly established and recognized as a leader in apprenticeship training and skill development throughout the world, and Alberta is responsible for training more than 20 per cent of all skilled people across Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: does your ministry see value in making certification for all trades compulsory?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important to note that for what we would consider high-risk trades such as electrician or welder, where public work and public safety is a vital concern, for the most part those trades require compulsory certification. We've worked very closely with industry, consulting with the public, as well as working extremely closely with the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board to establish the proper criteria for trade certification, compulsory certification as well as consideration for the optional certification trades.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. What does your ministry plan to do to protect homeowners from potentially shoddy workmanship done by uncertified tradespeople?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You can be assured that workers who go through Alberta's apprenticeship and industry training systems perform their skill sets to the highest standards, highest standards compared to anywhere else in the world. We encourage homeowners and consumers who are considering hiring individuals or trades to work on their homes to verify those certifications. Our department is happy to receive those inquiries and verify those inquiries. One of the things that our government is doing in leading the way is the work of our Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs in terms of the legislation for new-home buyers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Travel to London Olympics

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We heard yesterday how out of touch the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation really is when it comes to ripping off Albertans for her million-dollar junket to the London Olympics. She said she "needs to build bridges, not walls," but the only thing Albertans have seen so far is a \$113,000 London bridge to their luxury hotel industry. She said Albertans are "already seeing the return on our investment" for such outrageous and bloated costs. Will the minister, then, clarify to hard-working Alberta families why she sees this gross waste of their money as such a massive success?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to talk about one particular success of the many that we have achieved in London. In particular, we look forward to next year hosting what is called the Dertour Academy, which is going to bring more than 600 top travel agents and key tourism partners and journalists to Alberta.

An Hon. Member: How many?

Ms Cusanelli: Six hundred.

We hope that it will be aligned with the experiences of others who have hosted this same event. In the future we hope to reap a 20 to 30 per cent increase in travel and tourism. That will add to Alberta an additional \$16 million coming to our province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister has admitted that she has a general aversion to saving tax dollars by flying economy because -I will try to say this without laughing, and I quote - when you're out there meeting nine people in one day, you need to have your sleep, will the minister stop dozing off, stop ripping off Albertans, and start treating Albertans with respect?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our very strong and top-level expense and travel policy is obviously being espoused and supported across Canada. As I've done in the past and will continue to do, I will be following that policy.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When will the minister talk to her caucus whip so he can convince her colleagues to pay back Albertans for her waste and mismanagement, just like they all happily and freely agreed to for the no-meet committee? [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. minister. [interjections] Did you hear the question? There was so much noise, I had trouble hearing it. But if you did and wish to answer it, proceed.

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't hear the question either, so I will take the opportunity to say a little about, you know, the impact that our travel to London had on many of our artists and, certainly, our agrifoods environment and industry here. As I said in the past, what is good for our industry here in Alberta is going to be good for all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by Drumheller-Stettler.

Labour Negotiations with Teachers

Mr. Bhardwaj: Well, thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, teachers started the school year without a contract. Now we've learned that labour talks between government, teachers, and schools will be extended. My questions are to the Minister of Education. How long do you intend to keep these talks going and leave teachers without a contract? Mr. Minister, what are the main issues, and what's really on the table?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, to be clear, this is a tripartite discussion. We could go back to local bargaining, but we haven't set a deadline. There's enough fruitful discussion happening right now that we feel it's good to keep the discussions going. I would point out in response to the questions that the ATA and the teachers have recognized they're the best paid in the country by a wide margin. And it's not about the pay. It's about the working conditions, as the Member for Calgary-Buffalo mentioned. While we all agree that teachers need time outside the classroom to prepare and collaborate and keep their skills up, we need to find a solution that also gives us the ability to be flexible and doesn't put our rural schools at risk.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My next question to the same minister: Mr. Minister, how much will this agreement cost the government? Is that one of your concerns?

Mr. J. Johnson: Cost is always a concern, Mr. Speaker. We've been very clear that we need to work within the three-year budget that the Premier promised the school boards and that we've laid out so that they can have that certainty. But you should know that over the last decade we have increased funding to education by 60 per cent, even though enrolment has only increased by about 4 per cent, and the number of teachers in the classroom has increased by 13 per cent. We already invest more than any other province on a per-student basis or on a per capita basis. Our teachers make about 20 per cent more than the teachers in B.C. and Saskatchewan, which is okay because we want the best teachers in front of our kids. So it's not about the money. It's about finding ways to do things better, like cutting back some of the red tape that teachers have to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, my final question is to the same minister. Given that teachers are pushing to change the classroom hours to deal with workload, would that mean that kids spend less time in the classroom?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, we will not decrease the instruction for our kids. We may discuss changes on how much time a teacher spends in a classroom and what their workload day is like and how we support them with some of the diversity aspects that they have to have with respect to that, but we will not consider changing how much time our kids have in front of quality instructors.

Introduction of Bills

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

2:40

Bill 203

Employment Standards (Compassionate Care Leave) Amendment Act, 2012

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 203, the Employment Standards (Compassionate Care Leave) Amendment Act, 2012.

Bill 203 would amend the Employment Standards Code to include provisions for eight weeks of unpaid compassionate care leave for individuals charged with caring for terminally ill family members. This bill would help to ensure that Albertans do not have to risk employment and careers while performing their familial duties.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I committed to yesterday, I'm pleased to rise and table the appropriate number of copies of our final report on our London mission and, along with that, testimonials from individuals, companies, and institutions benefiting from Alberta's program during the London Olympics. Of course, as you know, our primary goals in London were to attract investment in our energy and tourism industries and to create new opportunities in the arts and culture sector. The documents that I'm tabling today will show exactly just that.

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

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 19(5) of the Auditor General Act I would like to table five copies of the report by the Auditor General titled Report of the Auditor General of Alberta, October 2012. Copies of this report are being distributed to all members in this Chamber.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table five copies of a document I referenced to the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance yesterday, estimates of medical costs associated with agricultural injuries in Alberta from Dr. Bob Barnetson, associate professor of labour relations at Athabasca University. The data are incomplete because there's no regulation regarding reporting of farm injuries, but his best estimate is that \$4.5 million annually is transmitted to the public health system instead of being paid for by the industry through WCB.

I have a second tabling, Mr. Speaker, and that is A Social Policy Framework for Alberta: Fairness and Justice for All, presented today by the Parkland Institute, highlighting the growing inequity in Alberta and the health consequences of the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table official transcripts from the western Alberta transmission line hearings out of Red Deer. There are extracts, with the requisite copies, basically attesting to the original author of every document this

government has relied upon calling these transmission lines not in the public interest and not needed.

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View has already tabled the report documenting increasing inequities and disparities in the province, so I will not need to.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In reference to my answer during question period, I would like to table five copies of the website for the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta that lists any and all donations that have been returned to bodies that should not have donated. I certainly hope that we will see similar disclosures from the parties opposite.

Thank you.

Projected Government Business

The Speaker: The hon. House leader for the Official Opposition on Projected Government Business.

