



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 26, 2012

Issue 22

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC), Speaker  
Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont (PC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Jablonski, Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)  
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Bikman, Gary, Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND)  
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),  
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Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (PC)  
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)  
Campbell, Hon. Robin, West Yellowhead (PC),  
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Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort (PC)  
Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)  
Cusanelli, Hon. Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)  
Dallas, Hon. Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)  
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)  
Denis, Hon. Jonathan, QC, Calgary-Acadia (PC),  
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Drysdale, Hon. Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)  
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Fenske, Jacquie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC)  
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Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)  
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)  
Griffiths, Hon. Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)  
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Horne, Hon. Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)  
Horner, Hon. Doug, Spruce Grove-St. Albert (PC)  
Hughes, Hon. Ken, Calgary-West (PC)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jeneroux, Matt, Edmonton-South West (PC)  
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Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL),  
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Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC)  
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Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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Olesen, Cathy, Sherwood Park (PC)  
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Pedersen, Blake, Medicine Hat (W)  
Quadri, Sohail, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)  
Quest, Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)  
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Premier  
Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)  
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)  
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)  
Saskiw, Shayne, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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Smith, Danielle, Highwood (W),  
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
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Weadick, Hon. Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)  
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)  
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W)  
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)  
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)  
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC),  
Government Whip

### Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 61

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

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Bhardwaj	Quadri
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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
Sandhu
Sherman

**Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee**

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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	

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Bikman
Blakeman
Brown
DeLong
Eggen
Leskiw
Quadri
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Dorward
Forsyth
Goudreau
Jablonski
Mason
Quest
Sherman
Smith

**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Mr. Cao  
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Barnes	Notley
Bhardwaj	Olesen
Brown	Pastoor
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Fox	Sarich
Fritz	Starke
Goudreau	Strankman
Jeneroux	Swann
Kennedy-Glans	Webber
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**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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Amery	Hehr
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Bilous	Pastoor
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Donovan	Starke
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Fraser	Webber
Fritz	

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Barnes	Kubinec
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Calahasen	Stier
Cao	Webber
Casey	Xiao
Fenske	Young
Fraser	Vacant
Hale	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 26, 2012

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Let us pray. Dear Lord, help us to better understand and accordingly to prioritize our duties in order that we can properly fulfill the requests of our constituents and of all Albertans who are counting on us for help. Amen.

Hon. members, it being Monday, I invite you to remain standing to join in as Mr. Paul Lorieau leads us in the singing of our national anthem. Join in in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour today to rise on your behalf and introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly a very special guest. Seated in the Speaker's gallery is Scott Hamilton, son of the late Don Hamilton, our former Ethics Commissioner. Scott joins us today to remember and celebrate the many achievements in Don Hamilton's extensive career in the public sector. Mr. Hamilton's long and dedicated service to Albertans was exemplary and inspirational. It is with great sadness that we have lost such an extraordinary individual. I would like to extend my deepest sympathies and condolences to the family during this difficult time. At this time I would ask Scott to rise, and I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in extending the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I'd like to introduce through you to all members of the Assembly 53 of Alberta's brightest young students from Julia Kiniski school, located in the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Creek. They are joined today by teachers Mr. Dale Mandryk and Mrs. Susan Skillings along with parent helpers Mrs. Tracy Martin, Mrs. Rhonda Paterson, Mrs. Gail Teasdale, and Mrs. Sherisse Hume. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and

through you to all members of the Assembly several guests from the Mental Health Patient Advocate office of Alberta. Joining us today are Fay Orr, the Alberta Mental Patient Advocate, and three members of her office's staff: Carol Robertson Baker, Ryan Bielby, and Bev Slusarchuk. Accompanying them are three individuals who are featured in the office's 2011-12 annual report, which I'll table this afternoon. Hana Marinkovic, the chief of staff for the hon. Minister of Human Services, is here. Hana's mother is living with schizophrenia. Austin Mardon, a friend and long-time leader in Alberta's mental health community, is here as well as Paula Murphy, a worker at Anderson Hall, a transitional home for young adults learning to live with and manage their mental illnesses. Please join me in thanking these Albertans for their commitment to mental health. Please stand.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some brilliant students from St. Alphonsus school in the constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. There are 17 students, teacher Mrs. Shauna Wasik, and parent helper Mrs. Bonnie Moddejonge. I would like them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Minister of Health, you had a second introduction. I wasn't aware. Go ahead, followed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Horne:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's also my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 35 individuals representing the political action committees of medical students at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary. These students are here today meeting with members of the Assembly to raise issues of concern to their committees. This year they have chosen to focus on the integration of aboriginal health into their education, a very worthwhile endeavour. I had the pleasure of meeting the students at lunch today, and I felt we had a very productive discussion on a variety of topics. I'd ask our guests to rise, and I invite all members to provide them with the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Fred Alexandruk. He lives in Edmonton, but he is the owner and operator of Pinehurst Lake Wilderness Cabins, which has boat access only. He met with me here today to try to resolve some of his outstanding issues. I'd like to invite my colleagues to give him the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really excited today to rise to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 21 employees from the local government services division of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. They are participating in the first public service employees tour, and they are very excited to be here. The group includes both new and long-term staff who are looking to better understand the context in which they work and just how important their job is to the work that we do in serving Albertans. They're seated in the public

gallery. I'd ask them to rise as I call their names: Sara Ahlstrom, JD Kliewer, Irene Black, Pat Chapman, Lisa Awid-Goltz, Carmen Auld, Clara Bartha, Jeremy Schiff, Haley Wasserman, Catherine Dunn, Daniel Mireault, Irfan Ansari, Christina Kortmeyer, Arlynn Neuman, Ronda Morgan, Karen Clarke, Mary Harron, Christina Ward, Olimpia Pantelimon, Joanne Campbell, and Aleks Nelson. I'd ask that the members here please give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my sister-in-law JoAnne Watson, who is up in the members' gallery. She is the youngest sister of my dear late wife, Heather, and every time I see her, I tear up. She's here today for meetings with the CLPNA, the licensed practical nurses. I think that's what that stands for. I'd ask, Jo, that you stand and that everyone please give her the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the Associate Minister of Wellness.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Michael Martyna. Michael is here with a group of medical students advocating for aboriginal health. Not only is he a medical student; he was a candidate for the Alberta Liberals in West Yellowhead. Michael was studying to get into medical school, was running as a candidate, and in the dying days of the campaign Michael worked hard to help me get elected in Edmonton-Meadowlark and sacrificed his seat for West Yellowhead. I would like to thank Michael and all medical students for their advocacy and ask the Assembly to give him the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you, Michael.

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Calgary-Foothills started something great. We're good colleagues and friends, so I'll finish it. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Health it is indeed a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a guest who's joining us from the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta. You got part of it. JoAnne Macdonald-Watson is the president of the college, and she's a licensed practical nurse from Red Deer working in the emergency department of the Red Deer regional hospital. I just want to mention that later this afternoon our hon. Health minister will be tabling the college's annual report, and we're pleased that JoAnne is able to join us for that today. One more time could we have JoAnne rise? I'd invite all members to give her another warm welcome.

## Members' Statements

### Donald M. Hamilton

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to Mr. Don Hamilton, who served as an officer of the Legislature from 2003 to 2008. Mr. Hamilton was born and raised in Alberta. He believed in helping to make the province a better place. As an ordained minister Mr. Hamilton lived his life for the good of others. From his work in establishing the Alberta service corps to serving as the first executive assistant to an Alberta Premier under Premier Harry

Strom, Mr. Hamilton strove to make Alberta a caring and inclusive community.