Mr. Anderson: Yes. Pursuant to the standing orders what is the expected business for next week, Mr. House Leader?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have projected government business for next week. On Monday, November 5, in the evening we anticipate discussing in second reading Bill 4, the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. Time permitting, we could spend time in Committee of the Whole on Bill 5, the New Home Buyer Protection Act; Bill 8, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2012; and thereafter third reading of Bill 6, Protection and Compliance Statutes Amendment Act, 2012, and Bill 9, Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2012.

On Tuesday, November 6, 2012, in the afternoon for second reading we anticipate getting back to Bill 2, Responsible Energy Development Act, and, time permitting, Bill 4, the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, and as per the Order Paper. In the evening for second reading we would anticipate still being on Bill 2 and Bill 4 and as per the Order Paper.

Wednesday, November 7, in the afternoon in Committee of the Whole we would anticipate commencing with Bill 2 and thereafter Bill 4 and as per the Order Paper. Wednesday in the evening we would anticipate being in Committee of the Whole on Bill 2 and Bill 4 and as per the Order Paper.

Thursday, November 8, in the afternoon for third reading Bill 2 and Bill 4 and as per the Order Paper.

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, I believe you had a point of order, or was Airdrie first? I've lost track of the order here. Airdrie, I think you were first earlier on. You may have two, but let's go with your first one.

Point of Order

Questions about Political Party Activity

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's just one. According to the Standing Orders – and we've done this, as you've pointed out – a point of clarification, just to keep it exceptionally short

today. Again, we dealt with this at another time. The Deputy Premier, obviously, may have missed that discussion, given his busy schedule. It was that the Alberta Alliance, of course, is a completely separate entity from the Wildrose Party, so the 2004 and 2007 donations have absolutely no relevance. Not only that, but as you always say, it is a party matter, and what's good for the goose is good for the gander. You know what I'm saying?

Thank you.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say to you that the hon. member is absolutely right. Matters of party finance should not be discussed in the House. I couldn't agree with him more. I will admonish all members on our side not ever to talk about party matters in the House again. I would hope that he would admonish all of his members to do the same.

I'd only have one other comment to make, Mr. Speaker. If that's not a sufficient apology, I would apologize most profusely for any member of our side talking about party finances and party matters in the House, and we will endeavour never to do it again.

I would only say one other thing that I think needs to be said, that one shouldn't ever be seen in public, particularly on the record, denying their heritage.

The Speaker: I think that sufficiently clarifies the matter. I just leave it with you to think about. If the hon. House leader of the opposition and the hon. Government House Leader on behalf of their respective caucuses and reflecting the general mood of the House are in total agreement, then I'm going to assume that next week there won't be any reference whatsoever to anything to do with issues that are outside the competence or the jurisdiction directly of the government, including and specifically referencing the two discussions that just occurred that might refer to party financing matters of any political party. Any political party. Are we agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Anderson: A point of clarification on Standing Order 13.

The Speaker: I'm just taking you at your word there.

Mr. Anderson: I did not agree to any such thing.

The Speaker: I have clarified this, and I'm not going to get into a debate with you here. We'll leave it there as something for you to think about. If we're agreed, let me know on Monday how you feel about that, and we'll proceed.

The second point of order. The hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Items Previously Decided Parliamentary Language

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Earlier today in question period the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, in a question to the Minister of Education, did two things which were particularly egregious, and I would ask that you admonish him not to do those sorts of things and ask him to apologize under section 23(f), "debates any previous vote of the Assembly unless it is that Member's intention to move that it be rescinded," which, of course, in question period he can't do, and *Beauchesne* 411(4), which suggests that a member must not "criticize decisions of the House."

2:50

I could give further citations, but I think that's a sufficient platform to say that we had a debate in this House on Bill 3, and there was a specific debate on the amendment to Bill 3 with respect to a no-zero policy. Positions were put on both sides of the House about whether or not that was an appropriate policy to be enshrined in the act. That was discussed. That was voted on. It's entirely inappropriate under the rules of the House to try and reraise that same issue and to continue the debate in question period by bringing that back after it's already been debated and voted on in the House. That's clearly against the rules.

What is also clearly against the rules and was also offensive in that same question was the use of unparliamentary language. The Speaker has ruled on a number of occasions with respect to unparliamentary language. I would ask members who haven't had the privilege to read these books thoroughly. The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at page 619 – now, I am, I think, operating with an old edition, the 2nd edition rather than the 3rd edition – outlines some of the context for that.

Although an expression may be found to be acceptable, the Speaker has cautioned that any language which leads to disorder in the House should not be used... that Member will be requested to rise in his or her place and to withdraw the unparliamentary word or phrase.

When you go to *Beauchesne's* 492, you will find that the word "cowardly" is a word that has been ruled unparliamentary, and I think pathetic and cowardly used together or separately are both unparliamentary words. Certainly, if you went to 23(j), suggesting anybody using "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder," it would fall, clearly, into that category.

Mr. Speaker, you quite rightly, I think, admonished this House several times about decorum and about how we keep our place. It's certainly easier to keep our place if we don't hurl insults across the floor at each other, and I would ask the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View to do the honourable thing, to rise in his place, to withdraw those remarks and apologize for them, and, further, to look at the rules with respect to raising issues that have previously been discussed and voted on in this House and understand that those aren't the topic for further questions.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Airdrie, since this is a point of order regarding you, I'll recognize you first, and then we'll go to the Liberal House leader.

An Hon. Member: Isn't it Chestermere-Rocky View?

Mr. Anderson: That's right, but the House leader responds to it, as you know.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the amendment issue that was raised, obviously, we acknowledge that we're not supposed to reraise subamendments that have already been voted on. We understand that. We'll make sure to make that clear to our caucus. Obviously, he can still ask about a policy. There's nothing wrong with asking about a policy and asking the government to act on a policy. But, granted, a subamendment which has already been voted on is different, so I will absolutely alert my caucus to that.

With regard to pretending that the PC name represented pathetically cowardly, clearly, *Beauchesne's* and the references he's referring to are dealing with individuals in this House. You cannot refer to an individual in this House using those names. Absolutely and completely true. The member was clearly referencing the party, the PC Party, in that way. That said, I will without any doubt ask my members to go over the sections in *Beauchesne's* that list the things that are unparliamentary

language and familiarize themselves with them as much as possible. Even though this was not directed at the member and was directed clearly at the party and meant in a slightly humorous way, we'll make sure to go to great lengths to not use things that may be interpreted as being against a member of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wouldn't usually rise to speak on someone else's point of order, but this has been, depending on how you like to look at it, either an exciting or a brutish week. I'm aware that there are a number of new colleagues in the Assembly, and I'd like to offer some observations if I may.

Using the citations 23(j) and 489 to 492, while it is sort of fun and a little bit joyous to call people names in this House for the first couple of times you do it, we have a freedom of speech in here that is balanced by an understanding that you shouldn't abuse it. There are hundreds of thousands of words in the dictionary that you can use to describe other people without resorting to pretty lame, schoolboy name-calling.

My issue in this is that the public doesn't distinguish. If the Wildrose wants to call the Tories some kind of blah, blah, blah, I go back into my constituency, and my constituents think that I've been called that, or I've called someone else that. This goes far beyond you standing up and calling anybody else a name. It blackens all of us, and like a witch's curse, it comes back on us seven times.

It's a particularly stupid thing to do in this House – I'm talking about the action, not the individual – considering the number of words that are available to us. I don't like being tarred with that brush. I'm careful to try not to do that. I'm a good heckler. I don't always get caught, but that's a different matter.

Really, it comes down to the golden rule. Speak to others as you would like to be spoken to. Would any of you like to be called the names that you've called others this week?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie, very briefly.

Mr. Anderson: Very short. I would reference that this member – it's difficult to understand that she of all members would be lecturing on this point – just did this exact thing that she's accusing the other of doing. She said that saying stupid names and stupid things like that – obviously insinuating that this member was the same. [interjection] Hold on.

I would also notice that the Minister of the Treasury Board has repeatedly in this House said over and over again, pertaining to us: I don't care what the wild alliance ever said. Well, that's not our name, all right? Again, there has to be some fairness in here. The hypocrisy can only go so far. What's good for the goose is good for the gander on this.

The Speaker: Thank you.

You know, I want to again ask you in all sincerity to review a couple of citations that will help in this matter, and I hope will help prevent future matters. I say this with the greatest of respect whether you're a new member in this House or a returning member to this House. I wish to begin on page 618 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, probably 2nd edition, Unparliamentary Language. Here is what it says.

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden.

Strictly forbidden.

Personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order. A direct charge or accusation against a Member may be made only by way of a substantive motion for which notice is required.

If language used in debate appears questionable to the Speaker, he or she will intervene.

That's what I've been doing. I'm compelled by the practices and traditions that guide this House to intervene.

In fact, if you were to look at our own Standing Orders, right at the very edge, at the beginning it says:

(2) In all contingencies unprovided for, the question shall be decided by the Speaker and, in making a ruling, the Speaker shall base any decision on the usages and precedents of the Assembly and on parliamentary tradition.

So I ask you to please bear that in mind.

You know, there is not an undereducated person in this House. Not one. I've looked at all your resumés that you had on your websites and everywhere else. This is a very intelligent group of people we have here. I just know that you can craft a solid question without using gutter-type language or using unparliamentary-type language, and I just know, government members, that you can answer without using the same.

3:00

I also know that any time and every time we get into issues that concern political parties, which don't belong on the floor of this Assembly, a point of order, usage of time, insults being hurled back and forth, disruptions, disorder, and the like always arise. Every single time. I can guarantee it.

I'm going to repeat. Hon. government members, you may not like some of the questions that are being asked, but they have a right to ask them. Hon. members in the opposition and government private members, you may not like the answers that you're getting from the government – you may not; you may disagree with them – but there's a time and a place and a manner in which to disagree with them. Using unparliamentary language is not one of those methods.

On page 634 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* it goes on. I'm pointing this out hoping that some of you will actually take a moment and reflect on *Hansard* over the weekend or on Monday. "A Member may not direct remarks to the House or engage in debate by raising a matter under the guise of a point of order." Points of order sometimes themselves get abused and are taken to be an extension of some debate.

With respect to the actual parliamentary language that was used in this case, "pathetically cowardly," I think all three speakers to this point – the Government House Leader, the leader of the Wildrose opposition, the House leader of the Liberal opposition – accurately stated a lot of valid, valid points. I'm not going to review all of them, but I would like to draw your attention to a couple of these. It's not just a matter of the word itself that guides a Speaker in making the ruling. It's the tone with which that word was delivered that counts as well. It's the timbre and the temperature and the passion or lack of it or whatever that governs how Speakers rule. I've had the benefit of listening to many Speakers over this summer as we discussed and debated some of these kinds of issues.

Quite correctly, as pointed out by a couple of members, citation 492 of *Beauchesne* does specifically list "cowardly." It says, "The following expressions are a partial listing of expressions which have caused intervention on the part of the Chair, as listed in the Index of the *Debates* between 1976 and 1987," and it specifically cites the word "cowardly." When you add "pathetically cowardly" to that and you add a little salt and pepper to it to spice it up, you're going to have a point of order every time, hon. member.

You are. It's just how it works. Now, if you flip back, you'll see that the word "coward" is also parliamentary in another instance if it's used in a different context, in a different way. There are frequently two versions of the same stat, fact, or data.

In the end of ends, let's all agree that using terms like "pathetically cowardly" in the context in which those two words were used does exactly what the Member for Edmonton-Centre indicated they do. They tend to tarnish us all. I would say to you that the majority of members by far in this House are very adult in their presentations, very adult in their questions and in their answers. Sometimes a few people don't quite rise up to the level of adult, but the majority by far do. Yet each and every one of us has to live sometimes by the missteps and misrepresentations, if you like, of the rest of us. We have to live by it.

Now, we're going home, some of us longer and farther than others, to our constituencies, to our families, to our friends, as I said in the opening prayer, and I want you to please think about this again. I am doing my best to help all of you, including myself, clean up our act, as I said in May. I've received some wonderful notes from all different people in this House, from all different parties, in verbal or in written form, saying: thank you for doing your best to clean up the act. I just ask you to join me in doing that with a little more passion, please.

As such, we will accept the apology which I think I heard you, hon. House leader, give on behalf of your member.

I don't know, hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, if you wish to add a short apology of your own. If you do, I would encourage you to do it now.

Mr. McAllister: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and everybody that pointed out my mistake today. I sure don't claim to be perfect, and emotion does run hot in here, and obviously as a newbie you make mistakes along the way. I completely withdraw what I said to the members across the hall even though I didn't intentionally mean to call them what I said. I meant to refer to the party. It still is the wrong thing to do, so I completely withdraw and ask that you accept my apology.

The Speaker: An excellently phrased apology. Thank you. We all noted the sincerity with which you gave it, and I think you noted the response of the House. Thank you.

That concludes that matter, then, and we move on to Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 1

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the hon. Premier.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour and a privilege for me today to rise to move Bill 1 for third reading on behalf of the hon. the Premier.

Bill 1 is always intended in parliamentary tradition to be a signature bill, to be a bill that sets a tone or direction and that actually makes a statement. Often it's not necessarily substantive. It's only in our House, actually. Not in very many parliamentary traditions is Bill 1 a substantive bill. In fact, in many parliaments Bill 1 is not a substantive bill; it's really just a pro forma bill.

We have had a history of Bill 1's that make a difference in this

House, and I'm really proud of that, and I'm really proud of this Bill 1. I think it was an important statement to be made on behalf of our community to first responders, to recognize that first responders operate in a context that most of us do not have to operate in. Many of us do see trauma in our life, sometimes in our work, hopefully not always in our work here, Mr. Speaker, but many people do see trauma in their life. I want to reiterate that this bill is not about saying that people don't have trauma in their workplace or trauma in their life.