Mr. Hamilton also believed in the value of sport. In addition to being involved with the 1978 Commonwealth Games and the horse-racing tribunal, Mr. Hamilton was also inducted into the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame as the general manager of the 1962 to 1964 Edmonton Huskies junior football team. Winners of three consecutive Canadian championships, the players and staff of this team were a shining example of working together for success.

In his capacity as Ethics Commissioner Mr. Hamilton worked passionately to educate Members of the Legislative Assembly, their constituents, and Alberta's youth. He believed that engaging youth was crucial in developing the next generation of leaders in public service. Mr. Hamilton was a regular participant in School at the Legislature, where he would talk to grade 6 students about his role. He advocated for the creation of a lobbyists registry and witnessed its fruition during his tenure as Ethics Commissioner. He was also involved in the review and subsequent amendment of Alberta's conflict-of-interest legislation. Transparency and accountability were always paramount in his mind.

Mr. Hamilton served the people of Alberta as part of the public sector for over 30 years. His contributions and his legacy will be long remembered with our admiration and with our gratitude.

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

## Physician Services Agreement

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week on a number of occasions I asked the Minister of Health to rescind the contract he imposed on the doctors of this province. I asked him to do the right thing and get back to the negotiating table with the AMA. The minister responded, saying he didn't need opposition telling him what to do, and he certainly wasn't going to talk about negotiations on the floor of the Legislature.

So what did he do? He started talking about it in the media. Over the weekend we saw in local newspapers the government's massive PR blitz spinning the facts around the minister's imposed contract on doctors by brushing aside opposition questions and avoiding the scrutiny provided by this Assembly. This minister is doing an Enron on accountability.

He won't talk about it to me, but he's more than happy to spend thousands and thousands of dollars on radio and newspaper ads to tell half of the story. The other half of the story is that doctors in Alberta have the highest overhead demands in this country. Doctors pay more in Alberta to set up and run their clinics than they would in any other province. Under this contract imposed by this minister programs that used to provide some financial support to doctors' clinics have been eliminated. Sure, the government is throwing cash at doctors up front, but they're clawing it back and more in the end.

Mr. Speaker, in the end it isn't about money. Doctors say that it's not about money, but it's about respect. The minister's repeated attempts to demonize doctors as money-grabbers is not factual. What is factual are doctors' demands for fair negotiations and their demands that the minister be truthful to Albertans. Albertans trust their doctors. What they don't trust is this government.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I said that I would have a comment on members' statements, and I will do it later this week.

Let us proceed to Vermilion-Lloydminster.

### Decorum and Civility

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Shortly after your election you urged members to develop a personal credo. As a former youth parliamentarian and a passionate adherent of our British parliamentary heritage, I was inspired by that address. I was further encouraged by the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition when she wrote to you, "I look forward to working with you along with other members in the House to improve decorum and respect." Wow, I thought. I was going to be part of a new era of civility, decorum, and respect.

Mr. Speaker, it has become clear that members of the Official Opposition are having a tough time meeting their leader's lofty ideals. Virtually every day you are forced to admonish the Official Opposition for their unparliamentary language and behaviour. Last week you severely admonished the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills for making criminal accusations against someone not in the Assembly and unable to defend the accusation.

That behaviour extends outside the Assembly. When the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville said on Twitter that she was looking forward to visiting the constituency of Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, the local MLA responded, "Nothing gives me more energy than a bunch of PC hacks visiting my constituency." This is a poor reflection on the promise of the opposition leader to foster decorum and respect.

More recently one of the opposition leader's staff members characterized government supporters as "PC bootlickers." Really, hon. member? Is this the decorum and respect you refer to in your letter?

Mr. Speaker, sitting in this Assembly is indeed a privilege. Inside and outside of this august Chamber we must embody the title of honourable members, but sadly some of the members of the Official Opposition and their supporters do not want to improve decorum and respect either within or outside the Assembly. I ran for office hoping to elevate the level of discourse in this province. I had hoped that all members would join me, heralding a new level of enlightened political discussion. Sadly, some prefer to debate and coarsen that debate. Personally, I would prefer to serve Albertans with respect and integrity. Albertans expect and deserve nothing less.

### Speaker's Ruling Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, having heard the first two members' statements, I hope that this is not a path we're going to continue down from either side of the House. I will give you that speech very soon, but in the meantime please visit *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* page 422, where guidelines for members' statements are indicated.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Violence against Women and Girls

**Ms Olesen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to encourage my colleagues and all Albertans to wear a white ribbon to recognize November 25 as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the beginning of the White Ribbon Campaign. The White Ribbon Campaign is the largest effort to end violence against women in the world. Started by a group of Canadian men, it has evolved to include men and women standing together to end violence against women and girls.

At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime,

with the abuser usually someone known to her. Violence against women and girls takes many different forms and is not limited to any culture, country, or specific group of women.

1:50

No one should ever have to be part of a violent relationship where they feel threatened or intimidated. No child should grow up watching a parent being abused. Wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge to never commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women and girls and to remember the 14 young women whose lives ended in an act of gender-based violence in 1989 at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal.

Mr. Speaker, violence has significant consequences for our children and families and should not be tolerated. We all have a role to play in helping end violence in this province by supporting and building strong families and communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

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

#### Corporate and Union Donations to Political Parties

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the current rules on campaign donations can lead to problems. We all know of the hundreds of thousands of dollars directed to one party by one individual with many different business interests before this government, and we've seen union members balk when their dues are used to support political parties with which they may not agree. In the spirit of raising the bar on openness and transparency, will the government now join the growing chorus of voices and put an end to political donations from both corporations and unions?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear to Albertans. With the advent of our Premier's assuming the leadership of this government, we have introduced legislation on provincial elections and donations, which is currently before the House and will be one of the most transparent ones in the land. We have also introduced a public disclosure act, which is known as the whistleblower legislation, which further speaks to those points. We have instituted what I would consider, and probably most would, to be the toughest expense and travel policies for not only elected officials in government but also for all public-sector employees and third parties. That shows leadership, and we are taking that leadership.

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

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is quite specific because the government's proposed legislation doesn't include any provisions to limit the source of donations. Earlier today we made a policy statement on it. Now, the Premier does like to talk about policy in question period on the odd occasion, so will she now agree with this policy and put an end to union and corporate donations?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, legislation has been tabled on the table. I don't think we will be discussing it in question period. The member, if she chooses to do so, will have ample opportunity to not only debate the legislation as it stands, but she can also file additional amendments. She knows she's privileged to do so.

Let me point out one difference. While these individuals continue to complain about standards and practices, this side of

the House actually is introducing changes and brings in much more transparency and much more accountability to finances in Alberta.