This bill is about saying to first responders that we appreciate that day after day first responders go out on behalf of Albertans and face some horrible circumstances. They do it willingly, they do it with a great deal of skill, care, and attention, but they don't always get the opportunity to come back from that. They don't always get the opportunity to debrief. If you're driving an ambulance and you're going to a horrific accident and you deliver the victims of the accident to care and then turn around and go back out on the street, you don't get a chance to go and see a counsellor about what horrific things you've seen. If you're a police officer showing up at a site where a child has been killed or injured severely, for example, sometimes in some of the most horrific of circumstances, you don't necessarily get to book off and go and see a counsellor and debrief right at that moment. You get to continue your shift and to do other things and go to other sites.

I know this is anecdotal, but often we hear about the fact that at the end of the day, of course, our first responders go home to their families, and they don't get a chance to debrief with their families, nor do they often want to debrief with their families.

You're talking about first responders who are going out and doing things on a daily basis that are traumatic without necessarily the kind of supports although I know that in each case of the employers for police, for emergency medical technicians, for firefighters, and for peace officers there are counselling services available. There are supports available. There are even support groups involved, but they don't necessarily get the opportunity to kick in.

3:10

Now, we heard in debate at other stages of the bill that there are other professions and occupations who suffer trauma, and that's absolutely certainly true. I know personally that that happens sometimes where you don't expect to have to deal with it. People have to deal with incidents and occurrences which cause trauma, and some professions and occupations are more likely to face it or face it more often than others.

This bill is not about separating those out. This bill is about making presumptive coverage for those first responders that we know face trauma on an everyday basis, on an every-shift basis on behalf of Albertans. It's about taking away the additional trauma of having to point to a specific incident or a specific occurrence or file a report when they don't even know it's happened, to start the process of saying: "I have a claim that I need to deal with. I need some coverage, some medical help that I need perhaps to take. Maybe I can't do my job anymore because I'm so traumatized by it."

This is a very good bill, Mr. Speaker. It's a very good bill in the tradition of Bill 1's in this province, which speaks to a direction of government and an understanding that we have as a community about how important it is that we have people who are prepared to go to work every day to make our communities safer, to take us out of harm's way, to be there for us when we become the victim of an accident, whether through our own fault or somebody else's.

I would ask the House to vote in favour of this bill, to pass this bill, and to make Alberta the first jurisdiction which has presumptive coverage in its Workers' Compensation Act for first responders – police, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, peace officers – who on a day-to-day basis go out there on behalf of Albertans and help us with our most troubled times.

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

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to stand and speak to this bill one final time. I have been pleased throughout this process, first off, to see the Premier make this the first priority of her government, and I want to thank both the hon. Minister of Human Services and the hon. associate minister of persons with disabilities for the engaging and productive debate that we had around this bill this past couple of weeks.

We've been through this, Mr. Speaker. PTSD is a devastating condition, and I'm very pleased to rise in support of the bill as it's been written and pass this legislation, with complete understanding of what presumptive care actually means for our first responders. I had requested an amendment earlier this week that would have put in a different time frame, and I was so pleased with the answers and the response that we received from the government members, who explained that presumptive care means that there isn't a timeline, that there is no time frame, that there is no statute of limitations in the sense of denying care for those first responders, who, as the hon. minister so eloquently put it, put their lives on the line for families, for our loved ones when it matters most.

The clarity offered around this particular part of the legislation will assure our first responders that they can quite simply receive the treatment when they need it, and I think it is incumbent upon us to offer that. It will reassure them that if they start experiencing the trauma of PTSD and have served as a first responder, the presumptive nature of the bill will simply allow them to get their lives back.

Through the meetings with stakeholders that I spoke with, that's truly what they've been asking for. It's nice to see that democracy works every once in a while and that they will have the opportunity to get their lives back. They're not just simply looking for wage replacement. They're looking to be able to go home at night, look their loved ones in the eye, and not want to go sit in a dark room by themselves. They're looking to be able to fall asleep at night without having to self-medicate. I think that this bill goes a long way to helping ensure that that is the case for our first responders.

I am thoroughly impressed and encouraged by the willingness of the government to accept an amendment that we brought forward during Committee of the Whole. There have been some questions posed to me regarding what it means to provide culturally competent clinicians to our first responders diagnosed with PTSD, so I'd like to take a brief opportunity to just maybe offer some explanation as to what that will mean for our first responders.

We all know that there are too many examples of the types of events that can cause PTSD, but to help explain this, let's just assume for a moment that a first responder has experienced a highly stressful situation and traumatic event where the extreme nature becomes a potential trigger for posttraumatic stress disorder. After their shift that day the worker goes home to their loved ones, tries to get some sleep and the images out of their mind from the hours previous. Now, assuming they can fall asleep, they may experience intense nightmares, essentially reliving the event. The next day they go to work, and they are told

by their superiors that the events of the previous day have come under question, potentially because a firearm was discharged or the actions of someone on their team came under question and someone was injured.

That generally in those environments starts an administrative hearing process where these first responders not only are set in the frame of mind of trying to deal with what they've just experienced, but now under a stressful, court-like setting they're asked to defend and relive these moments over and over, potentially for weeks and/or months, until some sort of administrative resolution has been found. As this is going on, there's potential for them to begin withdrawing, perhaps start self-medicating. They perceive or start to notice their colleagues are looking at them differently. Seeing as it's not generally acceptable to appear weak within these fraternities and professions, the feelings of abandonment add up. Combined with the potential stresses of these hearings, the very real stresses of living with PTSD all compound the trauma that they are experiencing.

It is for these reasons that PTSD is experienced through a unique lens when you are a first responder and why it's so important to have a treatment option that has familiarity with this. That is where culturally competent clinicians will come in and be able to help our first responders because it means they understand the whole picture. Again, I applaud the government and the ministers responsible for accepting that amendment and being open to further discussions.

As I mentioned earlier this week, the importance of allowing for culturally competent clinicians is that if a worker is going through treatment and they're not finding that they're getting the help that they want, you know, a worker stops going to treatment. They may be on medication. They're unable to pay the bills. There may be family pressures, administrative pressures. All of this can add up to an increased risk for suicide. The last thing that we want is an epidemic on our hands of first responders who aren't feeling like they're getting the support that they require once they've decided to pursue treatment for this terrible condition. Again, I'm very, very pleased with the way that this bill is going to be passed today for third reading.

I would also like to offer the potential to begin some education and a remedy to another topic that I've brought up, which is that we've only had four of what is suggested should be about 2,700 first responders having claimed for PTSD in the past two and a half years. If our first responders, when they do their annual physical, had to also go through an annual mental exam, perhaps that would allow for some insight into some of the stresses that they see on an everyday basis, and we'd start to be able to catch some of this. Just an item for further discussion down the road, I suppose. Perhaps some of those stakeholder organizations – our fire departments, our EMTs, our police departments – would consider doing this to help kick-start the education process, start to break the stigma of mental health here in our province and ultimately help our first responders.

As the hon. minister mentioned, this will be the first legislation of its kind in Canada. It's been a great honour to stand and debate and take part in this process. Again, I congratulate the government for making this a top priority for them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

3:20

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in third reading of Bill 1, which is intended

to be a debate on the anticipated effect of the bill once it's implemented. I have listened to almost all of the debate on the bill, and that which I didn't listen to either in person or on the Tannoy, I've followed up by reading *Hansard*, and I have to say that this has been an odd debate.