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

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our understanding is that we specifically can't amend this section in the legislation, which is why I am asking this question today. We believe that putting election financing entirely in the hands of individuals is the easiest way to protect the process from even the perception of undue influence. Now, the feds have done it. Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Quebec have done it. Isn't it time for Alberta to clean things up, too, and ban corporate and union donations?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, I can't be more clear. The piece of legislation that speaks to that was introduced by this government and by this leader. That is why it is on the floor of this Legislature, and that is why we are debating it. If that particular member feels that there are ways of strengthening that legislation, instead of making innuendos during question period, table amendments, debate the legislation as it comes up for debate. All we're hearing is innuendos. I'm looking forward to some meaningful discussion out of the opposition.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would suspect that Bill 7, the Election Accountability Amendment Act, 2012, may be up this afternoon, so let's be careful of the anticipation rule.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

### Capital Infrastructure Financing

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister is preparing to release his next quarterly update, and we all live in hope that it isn't another work of fiction. The minister has been insisting for months that there won't be a deficit because he won't have to borrow to cover operating, but that's just juggling the books. The minister is moving the province's capital spending out of the total budget into a new separate, different, alternative special budget so that he can then claim that things are balanced. They're not. It's borrowing. It's debt. Why won't he just admit it?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not exactly sure where the hon. member is coming from because what we're doing on our budget is that as a budget we're bringing forward the operating plan, the savings plan, and a capital plan. It's all one budget. I'm not exactly sure what kind of fiction the hon. member is trying to put into Albertans' minds. Does she believe that they're gullible or something? I don't know.

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

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're looking forward to seeing a balanced budget.

I want to ask about this quote from the Premier. "We will spend wisely and save intelligently, managing our finances to protect future [generations of] Albertans." She said that in this Assembly just 13 months ago. Why has she decided it's no longer necessary to protect future generations of Albertans?

**Mr. Horner:** As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the instructions that I have from our Premier and this government are to ensure that we are doing exactly that, that we are protecting the economy of today for tomorrow for future Albertans, that we are ensuring that the infrastructure that Albertans need today and tomorrow is

there for Albertans. We will not deficit finance the operations of this government. We have never said that we will.

**Ms Smith:** That's just the kind of doublespeak I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker. The minister refers to using everything in his financial tool box to get things done. If that tool box even exists, it's clear it doesn't have an axe, a razor blade, a sharp pencil, or even an eraser. Why won't he just admit that alternative financing, going to the capital markets, and public-private partnerships are just another way of saying debt?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, I think I've been fairly clear. I do agree that a P3 is a tool of financial borrowing just as going to the capital markets is, just as borrowing for the school that is in her riding that was built with a P3. Is she now saying that we should have waited until the school was 20 per cent higher in cost and the students were doing their school work in the street? Is that what the Wildrose capital plan is? The Wildrose Alliance policies are from before 2000, even, not today. Albertans need a policy for today, not yesterday.

**The Speaker:** Third and final set of main questions. The hon. leader.

**Ms Smith:** We're just asking for the kind of policy that Ralph Klein would have introduced in this Chamber.

### Openness and Transparency in Government

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the growing body of evidence that this government, rather than raising the bar on openness and transparency in Alberta, is doing exactly the opposite. Instead of a quest for truth we get stalling, roadblocks, and hiding. On the simple issue of health care expenses the only formal investigation is looking into one individual at one health region. Why won't the minister order the release of all of the expenses of all of the executives for all of the regions dating back to 2005?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing that apparently we're going to go through a second week of questioning on this same line. This question has been asked and answered. I've lost count of the number of times it's been asked and answered.

The question that is before the government, and the question that should matter to all members of this House is, in fact, the expense policies that are in place today for travel, accommodation, hospitality, and all the other expenses. I think we've proven clearly that we have the most aggressive set of policies in the country. Everything we do in health care is to support better publicly funded health care. These policies support wise use of taxpayers' dollars in this regard.

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

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This isn't the only example. There are also the examples of illegal campaign donations. The new legislation that the government is touting as the toughest in the land shuts the door on most of the past transgressions. This quote applies. "We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light." Where is the transparency?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, it's peculiar that the member would say that because these policies for campaign donations – she wants to go back all the way to 2005. I note that the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills was the policy vice-president for



the PC party till 2010, the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek till 2010, the prior Member for Fort-McMurray till 2010, the Member for Airdrie. They were all developers of this policy. Now they choose to step aside and demand transparency. While this government is actually introducing transparencies, all they are doing is criticizing the policies that they were part of developing.

2:00

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

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been against the law since 2004, and it's not the only example. The queue-jumping inquiry is restricted, too. It can't look backward to where the evidence points. Rather, it seems designed to produce a result that the government can spin as a clean bill of health on ethics. I wonder: if it was someone other than the government family accused of misdeeds like this, wouldn't the investigations be a bit more vigorous and thorough?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, yet another innuendo. I've said clearly on a number of occasions that no matter who it is, if you have evidence, present it, and that person will be investigated.

However, let me show you the difference between leadership and the lack thereof. When the member of the opposition files illegal expense claims, she throws her secretary under a bus.

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** When she ends up with intolerant candidates, she throws their associations under a bus. When she loses an election, she throws gullible, quote, unquote, Albertans under a bus. That is not leadership. What's happening on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is leadership.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Airdrie, you rose on a point of order at 2:01, and that point of order has been noted.

The hon. leader of the Alberta Liberal opposition.

### Physician Services Agreement

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A health system that does not have a well-engaged medical profession will not succeed. In his November 22, 2012, letter AMA president, Dr. Michael Giuffre, says: "Does [the minister] really think he can run this health care system without the confidence of physicians . . . If the minister says [yes, he does], then I have news for him. He is losing it . . . This cannot go on." To the Minister of Health: do you or don't you want the respect and trust of Alberta's doctors by treating them as partners in health care?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, this government works collaboratively with physicians on a number of levels. The Alberta Medical Association agreement and the negotiations that are going on toward that end are one part of our work with physicians across the province. We can cite many examples. I talked last week, for example, about the improvements in acute-care occupancy in our seven major hospitals and the significant reduction of the number of patients waiting in acute-care beds for admission to continuing care. All of these things were accomplished because of the collaboration and leadership that physicians continue to show in our health system. We count on that as a government, and we will continue to count on that.

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

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have amongst the most demoralized physicians in the province and in the country and given that Dr. Lloyd Maybaum, president of the Calgary & Area Medical Staff Society, said that the minister was trying to hoodwink and bamboozle the public with nonsense numbers and figures and given that the government of Alberta recently placed radio ads advertising how much doctors are paid – Albertans deserve to have a government that bargains in good faith – to the same minister: why are you then wasting taxpayer dollars on radio ads instead of doing your job and getting back to the negotiating table?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, in the last month there has been some tremendous information released by the Canadian Institute for Health Information about our health care system. If the hon. member actually cares about the morale and the confidence of physicians and other health workers in other disciplines in our workforce, I am sure he would agree with telling Albertans that the province of Alberta has increased the number of physicians in this province by 60 per cent in the last 10 years compared to 23 per cent nationally. I'm sure he would agree that Albertans want to know about that. I'm sure he'd also want Albertans to know that our physicians are the best paid in the country, 29 per cent ahead of the national average.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, I do care about Alberta's physicians. That's why I spoke up about physician intimidation and gladly left that side of the floor for this side.

Given that AHS has been a partner in the trilateral process of negotiating with Alberta's health care staff and doctors and given that the resulting negotiations will ultimately affect AHS operations, to the minister. You've cut the doctors out from their own negotiations with your unilateral imposition. Why have you also cut out AHS? Aren't they a partner?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, if this hon. member's idea of leadership is engaging in negativity, cynicism, and personal attack, if that's how he defines his role as a parliamentarian, we leave that to him. [interjections] We are engaged in discussions with the AMA toward a new agreement. We have a meeting scheduled for later this week. [interjections] We're very confident that we will be able to reach an agreement on all the issues, but it will be the right agreement for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let's please give the floor to whoever has it. This talking across the aisle is starting up again. We have young people here who are trying to learn something about the democratic process. Let's show them the best example we possibly can.

The leader of the New Democrat opposition.

### Bullying in Schools

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Alberta School Boards Association rejected a proposal to provide protection of gay students and staff from discrimination and bullying. Clearly, gay and lesbian students need protection, and they're not going to get it from the ASBA. The Edmonton public school board, on the other hand, has implemented an effective and proactive policy on bullying that should be the standard for the entire province. To the Minister of Education: will you act to ensure that schools provide the highest level of protection to GLBT students from bullying and discrimination?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, we absolutely will, and we did. We passed the Education Act. It has very strong measures with respect to antibullying that protect all Alberta students under a very broad and very inclusive framework. We expect every trustee and every school board in the province to comply with that.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that this government caved in to the extreme right and removed any mention of the Human Rights Act from that Education Act, will the Minister of Education admit that this government's totally inadequate Education Act was a clear signal that school boards do not have to make ending the bullying of gay and lesbian students a top priority?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, many things in that statement are simply not true, in particular that the Human Rights Act is not referenced in the Education Act. It's in section 33, and I referenced it in a quote last Thursday when I was asked a very similar question. Maybe the hon. member would like to just review *Hansard*.

**Mr. Mason:** We know that they took that piece out, Mr. Speaker, because we saw the old act.

Given that the government has made it a human rights offence to discuss sexuality and religion in the classroom without previous parental consent and given that this provision hinders attempts by teachers to educate students about the need to be inclusive with all students will the minister admit that the government's policies harm and limit attempts to combat bullying of gay and lesbian students in our schools, and will he commit to repealing the offending section from the old Bill 44, and if not, why not?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, if he wants to talk about the Human Rights Act and Bill 44, I'm sure the Minister of Justice, who is responsible for that bill, would be happy to respond to him.

What I can say is that in his last question he talked about kowtowing to special-interest groups. Well, Mr. Speaker, those special-interest groups are parents. I wouldn't exactly call parents special-interest groups when you're talking about the education of their children.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by Grande Prairie-Smoky.

#### Expense Reporting by Ministers

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has promised to raise the bar on openness and transparency, but I'm not sure this government even understands what those words mean. Further demonstrating that this government cannot be trusted, we have learned that three ministers are preventing the release of their expenses. The Human Services minister, the Minister of Education, and the Deputy Premier are denying a request to see how they spend public dollars, information Albertans deserve to know. To the minister of accountability, transformation, and whatever else it is you claim to stand for: what is your government hiding?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, in addition for it to be totally inappropriate for the hon. member to make allegations against another member, he's totally wrong. There are FOIP requests to the three ministers mentioned, and in each case the reply has been that all of those expenses will be made public. There's a section of

the act which clearly provides that if all the requests are to be made public, then it is not provided specifically to the requester but to all of the public. Very open and transparent.

**Mr. Wilson:** To the same minister: what are you going to do about these three rogue members of your cabinet who are actively trying to suppress information that Albertans by law have a right to know now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader rose on a point of order at 2:10. It has been noted. I was going to make some points of clarification. We'll wait for the point of order.

The Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, unbecoming to be calling a member rogue when the member doesn't even understand the rules. Three requests under FOIP have been made, and three offices have responded to that request advising that all information – more than FOIP is requesting, all information – will be made public not only to the person that requested information, but it will be posted to the general public. Hence, no one is avoiding anything. The information will be made available. I take particular offence to that kind of language in this Chamber.

2:10

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

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question was posed to the minister of accountability, not the Minister of Nothing at All, but I will simply ask for one clarification: when?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I stand, and you please sit.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, we don't have any ministers of nothing in this Assembly, and I would ask you to please reconsider how you phrase questions and to whom they go in the future.

We do have an Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation, and I will recognize him now.

**Mr. Scott:** Mr. Speaker, we have the toughest and most transparent expense disclosure policy in Canada. All of the expenses are going to be posted online. That's going to happen in December. In addition to not being able to read the legislation that we've tabled in the House, they obviously can't read press releases either. It's been disclosed in a press release when it's coming out. Read it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

#### Council of the Federation Energy Strategy

**Mr. McDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that Alberta's future economic success is tied to getting products to market, yet it seems that every time a private-sector pipeline proposal is made, there is stiff opposition that threatens it. My question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. What is being done to help convince other jurisdictions in Canada that Alberta's resources can be transported securely to key markets?

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

**Mr. Dallas:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is certainly correct that helping to diversify Alberta markets really is the government's single most important economic challenge. That's one of the reasons that our Premier has led a push for the Canadian

energy strategy, a strategy that will ensure that we take advantage of all the regional energy strengths that our country has to offer. Unlike the opposition, the Premier believes strongly that being at the table with other provinces will help fully realize the economic opportunities for everyone in resource development.

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

**Mr. McDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's all fine in theory, but B.C. is still complaining. My second question to the same minister: what success has Alberta had in working with other provinces on these issues?

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

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is just returning from what has been a very successful Council of the Federation meeting in Halifax, where Premiers engaged in a lot of discussion on the topic. The Premier met with the Premier of Quebec, where it was determined that the provinces would strike a working group to share expertise on responsible energy development and examine key issues around pipelines. The Premier also received strong support from other Premiers for a proposal that would see more of Alberta's oil shipped to eastern Canada. That's leadership.

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

**Mr. McDonald:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Minister of Energy. What are the benefits of such a west-to-east pipeline to Alberta and to all of the rest of Canada?

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

**Mr. Hughes:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the benefits are spread right across the country. The benefits accrue not only to Alberta but to the many provinces across central and eastern Canada that can benefit from having competitive, good-quality, western Canadian crude and petroleum products that can serve the energy needs of central Canada and eastern Canada.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

#### Political Party Financial Contributions

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo asked the Justice minister when he would make election laws tougher and penalties harsher. Ironic since that member was on the board of the Wood Buffalo Housing Development Corporation in 2007 when it gave a \$2,250 donation to a certain political party. This is an illegal donation. The election finances act prohibits housing management bodies from making political donations. To the Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation: when will your ministry raise the bar on openness and transparency and voluntarily disclose all illegal donations regardless of timing?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I really have no clue how to answer those questions over and over again in a way that is comprehensible, in a way that those members can understand. What is particularly interesting about this question is that the member to whom she is referring, because she is referring to a PC member, is one Guy Boutilier, who was then a Wildrose Alliance member of this House. So, first of all, I would advise the members of the opposition that, if they have any allegations, table them appropriately and be very cautious who you are pointing fingers at

because, again, here is another member who is no longer a member of this Assembly.

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

#### Speaker's Ruling Referring to Nonmembers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let me just remind you all, beginning with the Deputy Premier in this instance, that we should not be referring to people who are not here and not able to defend themselves. I've commented on this before. I would say the same to members of the opposition as well.

The next question, please.

#### Political Party Financial Contributions (continued)

**Mrs. Towle:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, I'm referring to the current Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, who was a board member at the time.