No one that I heard speak was intending in any way, shape, or form to demean or degrade or to value in any way less the first responders that are specifically named in this legislation. What I am really interested in is that I have not heard a very clear explanation – I haven't heard a clear explanation – from the government as to why they have made a choice to give preferential treatment to certain people and not to other people, and even on their definition of that they have waived and changed their mind.

I start back from the beginning and go: okay; why does the government feel a need to intervene in the current WCB process? Because that's what's happening. They're saying: we are going to say that this group of people gets to go to the head of the queue. Once they've been diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder, they go to the head of the queue. They don't have to go through the usual WCB process where they're examined, the WCB doctors can be brought in, and additional examinations and tests and surveillance and all the rest of that stuff can happen. This one particular group of people goes straight on. Nobody is saying they shouldn't, right? Nobody that I've heard debating or read has said that, so let's be really clear about it.

But I still can't get a straight answer out of the government as to why they feel the need to put these people at the front of the line for WCB. To me, that says that there's a real problem with WCB, so I'm wondering why the government hasn't just addressed the problem with WCB.

Increasingly, I'm seeing a Swiss-cheesing of this issue. Five years ago we added – forgive me; I'm going to get the order wrong – firefighters. It's the same situation. They would be automatically believed that any lung cancer they suffered would have come directly as a matter of their job, and off they go. No more tests. No more hurdles. No more loopholes. On they go. Then we added in another piece of legislation a couple of years later, and a second kind of cancer got added in for a specific group of people. Same deal: head of the line; avoid all the hoo-ha with WCB.

Okay. This is the third bill doing exactly the same thing, and I started to think: "Hmm. Why aren't we dealing with the problem here; that is, the problem with WCB? Despite the fact that in the last – oh dear – 15 years we've had two significant inquiries/commissions, maybe a blue-ribbon panel in there somewhere, and a committee to examine this, and there were, in fact, recommendations made, very little, if any of it, has been implemented. I'm looking with anticipation to my colleagues on the other side to see who is going to leap to their feet to contradict me on that. No one.

Mr. Hancock: We can't.

Ms Blakeman: Oh, that hasn't stopped you before. Come on, now.

If we're going to develop this argument, then, if we're having this legislation enshrine, enable, enact the ability to intervene in the current WCB process, why are you doing it? Okay. One stream of that is saying: there's something wrong with the system, and we're trying to queue-jump some people we think really should be queue-jumped. The second side of it is: well, if there's nothing wrong with the WCB system, then why are we choosing certain occupations to get preferential treatment?

I carefully listened and read the definitions to see who a first responder is or why they've chosen certain people. It's ranged from the Member for Peace River on page 336 of October 29 *Hansard* talking about: "This bill is about thanking first responders." Okay. Then a little later on he talks about that it's "meant to recognize first responders," to which I say: for what? Usually when you recognize someone, you give them a plaque or a glass thing or a bonus or a watch or something. Why are we recognizing these people? I thought we were trying to help them with a health problem. There's one definition that I've heard coming from opposite on why we're doing this bill. We're thanking and recognizing people.

I carefully went through and, once again, on the next page over, 337:

The point is that we are saying thank you to some people that are richly deserving of that. It's about the fact that the things that they do day in and day out are horrific, and we thank them for that. We should thank them for that.

And everybody here has agreed thus far. If that's the definition we're going on, there were very good arguments made throughout the various debates on this bill that there are a number of other people who also do things day in and day out that are horrific and, one presumes, on behalf of the public in Alberta. So there were arguments for prison guards. There were arguments for social workers. There were arguments for anyone in the public service who is diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder. I never get the initials right.

Later in the same thing:

It's . . . not about removing the right that any worker in Alberta has to PTSD coverage when that PTSD, posttraumatic stress disorder, is related to their employment. That's already available to everybody, and the bill does not remove that from [anyone].

No, it doesn't, but it does grant preferential treatment to certain people, and I still can't get an answer as to why. If you're going to say first responders, well, there are other people that fit the definition of first responders that didn't get included in that. I'm just looking for criteria here that anybody could repeat more than once so I can go back to my constituents and say: here are the criteria they based this on. But I can't find it; in your own words, it's not there.

Let me go back and talk a little bit about this. Well, okay; we're going to give preferential treatment, and it's about saying thanks, or it's about recognizing. Well, I would argue that these are all hard-working people. They are all hard-working public servants. These are not people that are paid by a corporation. These are public servants who are walking into a building or a situation when everybody else is running out. They indeed are the firefighters, the medical technicians, the police officers, the sheriffs. I support having the additional categories of people added in if that was the point of this, that we were going to take care of certain people because they were doing something on our behalf, and it is something – what did the minister just say when he was up? It was a traumatic situation, and they may not get a chance to debrief, and they may not get to a counsellor; they may be doing a traumatic thing. Well, I think there are a lot of public servants that actually fit into that.

This is the problem with the government drawing a line. As soon as you draw a line, there are people on one side of it and people on the other side of it. Then there's a long argument about why you should move some people from one side of the line to the other side of the line. I just want to know what made people get on the other side of the line, and it's not clear why the government decided to do this. I'm sure there's a reason, but it may not be a

reason that we can discuss in the House because maybe it's got to do with party business or party financing, Mr. Speaker. Maybe that's why we're not talking about it. Who knows? They won't tell me.

3:30

In the end, having gone through all of this, I did go and look up "presumptive" as I was listening to the previous speaker. To presume: to assume is true without proof; to undertake to do something without right or permission. Okay. Both of those would apply, I would say. Presumption: the act of presuming; reason or grounds for presuming or believing something is true. Again, that's exactly what's anticipated here, that we're going to believe that this posttraumatic stress disorder came about because of the work that these public servants were doing, and therefore we're going to look after their health without making them run through this gauntlet of tests and questioning and proof that is a matter of course and process with WCB.

Again, I challenge the government: why them and not everybody else? What is the point that we have come to where this is the third piece of legislation that I've seen in this House inside of I'm going to say eight years, each of which is specifically – what's the word I'm looking for? – going around the WCB process . . .

An Hon. Member: Circumventing.

Ms Blakeman: Circumventing. Thank you. See? We can all work together.

. . . deliberately circumventing the WCB process. That's exactly what's going on here, and we still don't have a real reason or a definitive criteria.

I know people feel really strongly about it, and that's quite clear from listening to the debate that I listened to and from reading the remarks in here. There was also clearly a division, where people said: "No. We're willing to add this one in but not this one." There were a number of people that spoke in favour – Calgary-Shaw, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, Airdrie, Little Bow, Calgary-South East, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, Medicine Hat, Calgary-Fish Creek – that spoke in favour of including the penitentiary workers but not in favour of any additional workers, so very clear guidelines in people's heads. Okay. Fair enough. They all had reasons why they didn't want to go the other step, very clear reasons why they felt that the penitentiary workers should be included and very clear reasons about why they wouldn't include anybody else, which, frankly, is better than the government managed to do.