Section 1(l) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act clearly spells out that management bodies under the Alberta Housing Act such as the Wood Buffalo Housing Development Corporation, of which the current member was a board member at the time, are prohibited from making contributions to political parties. To the Justice minister: given that this diversion of money intended to support the poorest Albertans happened five years ago, does he understand why Albertans might find limiting disclosure to only three years problematic?

**Mr. Denis:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, we are debating this bill this evening, I understand. The hon. member will have ample opportunity to discuss this then. I would also refer her to section 52 of the legislation, which imposes a three-year limitation period. Also, if the hon. member has any particular information, again, that she'd like to disclose, I welcome her to contact the Chief Electoral Officer.

**Mrs. Towle:** My final question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, whose department is responsible for making sure that the poorest Albertans can access subsidized housing. What have you done to make sure that tax dollars intended to help very low-income Albertans are being used properly? Can you confirm that this money will or has been returned?

**Mr. Griffiths:** Mr. Speaker, all I can confirm is that I haven't heard anything about this case. But it is very clear in law that donations like those she's insinuating cannot be made. I'll look into it. Everyone should understand that whether it's a municipality or housing body, they do not make those donations. It's their responsibility to make sure that they don't.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

#### Liquor Distribution System

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission has one liquor distributor for the whole province of Alberta, with a warehouse located in the city of St. Albert. The distributor operates as a monopoly. All of the liquor in the province is distributed through that warehouse. Many liquor imports are coming into the province through the city of Calgary, trucked up the QE II to St. Albert, from where they're then

distributed, oftentimes back down to the south end of the province. The result is an inefficient system. My questions are for the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance. How do Alberta's liquor distribution costs compare to other . . .

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I would suggest, first of all, that I disagree that it's an inefficient system. As most members will know and as was pointed out, Alberta has Canada's only fully privatized liquor retail system. Having said that, independent reviews have been made on the efficiency of our distribution system. In fact, PricewaterhouseCoopers recently studied the model and came to that conclusion, that it is a very efficient system. That study, I'm told, is available on the AGLC website.

**Dr. Brown:** To the same minister: will the government introduce some competition into the liquor distribution business in Alberta? [interjections]

**Mr. Horner:** Well, it's interesting that the left side of the House would be interested in that type of a question.

Mr. Speaker, the system is working quite well. We're not into fixing systems that aren't broken. The service of the private operator is very closely monitored. There is some contracting out that goes on with that. The costs to liquor businesses have either held the line or gone down in some instances for many years. The system is working quite well.

**Dr. Brown:** Well, will the minister undertake to eliminate some of the inefficient necessity of having to truck the liquor all the way up from Calgary, where it's flown in from international cities, to St. Albert and then going back down there? Is there some way to get rid of that inefficiency?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I agree that we always want to be very cognizant of whether or not these systems are being efficient. To that end, I do know that the AGLC has hired third-party verification of that system over the years. We've also asked them to look into whatever are the best possible options. As they look to expand, we want to ensure that they are expanding in a very efficient manner. That's why these outside parties, who have expertise in distribution and warehousing, are being asked their opinion. We believe that they will give us the best advice.

### Funding for Private Schools

**Mr. Hehr:** Alberta continues to be one of only five provinces to fund private schools. Further, there is little or no accountability for the public money that is going to these private institutions. For instance, a Calgary private school was found to be inflating grades, teaching children in the basement of a church, the principal and founder of the school was deemed to be unemployable in our separate school system, and to top it off, he had purchased a luxury car and signed a \$1.1 million mortgage, all being paid for by the private school receiving taxpayer money. To the Minister of Education: how is it that the International School of Excellence is still operating with next to zero accountability to either the children learning in the school or the taxpayer dollars?

2:20

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, let me just respond to the specific question by saying that that particular school has been under a great deal of oversight and monitoring over the last year. There have been some measures taken, and Albertans can be assured that

the dollars we are investing in private schools are going through to instruction based on the accountability measures that we've put in place.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think we can.

Let me ask you a specific question: how does someone get to operate a private school if they're deemed unemployable in our separate school system? How do they get a licence to operate a school, to run it?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, I caution the member because his comment is not accurate, and he is talking about someone who is not here to defend themselves and was not fired from the public system.

I guess it gets to the root of a real question that we wrestled with through Inspiring Ed. Is it the success of a system or a school division or a school that is important to Albertans, or is it the success of every child? Should we be investing in a system, should we be investing in a school, or should we be investing in children and the success of each child? Every child is different, unique, and their parents may choose to send them to different . . .

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, why are we funding private schools that tend to divide communities on the basis of wealth or religion when we should be committed to one publicly funded education system?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad he allowed me to expand here. In Alberta it's the parents who get to choose where the kids go to school and not the opposition. We want every child to succeed, and that's why we provide many different opportunities for those children to succeed. We recognize that not every child can be fit into the same box. Every community is different. We want to invest in their success, not just invest in a school and not just invest in a system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Full-day Kindergarten Programs

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend the Education minister said that full-day kindergarten might be ready by 2014. Before the election the Education minister claimed that it would be ready by the fall of 2013. When the Premier was running for the leadership of the PC Party, she promised to introduce full-day kindergarten within a year of being elected. Well, more than a year has passed, and we're still waiting. You didn't run on maybe a kindergarten in 2014, Mr. Education Minister. How can we look upon this as anything but another broken promise?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's a good and fair question, but I think the members would probably acknowledge for Albertans that we actually do have full-day kindergarten right now. Full-day kindergarten was operating in 2012, and it will be operating in 2013, and it will be operating in 2014. The question is: are we going to expand that? Are we going to offer it to more Albertans? How are we going to pay for it? Who is going to deliver it? And how does it fit into our early childhood development strategy? We're going to have those things settled very shortly.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that all research suggests that children who have access to full-day kindergarten perform much better throughout their school years, when will this

government take real action on the Premier's promise and introduce full-day kindergarten in Alberta on their dime, not the Edmonton Public School Board dealing with it?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, not to split hairs, but the Edmonton Public School Board's dime is our dime. There is one taxpayer. We fund school boards, and we're happy to do it, and we think it's a fantastic investment. We recognize that every kid deserves the best possible start in life, and that's why we commend the school boards that are offering full-day kindergarten for targeted kids. We know that we want to expand that, but we're not quite sure how much investment that's going to take in infrastructure and how that will tie in with other programs. We want the best possible solution.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this Education minister is really giving us no idea of when this full-day kindergarten is going to come, what it's going to look like, maybe in 2014, will the minister then admit that the absence of full-day kindergarten for Alberta's children is a particularly egregious broken promise?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, the member talks about an absence of full-day K. I hate to repeat myself, but two minutes ago I just acknowledged that there's full-day kindergarten right across the province today. And he should be reminded that the Alberta School Boards Association even voted last week that they don't support mandatory full-day K. So there's a little bit of work to do to make sure we understand how this is going to fit so that each child that needs this resource to succeed is going to – we're going to put the resources where they give Albertans the most benefit.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Calgary-Foothills.

#### Government Relationship with Physicians

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing more fundamental in our health care system than the concept of respect. It should be the guiding principle for how government interacts with our front-line staff and our health professionals. Instead, this Health minister is busy wasting thousands of dollars on radio ads trying to mislead Albertans about the contract imposed on our physicians while our surgeons are saying that they are in favour of fiscal responsibility but that the proposed changes are arbitrary and imprecise. Will the minister, then, stop muddying the waters, be open and honest about some of the costs facing doctors, start showing them a little respect, and stop your bullying and intimidation?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I've noted the point of order from the Government House Leader at 2:27.