You know, I think everybody is going to support this legislation. Why wouldn't you? But, again, I question. I know it's hard, but you're the government. You've got a gazillion dollars behind you. You've got resources up the wazoo. You have everything. Why can you not deal with the difficult stuff? You have everything to be able to get to the core, to do the radical surgery that you need to do here on WCB, and you've got some experts on WCB here. You've got people that come from the trades and unions and people that really understand this, and every one of us has dealt with these cases in our office.

I challenge the government: step up; do the right thing. I really don't want to see a fourth piece of legislation in here exempting yet another group of people from the WCB process or adding another reason why they get to queue-jump that process. I'm not saying queue-jumping in any kind of negative way. It's just that there's a queue, there's a process, and these people don't have to do it. That's what the presumptive is all about.

I do think there's a huge underlying problem here that has not been addressed. I'm sure the bill will pass, and you will all put feathers in your caps and feel good about it. But we still have not dealt with the problem, and I am not seeing any sign that you're inclined to. Oh, well, another 15 minutes of talking to thin air.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available for five minutes of questions or comments regarding the previous speaker's comments. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just wondering if the member, one, would recognize that I supported both motions and went against my own caucus and, second, define "wazoo."

Ms Blakeman: I am sorry. I was looking at the divisions that were done on that, and I thought I saw your name. I am certainly willing to withdraw that and believe you absolutely because I remember you getting up the second time to say: now, just a minute here; I haven't said that I won't support it, but you've got to give me a better argument. I do remember that.

An Hon. Member: That was in the third one.

Ms Blakeman: That was in the third one. Okay. Sorry about that. I have misspoke about you, and I will take that back because I'm sure you did it.

The definition of wazoo is culturally different, but generally it is a very large container, a vat, you might say, or a large enough venue that you can put many, many things in it. This government certainly has that, and they certainly have a lot of things that they could use to improve WCB, and I would encourage them to do that.

Mr. Dorward: Mr. Speaker, according to the Urban Dictionary "up the wazoo" means "up one's trapdoor."

Ms Blakeman: This is what I was saying about the precision of language, and it's such a delight. I will thank you for using your electronic device to be able to look up a more colloquial way of describing it than I chose to. You're just faster with your electronic device than I am with an old-fashioned dictionary, but thank you very much.

The Speaker: Yes. Well, that certainly clarifies that matter, doesn't it?

Are there others under 29(2)(a)?

If not, hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, proceed on the main debate.

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what I came to do this afternoon. I haven't had an opportunity to speak at length in regard to Bill 1. I think I did speak on one amendment. I was very interested in bringing forward some comments on this bill.

First and foremost, I do recognize this as being perhaps a good first step in regard to protecting and funding treatment for public workers that experience PTSD. Certainly, we know that through the evolution of this condition and the treatment of this condition we have been ignoring this for a long time. We've come to know different versions of PTSD from as early as the First World War, really, when people had shell shock and so forth, but now to recognize the condition and to provide more advanced treatment for people over these last hundred years I think is overdue. We know that we have at least thousands of these cases every year across the country.

Certainly, when dealing with issues like this, I like to speak on behalf of the first responders that would be under this new law if it becomes law. I have heard from firefighters and police and peace officers and EMS workers that are all certainly favouring this legislation. I'd like to support them, of course. These are important workers that often are not compensated commensurate with the hard work that they do. As the Member for Edmonton-Centre mentioned earlier, they are the people that run into emergencies while the rest of us are running away from them sometimes. For that, I certainly don't find fault with Bill 1.

But there is, I guess, a problem here. It's both a logical problem and a practical problem. When we are changing legislation on who gets a treatment and who doesn't get a treatment, then we have to be very careful about how we define that and whether it passes the test of logic and of common sense as well.

3:40

As I said, I did get to speak on one amendment that was put forward on Bill 1, and that perhaps will serve as a good example of how when you draw a line treating people for a condition in a presumptive way, there are people on the other side of the line that probably, logically and practically, could be considered for that same treatment if we were to be fair and balanced, which is what we try to do in a Legislature when making laws.

That amendment that I spoke to, of course, was in regard to including jailers, keepers, guards, and other officers that work in prisons as being fairly defined as first responders as well. We know that, in fact, there are even legal definitions that would legally tie those prison workers of different categories to being in the same category as a police officer. We know that there are lots and lots of cases. It's a difficult environment to work in. These are individuals that need and require our support always and are often in traumatic situations that can lead to a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder. Again, just drawing a rather arbitrary line with this whole presumptive part of this law I think unfairly excludes, for example, prison guards. I did speak on that before. I don't want to bring too much of that detail in.

Upon reflection, then, you take that example of prison guards being on the wrong side of that line, where they are not able to be protected under presumptive laws or sections of this bill. Then, of course, I just started to reflect on this in even a wider way, again applying logic and common sense. If a person has a condition and it's recognized by a doctor to be a condition – you break your arm; you have something wrong with your kidney or whatever – then that's just the way it is. It's a scientific fact. If we are excluding someone because they are in a certain occupation – let's use our imaginations for a moment here on that kidney disorder, not the PTSD but the kidney disorder – but they're not under this certain small category of people, you know, that person still has the same kidney disorder as the other one that is included. We've just drawn an imaginary line in law here in the Legislature.

I think that there is a reasonable compromise. We do know that including, I think, social workers and other professions in the public service is very reasonable when we're talking about this law. I think that by applying a certain reasonable test, where if someone has a documented situation that's happened to them, that's been documented as a traumatic event in the course of their job, and then they end up with a diagnosis of PTSD, again, I think that by applying that little sort of middle range of law, we should be able to give them the protection that this sort of law would be afforded them as well.

There is a third story that passes through this bill, and it's not a pretty story. It's a story of how the Workers' Compensation Board and practices in this province of Alberta are not necessarily

servicing the needs of workers as they should be. If you go to the board with an application for a PTSD case, then you are often strung along on a very long and very tenuous course with people trying to make a presumption that you picked up PTSD or that your condition is for any number of other reasons besides that traumatic incident that you had suffered during the course of your work. We all know, because we're all dealing with casework from WCB here in our constituencies, that so often people – it's like judge, jury, and executioner all in the building up the street, in WCB, where someone has a case of, let's say, PTSD, and they go and they delve into their substance abuse or their broken marriage or whatever else that, you know, people will get pinned with. They carry that around with them like this heavy knapsack of stones, that is entirely unfair. We also know that once your case is up for review at WCB, that stress alone often results in people picking up more and more problems along the way. You'll see this as you go through your caseloads, that will undoubtedly increase exponentially once they've heard you speak so eloquently on this issue, right? People will come to your constituency, and as their case drags on, just the case alone will complicate things and make their lives that much more miserable.

I like this idea of a presumptive protection for people, but let's make sure that we're not just giving it to one person. We know that first responders are well deserving of it, but why have that off? If we have a good idea, let's use it for everybody, right? That's a basic thing that I've always learned in my experience in this Legislature. If we come up with something that's good, well, then, why should we exclude anybody from having that thing that is good? Of course, the case that's often made back to that is that, oh, well, it costs too much money. Well, you know, when we are treating people for illness, all forms of illness, then presumably we are treating them with the idea of not just saving that person but also saving society a larger money issue down the road.

We've come up with something here which I think is good, an idea of presumptive coverage and protection for first responders, and good for them. They will recognize and appreciate this, undoubtedly, and I think they're well deserving of that, right? But let's use the model that we're building here with some modification. If someone can show that they have had a traumatic incident during the course of their work and they do get diagnosed with PTSD, then they can be afforded the same coverage that is in Bill 1.

Bill 1's are often trying to set the tone for a government, and it's important that we make sure that we get that tone right, that we're not compromising or just trying to get a little attention or something like that but that we're building a landmark thing that we can point to that adds to the edifice of a just and fair society for everyone. That's what we do when we make laws. You know, I look at other Bill 1's in the past, and I've seen governments rise to that occasion and recognize that they will mark their period of governance with landmark legislation that lasts.

I can see very clearly the good example of that back in 1970, 1971 when the Progressive Conservative government of Peter Lougheed brought in the Human Rights Act, and here we are 40-some years later still dealing with that landmark legislation and enjoying the benefits of it. But I also find that this government, when talking about that Bill 1, the Alberta Human Rights Act, which is now law, and constantly compromising the integrity and the intention of that law – I find that very disturbing.

We've seen a movement away from the idea of equality and social justice in this Legislature through the compromise of that Bill 1 from back in 1970, 1971, the Human Rights Act, and I find that disturbing. I feel glad that I'm back here to speak on that, and I will certainly be watching like a hawk – with all of the things

that happen to hawks, and literally watching hawks in some cases – to ensure that that Human Rights Act is not compromised. That's the sort of Bill 1 that is landmark legislation that you can take to the bank and help to build up the edifice of democracy in this province.

This one, this Bill 1, is okay, right? I'm not saying that it's not okay, but there's that compromise in there, where you are undermining a sense of equality and both logic and common sense, that I find a little bit disturbing. Certainly, it's not going to preclude me from probably voting in favour of this Bill 1, but let's remember just what that flaw is built into it. I think we've heard eloquently and succinctly from a number of people. They've pointed that out. It's fairly clear.

3:50

But, you know, we're not at a make-work sort of project here, Mr. Speaker, where we build little tiny bits of law here and there and everywhere and then come back next year and include another group. I mean, let's do it while we're all here together now and, like I say, build a Bill 1 that we can all be proud of and that will still be around 50 years from now.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available for questions or comments related to the previous speaker's comments.

Seeing none, we can move on. I would recognize the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise today to speak about Bill 1, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012, which has given presumptive coverage to Alberta's firefighters, emergency medical technicians, peace officers, and police officers, all as first responders who have been diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder. This bill clearly is a great step forward towards providing the support that our 27,000 first responders need when they become ill as a result of the trauma of things they deal with in their everyday lives. We all know somebody, who might know somebody, who might know somebody – or perhaps we even know them personally – who deals in this range of fields.

I myself have a cousin who is a police officer with the Calgary Police Service, and the amount of work and the amount of trauma that he sees on a regular basis is staggering to me. It's honestly a job that, while I'm happy to be here and sometimes it's traumatic, I wouldn't want to do. I admire and acknowledge and honour everything that they do each and every day for Albertans all across this province. Clearly, their job is important. Clearly, their job is needed by each and every one of us in order to feel safe and in order to go forward every day.

One of the important parts of this bill is the presumptive coverage. This is vital for a number of reasons, but I'd just like to go through a couple. First, first responders are very courageous people, who become ill through the course of their work. It's important to understand that the traumas that they see, either at one time or in a series of events, are likely to be all through the course of their work. They're not likely to be seeing this on the drive home on a regular day. They're not likely to be going home to traumatic situations. The majority of their situations come directly as they relate to work, and that's why the presumptive coverage is so important.

These courageous people also help Albertans through some of the most stressful and traumatic events that they face. I myself had a very traumatic event. As most people in this House know, my brother was diagnosed with Huntington's in 2008. This was a new

diagnosis to our family. We had no idea. There was some odd behaviour ahead of time. Quite honestly, we thought he had mental illness. We truly had no idea.

Well, unfortunately, a call came early one morning at about 5:30. It was the RCMP from our local detachment. The RCMP called, and I took that phone call on behalf of our family, and they advised that my brother had jumped off a bridge attempting suicide, as almost 40 per cent of those with Huntington's do because they're not aware they have a disease that is killing them. As we made those decisions, the RCMP met us in Innisfail. They were very kind and very giving. My mom was devastated. They couldn't tell us if he was dead or alive. All they could tell us, in the middle of a blizzard and minus 25, was that he had been taken to Red Deer hospital and they would escort us to that hospital. They did that. When we arrived at Red Deer hospital, they stayed with us.

Obviously, we were all very upset. My dad was at home recovering from cancer. My children were at home with my in-laws, thankfully, being very kind. We walked into a hospital not sure if my 32-year-old brother was alive. Luckily, we were very fortunate. When we got to the hospital, thankfully, he was very much alive. Unfortunately, he was broken, completely broken. He'd jumped off the top of an overpass onto pavement. You can imagine what kind of trauma that would be. He was unrecognizable. I had not seen my brother in six months and did not recognize him. He had no teeth. He was gaunt, 140 pounds. He looked like a stranger. The RCMP officer stayed with our family during that whole thing.

Now, I understand that this isn't the same kind of trauma, but to watch a family go through that kind of trauma and have to work them through that trauma – I don't know what's going on in his life. How do I know he doesn't have that same one? How do I know he hasn't suffered the atrocity of suicide? It's something we never talk about. To sit there with us and console us and then walk us through the beginning of the worst two and a half years of our lives: I honour them for that.

Recognizing that, I understand that our first responders must be supported when they ask for our help in return. This coverage will also help the families that deal with these situations every day. This is not limited to our first responders. These families live with their spouses and their partners. Early on they see the signs of PTSD. Early on they will see that their spouse is drifting apart, going into a room that is dark, those sorts of things, and then their family is directly affected by this. Having presumptive coverage for first responders will make it so that that spouse, that partner, can seek help sooner. This bill will make it easier for them to assist their loved ones with getting the help they desperately need.

Secondly, first responders understand that they work in a culture where the stigma of mental illness has made it difficult for them to talk about the problem of PTSD and seek help for it. Removing the burden of proving that these events occurred at work or which tragic event affected your life ensures that first responders will not be traumatized going forward. The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act will help to create a better culture in workplaces so that those workers who need help will know that they are working in an environment that is committed to getting them the help that they desperately need.

Part of this commitment is ensuring that they get the right help at the right time with the right person, and this is what the amendment forwarded by the Member for Calgary-Shaw achieved. I'm quite honoured to be sitting in a caucus that was able to show everybody how we can work together and achieve what is best for Albertans. The Member for Calgary-Shaw identified the clear need to ensure that those people who need

treatment will get that treatment from a clinician who understands the unique stress that our first responders are under, the unique stress of their job, the demands of their job, and the incidents that lead to PTSD.