I'll just remind Calgary-Fish Creek and others that the minute you use terms like "mislead" in the way it was just used, it's going to surely result in a point of order, and it's going to surely consume time. So let's be very careful, okay?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to use House time to answer personal accusations presented by the hon. member opposite because, of course, as we know, she didn't ask a question of government policy.

What I will use the time for is to take this opportunity to inform the House that I am meeting with the president of the Alberta Medical Association later this week, remind the House that we have been over 20 months in negotiations toward a new contract, and remind the House that we continue to work for a new

agreement because we believe that's in the public interest, provides for the best possible health care for Albertans, and preserves our position as the best province in Canada in which to practise a health discipline.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has bullied physicians, broken a promise to call an inquiry, and now has imposed an agreement on our physicians, that has left them very angry, alienated, and disillusioned, when will this Health minister get it into his head that this isn't just about money? This is about respecting the doctors that hold our entire health care system together.

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the premise of the question, the hon. member is right. This is certainly not just about money. This is about standing up and defending a strong, publicly funded health care system to serve this province and lead this country. This is about a discussion about public policy to support a health care system that is second to none in this country. Most of all, this is about a government and a caucus defending against an Official Opposition which seeks to privatize and dismantle and to undermine confidence in that publicly funded health care system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie has risen on a point of order at 2:29. It's noted.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's just get this on the record. The minister is full of you know what. Given that our surgeons have argued for fiscal responsibility and given the fact that the former AMA president, Linda Slocombe, has stated that the PC government has failed to address the issues around engagement of physicians within decision-making, when will the government put an end to its bullying tactics and get back to the negotiating table with our doctors?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I have just said, this government is having further discussions with the Alberta Medical Association this week. As I said last week, I'm not going to engage and I'm not going to support the hon. member, in fact, in undermining confidence in these discussions, in undermining confidence in public health care, and in calling into question anyone's motives, be it the members of the government, physicians, other health care professionals, or anyone involved in this system. We are committed to a strong agreement with physicians in this province. We will continue working with them to do our best to achieve that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by Chestermere-Rocky View.

#### Student Finance System

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am the father of three beautiful daughters who are currently in postsecondary and graduate studies. Even though they work one, even two jobs to pay for the incurable expense of being a student, they do come to dad every now and then for some financial support. I'm okay with that. But they would rather go about taking out a student loan than come to me. I guess my interest rates are too high for them. My question is to the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education. I understand you've recently made changes to the student loan

program, yet there still is a lot of frustration out there with getting that support. Can the minister explain what new improvements were actually made to support students?

2:30

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

**Mr. Khan:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question, and I thank the hon. member for that question. We've been listening to students, and in consultation we've made a number of changes to make it easier to provide access to our student funding programs. We certainly understand and appreciate that today's students are digital natives, and as such they've told us that they want and need and use online services. As such, we've launched a new website this past spring called [studentaid.alberta](http://studentaid.alberta), which eliminates the stress of students having to wait days and weeks to find out about their funding. They can find out now in real time how and when they qualify for student aid. This is just one of the changes we've made, and we look forward to working . . .

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

**Mr. Webber:** Well, to the same minister, Mr. Speaker, my second question: a postsecondary education is expensive, and many students can't even afford to attend without a loan, so can the minister explain how the amount that a student qualifies for is determined?

**Mr. Khan:** Mr. Speaker, we certainly appreciate that every student's circumstances are somewhat unique, so we assess each student on a case-by-case basis. There is a formula, and basically the education and living costs a student faces minus the resources they have available equals their financial need. I can tell you we've made some significant improvements this year. We've eliminated the use of RRSPs, savings, part-time earnings, and parental contributions from the eligibility requirements for those student loans. Alberta has the most generous student loan programs in all of Canada, and we'll continue to work and improve those access issues for our students.

**Mr. Webber:** Again to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: if a student disagrees with the amount granted for their student loan, do they have any means for appeal at all?

**Mr. Khan:** Mr. Speaker, I would encourage any student who is denied funding or doesn't feel they've received adequate funding to contact student aid Alberta. The staff in my department are dedicated to finding solutions to help students. I will tell you that if we can work within the framework of the system, if a particular student needs help, we will find them the help they need.

#### **New School Construction Priorities**

**Mr. McAllister:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Education minister. Given what's happened today, he should be good and warmed up by now, I think. The government talks about fulfilling its commitments, but when it comes to building schools, boards, parents, and communities wonder if their needs are going to be met. In the Chamber the Minister of Education talks about building schools based on priority according to capital plans. Outside the Chamber, though, he mentions that the government may have special projects that aren't on anybody's capital plans. To the Minister of Education: why would you do that, and what

would you say to a community that doesn't get its school because you built a special project?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the member is referring to. I haven't talked about any special projects that are going to be pulled out of the air. We're talking about trying to incent collaboration and co-operation within the community and build hubs, and we're going to try and be nimble to proposals that may come forward from communities, from school boards, from parents, and from people within that community to build those hubs. I'm sure the member wants us to listen to the community and listen to parents. That's exactly what we want to do.

**Mr. McAllister:** I very much do, Mr. Speaker. For clarity to the Minister of Education, it was comments made during a breakfast with the ASBA last week.

Given that boards spend time and resources developing their capital lists, why won't the government commit to drafting a list of the top 50 priority education building projects so parents, boards, and communities aren't left in the dark and they do know who'll be getting their school?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** You know what, Mr. Speaker? It's a very good question, and if he asks it of our Infrastructure minister, he'd tell you we actually do publish the lists. The lists are online of all the projects that are approved. Each school division has lists that they send to us of their priorities, and we're wrestling with that and measuring those against each other. The list I would really like to have that could help us inform our capital planning with school boards is the secret list of the Official Opposition of the \$1.6 billion in projects that they would defer. I'm sure some of those must be schools, and if they can advise us which ones they think can wait longer, we'd be happy to consider that.

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

**Mr. McAllister:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. The Wildrose Party would find savings. I'm sure that most Albertans recognize the bloated bureaucracy that needs shaving on the other side.

Albertans want and deserve to have the politics taken out of decision-making when it comes to where schools are built. Parents want to know that their communities are going to get the schools that they need. To the minister: why aren't projects chosen based on needs, instead of the whims of this bloated government?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how to answer that. We're trying to do a good job of balancing the demands right across the province, which are significant, which is why our Premier has mused about financing. That demand for schools seems to be in direct opposition to their demand that we take on no debt or take on no financing. It's interesting that last week alone the Member for Airdrie was turning sod on a financed school in his division beneath a government sign, a P3 school. I'm not sure how you reconcile those two.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

#### **New-home Buyer Protection**

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend I heard some concerns from my constituents regarding Bill 5. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Now that Bill 5, the New Home Buyer Protection Act, has passed third reading and

almost into legislation, how does this impact Alberta? Will the purchase of a new home tomorrow be protected under this act?

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very excited that we have passed – unanimously, I'd like to say – Bill 5 through third reading in this House. Unfortunately, Bill 5, the New Home Buyer Protection Act, won't be retroactive. It also doesn't apply to homes that are built today or built tomorrow. Once the legislation is passed, we have some foundational work to do to processes and policies and paperwork to put into place. We're still anticipating it will be in place by the fall of 2013.

**Mr. Quadri:** Mr. Speaker, to the same minister again: given that homeowners are looking for protection as quickly as possible, what steps need to occur for this legislation to be enforced?

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The biggest piece of work yet to do is to build the regulations around the legislation. Actually, as soon as the bill was passed, we started online consultations with stakeholders. We'll be meeting with new-home buyers' organizations, we'll be meeting with the builders and the developers, with the warranty companies to construct the regulations. We've already made a lot of good progress. Once those are complete, we anticipate we'll be ready for the fall of 2013.

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

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you. To the same minister. For some homeowners who already have warranty coverage, it is very difficult for them to get their claim processed. Will the minister assure us that with this process it will be easier for them to get home repairs if something goes wrong?

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have heard from a lot of people who have purchased homes – a warranty comes along with it – about the process in place. It's not an official or legislated process, but now that we have mandated new-home warranties, it will fall under the Insurance Act. There were new rules brought forward just this summer, I believe, for the Insurance Act on the appeals process and making sure that you got satisfaction. All new-home warranties, when this is in place, will fall under that. Customers will know they're getting satisfaction then.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by Stony Plain.

#### **New School Construction Priorities** (continued)

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The citizens of Blackfalds have been waiting to see a shovel in the ground for a new elementary school that has been waiting on the school board's capital plan for over three years. This government inaction gives a lot of uncertainty for the parents of 180 children of the age of three who will need classroom space in two short years. Can the Minister of Infrastructure tell my constituents where the new school for Blackfalds falls on your government's infrastructure priority list?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, here we have another example. I wonder if the member is willing to take a P3 school, which would be a financed school. Nonetheless, we recognize that there are some significant pressures in this member's constituency. We appreciate that. We're going to do everything we can to try and deliver the school desks where they're needed in Alberta, either for growth-enrolment pressures, like in his case, or in areas where we've got buildings literally falling apart and we have health and safety issues.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member. [interjections]

Hon. Member for Airdrie, please, if you have a point of order, rise on it. Otherwise, yield the floor to your colleague, whom I've now recognized. Thank you.

2:40

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not talking about extra money. I'm just talking about a priority list.

Given that my constituents are left up in the air about a new school, I'm sure that many other Albertans across the province are, too. When will the Minister of Infrastructure release a province-wide list of provincial infrastructure projects along with upgrades and the criteria used to create it so Albertans will know where their priorities are ranked in your ministry?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, those lists of what the province intends to build – from the Alberta museum to all the schools across the province, investments in health care and hospitals – are all on the website. Those lists are announced, and they're announced with the budget. It takes a long time to build those lists, and they're changing all the time. When you think about thousands and thousands of projects across the province, what happens when you have a Slave Lake? What happens when you find mould in a school? What happens when a roof caves in? Do you just tell them, "No. You're further down the list. We're not nimble enough to respond to that"? It's not quite as simple as they'd like.

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

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell this isn't really going anywhere. To the Minister of A, T and T: when will you heed the call of Albertans, live up to the name of your ministry, and demand that the government release a public infrastructure list with the criteria used to create it? That would be truly transparent to Albertans. This would be a true transformation for this government.

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would refer the hon. member to the Alberta government website. Approved projects are on there. What the member is asking for is a preview. I don't blame him for being curious because we have a very good budget process. The fact is that we release on an annual basis the budget process, a lot of those priorities, and when we do that in the spring, the hon. member will see what the next schools are on the list, the next roads on the list, the other infrastructures projects on the list. We set priorities, and we do our best to follow them every single year.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that concludes question period for today. In a few seconds from now we will begin with our next person in line for members' statements.

## Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North West, followed by Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

### Joint Action on Arthritis Framework

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On September 18, 2012, the Arthritis Alliance of Canada, or AAC, released the Joint Action on Arthritis: A Framework to Improve Arthritis Prevention and Care in Canada. I was pleased to speak at the launch in Calgary that day.

As there are more than 4.6 million Canadians who suffer the effects of arthritis, this is a chronic disease that impacts many around us. I myself am a sufferer. There are three pillars of the framework that help address this impact: one is advancing knowledge and awareness, two is improving prevention and care, and finally, supporting ongoing stakeholder collaboration. In the framework everyone has a role in working towards these pillars: the patients, the health care professionals, the government, the industry partners, the AAC members, and, of course, the general public. It's important that these groups come together.

Arthritis can affect people of any age, and it is the most common cause of disability in Canada with the pain and limitations it can cause for those who have it. The AAC's framework executive summary notes that "the total economic burden of [osteo- and rheumatoid arthritis] in Canada, including direct health care costs and productivity losses to the economy, will grow from \$33.2 billion in 2010 . . . to over \$68 billion in 2040." Mr. Speaker, it's through the collaboration suggested by the report that an impact can be made on the daily lives of those with arthritis and lessen the burden it causes both financially and physically.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Family Care Clinics

**Mr. Rowe:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last spring the government made a last-minute and expensive election promise to build 140 new family care clinics in our province. They made this promise without consulting physicians. They made this promise without providing any evidence that these clinics will benefit Alberta families more than our current system of primary care networks. They made this promise without explaining whether they plan to shut down existing primary care networks in order to pay for the new government-run clinics.

The Health minister needs to provide Albertans with a cost-per-patient accounting of a family care clinic compared to existing primary care clinics. To date we have not seen this information. The Wildrose supports family care clinics where a need for them can be shown and where they will not put existing primary care facilities at risk.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans in both rural and urban centres want a government that will put forward meaningful solutions to some of the problems they experience in our health care system like long wait times. Instead, what they have is a government that mismanages our health care dollars and throws money at risky experiments.

There is no evidence that establishing family care clinics in rural communities will decrease wait times or improve access to health care. Family care clinics will do nothing to address the huge issue of physician shortages that so many of our rural

communities are facing. People in rural Alberta are concerned that if they have a family care clinic in their area, they might actually have a more difficult time recruiting physicians. Why would doctors want to invest in establishing their own private clinic in a rural community where they are going to face direct competition from a government-run and -financed family care clinic?

Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable that this government is putting primary health care for hard-working Albertans at risk across the province just to try and win a few votes.

Thank you.

## Notices of Motions

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice pursuant to section 15(2) of the standing orders that at the appropriate time I will be rising on a point of privilege concerning the failure of the Chief Electoral Officer to distribute his recommendations for legislative amendments, submitted to the Minister of Justice on August 27, to all members of the Legislative Offices Committee and the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. That is noted.

## Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the minutes of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo's regular council meeting dated January 24, 2006. This is showing that the current PC MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was appointed treasurer of the Wood Buffalo Housing & Development Corporation as of January 24, 2006.

I also rise to provide five copies of the current PC MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo's bio, which shows that he was a Wood Buffalo housing corporation director from 2005 to 2010.

I also provide five copies of the 2007 PC annual financial statement and five copies of page 46 of the PC annual financial statement showing that the Wood Buffalo Housing & Development Corporation donated \$2,250 to the PC Party.

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to table the requisite number of copies of the 2011 Alberta College of Medical Laboratory Technologists annual report and the 2011 College of Alberta Denturists annual report on behalf of the Minister of Health. Both organizations are key partners in providing safe, efficient, and professional health services to Albertans.

Thank you.