It's key that in order to understand how to cure, we need to understand what causes the illness in the first place. Along with that, first responders will also be reassured that they have the opportunity to recover and lead a full and productive life and, hopefully, at some point in time return to work if they're able. This is crucially important. We all know that the sooner a worker returns to work if they are able, the sooner that life can return to them.

I am honoured that we can show all Albertans that this bill is the result of a collaboration between stakeholder groups, first responders themselves, the government, and the opposition. The government likes to talk about all of its consultations and conversations that it has had with Albertans, and we're often very critical of that process. I understand that. A lot of times that's all we hear: "What kind of conversation did you have? What is the decision? Oh, no decision, so more consultation." But I will acknowledge and note that with Bill 1 the government has delivered something that is tangible as a result of those conversations with those on the front lines. I would extend a huge appreciation, and I thank you for that.

4:00

I'd also like to recognize the great effort by members of all our caucuses, not just the opposition and not just the government but also our third and fourth opposition parties, to debate and actually agree on the amendment to provide workers with PTSD treatment delivered by culturally competent clinicians. I swear he picked that just so we can't say it.

No instance of PTSD is the same, and this amendment recognizes this and provides the supports for the first responders who need it. It's always a nice feeling when we can come to work and as members can work together to bring smart improvements to legislation and put partisanship aside. I truly feel that with Bill 1 that appears to have happened. I am excited that over the next four years we'll have many opportunities to do that with many more pieces of legislation and to show that we're all working for the betterment of Albertans.

I thank each and every single member of this House for doing their part in making sure that that amendment was entered into Bill 1 and for making sure that Bill 1 covers all first responders.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available for any comments or questions directed to the previous speaker.

Seeing none, we'll move on. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this bill. As some members may have noticed, I actually voted against, in opposition of my own caucus, one of these amendments because I did have a change of heart. We debated it. We decided it. This is a good bill in many ways, but I'm also saddened that we had to even bring this bill forward. The fact is that the reason behind this bill, the overriding reason, is that we have an issue with the WCB. That's the problem. That's a problem that does need to be fixed.

It's interesting. My experience with posttraumatic stress disorder goes way back to when I served in the Marines. I lost a friend, and I watched it right in front of my eyes. He just couldn't stick a needle in himself enough. I watched a young man dissipate in front of me who was a good friend. I didn't realize at the time what was driving that. Years later I got a sense of what went on.

How traumatic situations affect people is complicated. There are medical physicians that diagnose it, but we do have, in my mind, basically two types, the one that is diagnosed from a series of events and the one that can actually be pinpointed to an event.

What saddened me about the bill is that although the hon. members claim that they did not pick and choose who would be represented or which was more important than the others as far as professions – I say to you this. I just had a chance to talk to the security who have the enviable position of security for this honourable Assembly. They are all ex-sheriffs, ex-police officers, but they are private security nonetheless right now. Not one of them would hesitate, I don't think, to do their job, which is to put themselves in harm's way to provide security for this facility. The question is: if it's a one-time event, are they covered and presumed for posttraumatic stress disorder? It's not clear to me in this bill. Clearly, if it's related to their police work from their former employer, then they would be.

The reality is this. In order to be diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder – and maybe the sheriffs here or the security here do have it just watching us behave some days. But the reality is that it is diagnosed professionally and by qualified medical clinicians. Once diagnosed, the idea of having to fight with the WCB or have them make your life difficult is problematic. It's troubling. I just find that deplorable, knowing what I know from my own experiences.

Looking at some of the professions who, in my mind, are absolutely first responders that are not covered by this bill, I'm saddened because the reality is that we should never ever deny anyone with a legitimate diagnosis, with a legitimate cause the coverage that they absolutely deserve. They should never be interfered with by that government nanny who comes in and says: we're going to investigate your life. A prison guard, a correctional officer will now qualify as that, and that's unfortunate.

The idea behind covering people with the presumption I think is a good idea. I would disagree with my caucus and the members on the other side. I think the onus should be on the WCB. Once the diagnosis is made, if they disagree with it, then the onus should be on them to evaluate it as far as to prove that it wasn't what caused the PTSD. That's just my opinion. It is serious, and it affects people in so many different ways. I have nothing but respect for first responders.

I will tell you this. You groaned when I said that I was in the Marines. When I was a police officer, it was no different. When I worked for the Canadian Coast Guard it was no different. We had people who joined up in that service, all three of them, and after their very first event they hung it up, quit, walked away, decided that it was not for them. They could not take it, and that was it. That one event caused them to say: I do not have what it takes to do this job. I can tell you right now that that is true, I think, of every first responder's position, where there are people who cannot do it. Yet we don't cover all first responders.

I truly believe that anybody in any profession that would put themselves in harm's way willingly is a first responder. There are people who ride along with police officers. There are people in that position on a boat, on a pleasure cruise who, with no intention of being a first responder, find themselves all of a sudden there. When a ship goes down, a boat goes down, they have to react. They have to deal with the consequences. They have to deal with the traumatic experience. That happens day after day after day, yet they're not covered. I just find that sad.

I'll go back to the beginning, where I started. The problem is the WCB. This law is unnecessary. It's a Band-Aid approach to correct a situation. I am going to support it because it is a step in the right direction, but it is not the final solution. We need a WCB

that works and that covers people and treats them with the respect and dignity that the average person deserves.

Now, granted, there are people who could abuse any law or any system that we come up with here, but that's no reason to penalize the population at large.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available should anyone have a comment or a question for the previous speaker. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

4:10

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to congratulate the member for a very well-constructed argument and an excellent speech. As I said, this is my first real opportunity to speak to this bill, so I had missed where you had said that you had voted on your own. Was it on one of the amendments? If you could maybe just identify where that spot was, I would be curious to know.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe I voted against my caucus on the second amendment if I'm correct, which is the social workers.

The Speaker: Are there others under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any others who wish to speak to third reading of this particular bill?

Now, hon. members, I understand there might be a wish to shorten the time between bells. If that's the case, we will need a motion to that effect because some members, not being in the know on this, would not be able to arrive, perhaps, in time. I'm prepared to entertain a motion.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let's just waive Standing Order 32, which would allow us to shorten the bells to one minute.

Thank you.

The Speaker: That means it will be one minute between bells. Accordingly, should there be a division, then that's how we will proceed.

Are you ready for the question?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:13 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Fenske	Pedersen
Anglin	Fox	Quadri
Bhardwaj	Goudreau	Quest
Bikman	Hale	Rowe
Blakeman	Hancock	Sandhu
Brown	Horner	Sarich
Campbell	Jeneroux	Saskiw
Cao	Johnson, J.	Smith
Casey	Khan	Towle
Cusanelli	Klimchuk	VanderBurg
DeLong	Luan	Wilson
Donovan	McIver	Woo-Paw
Dorward	Olesen	Xiao
Eggen	Pastoor	Young

Totals: For – 42 Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 1 read a third time]

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 19(1)(c) I must now put the question on the following motion for consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech.

**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.

[Motion carried]

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne

14. Mr. Campbell moved on behalf of Ms Redford:
Be it resolved that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

[Government Motion 14 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say to call it 4:30 and adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, November 5, 2012.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:20 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

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