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

2:50

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings if I may. First, I'm pleased to table the requisite number of copies of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta 2011 annual report. Licensed practical nurses are health professionals regulated by the Health Professions Act. The legislation gives the college the ability to govern and regulate the profession of licensed practical nursing in Alberta. This year's



annual report highlights collaboration, quality education, practice excellence, growth of the profession, and their continued commitment to the protection of the public.

Mr. Speaker, my second tabling, with the requisite number of copies, is the Alberta Mental Health Patient Advocate office 2011-2012 annual report entitled *We're in This Together*. The Alberta Mental Health Patient Advocate works to promote and protect the rights of mental health patients and those acting on their behalf by ensuring they are informed about their rights under the Mental Health Act. This year's annual report focuses on the theme of compassion and features interviews with several Albertans speaking about the role compassion has played in their lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of two letters from the Chief Electoral Officer. The first letter is dated August 27 and is addressed to the Minister of Justice. The second letter, September 24, is a letter to the chair of the Legislative Offices Committee addressing questions raised by MLAs in committee on September 13, 2012.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his stead I have the appropriate number of copies of a collection of photographs and messages put together by Fort McMurray residents who are demanding immediate action to twin highway 63. It's called *Reality: A Collection of Photographs Illustrating the Common Dangers on the Torturous Gateway to the North Known as Highway 63*.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to withdraw as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has tabled the document I was going to table.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much. On behalf of my colleague the leader of the Liberal opposition and Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of the Alberta Medical Association President's Letter which he referred to in his questions today.

Thank you very much.

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

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I would like to table the requisite number of copies of a number of documents: firstly, the letter that I referred to in my member's statement from the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition dated May 23, 2012; a copy of the Twitter comment made by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, dated September 13; a further Twitter comment made on November 15; and finally, the requisite number of copies of a final tweet that I did not reference in my member's statement because I don't think I could have gotten through the member's statement. It was made by a Mr. John Winslow, who was introduced in the House on May 28 as a good friend of the Wildrose by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. On Thursday, August 3 . . .

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, for crying out loud.

**Dr. Starke:** I just want to read this into the record, though, so that it is in the record. I quote . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Please. Hon. Member for Airdrie, hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, please.

Hon. member, just table the document, and everyone will be able to read it simultaneously. I'm going to be reminding people again about tablings and what the procedure is for that. I'd again ask House leaders to remind their own caucuses of what the procedures are. Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the invoice received by Alberta Transportation for the asphalt heater used earlier to assist in line painting for 36 kilometres of a new section of highway 63. I had promised at one point to this Assembly that I would provide the final amount for this additional work done to help ensure the safety of drivers on the twinned section. Today I can tell you that the final cost was \$43,682.75. The use of the asphalt heater helped to clear the ice off the highway and heat the pavement to help accept the paint and then to keep it there.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there others? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mr. Anderson:** I just noticed that I'll be tabling very soon all of the comments of a Mr. Craig Chandler, who was introduced by the Solicitor General the other day, and the comments he's made in the past, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please. This is for tablings. This is not for notices of tablings. You've been here for a few years. You should know that by now.

Let us move on. Are there any other legitimate tablings?

I believe we have no tablings to the Clerk and no more tablings, so we're going to deal with the points of order. [interjections] I am sorry. I was sensing some interruptions there while I was speaking.

We have a point of order raised at 2:21 by the hon. Member for Airdrie. Please proceed with your citation and your point.

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

**Mr. Anderson:** Three points of order, actually, Mr. Speaker, but I'll do one at a time in the order that you request. The first one was certainly the most egregious. The Deputy Premier, someone that you would think would understand procedure and decorum in the Legislature, as he always claims to do, stood up and said: when the Leader of the Official Opposition makes illegal expense claims. Illegal expense claims.

Mr. Speaker, I would refer you to the standing orders under 23. There are a whole bunch of them here because they all virtually apply.

- (h) makes allegations against another Member;
- (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member;
- (j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder . . .

and

- (l) introduces any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly.

Also, I would turn your attention to *Beauchesne's*, specifically sections 486, 488. Obviously, it talks about the context the

comments were made in and so forth. Section 488 as well as 489 specifically say that it's unparliamentary to refer to a member as doing something illegal, taking illegal actions and so forth.

Here's the problem, Mr. Speaker. We have been going through this for a while. We do talk in this Legislature about illegal donations – no doubt about it – made to the governing party. Absolutely. And we do table proof and evidence of those things. But one thing that I certainly can't recall – and I would ask the members opposite to please correct me if I'm mistaken and to produce the *Hansard* where that was done – is any folks in this room saying that someone over on that side, naming a specific member, has done something illegal. I don't think we've ever said that.

We've obviously said that there have been illegal contributions made to their party that haven't been paid back and so forth. We've gone through that whole exercise. But, of course, we all know that when it comes to talking directly about another member of this Assembly, there is certain language that is completely unparliamentary. Saying that a member of the Official Opposition has done something illegal is, clearly, unparliamentary language of the greatest degree, in fact.

Now, the second part of it, Mr. Speaker, is that it's not even factually accurate. First of all, the Leader of the Opposition did not submit the expense to the Legislative Assembly Office. It was never submitted. The only reason anybody knows about it is because it got incorrectly put on the website because this opposition member wanted to put all of her expense claims on there, and this one, which was withdrawn before it even went to the LAO, did get into that pile and posted. An unfortunate accident. It happens, for sure. But it was never ever submitted. So that's not true.

Secondly, even if it was submitted, Mr. Speaker, it is not illegal in any way, shape, or form at all. In fact, it's not even against LAO policy. The LAO policy is very clear that we make claims, we put them into the LAO, and they decide whether a claim is legitimate or does or does not fall under the reimbursement policy and then say yes or no as to whether to make that reimbursement.

Many of us, I would assume, in this Legislature have made a claim and then had it come back; for example, a claim for a hotel room or some kilometres or something like that, where it's been submitted, and our totals might have been off by a few dollars plus or minus. Who knows? The LAO will come back and say, "No, you've made a mistake here; that's not correct" and so forth. Then you make the adjustment, and you proceed further. That is standard practice. That is the policy. So not only did she not break the law; she did not even break the policy even if she had submitted it.

It is absolute malarkey for this Deputy Premier to stand in this Legislature and accuse this member of doing something illegal. The facts don't match it up. It's completely unparliamentary. Now, I know that member, the Deputy Premier, obviously thinks he knows what's illegal. He has no problem calling the police when a 70-year-old senior citizen on oxygen asks him to get off his porch. He has no problem thinking that that somehow is illegal and calls the police in to protect him against that 70-year-old senior on oxygen.

3:00

I would request that this Deputy Premier, frankly, get his act together and stop pointing to this ridiculous statement. If he wants to hold it up in the media, that's fine. Go for it. But don't come in here and say that this leader, who has got more integrity in her little finger than that member does over there – don't come in here

and start calling into question her integrity – has done something illegal. That's got to stop, and it stops today, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here is the problem, to quote the hon. member. The members opposite engage in this mudslinging and bottom-feeding process of trying to malign everybody in government with all of these accusations and then have problems when the same thing happens to them.

**Mr. Anderson:** We accused you of doing something illegal?

**Mr. Hancock:** Yeah, as a matter of fact. The hon. member back there, which we'll talk about in the next point of order.

Here's the problem. The hon. member is exactly right with respect to the fact that one should not make allegations against another member, and I'll come back to that piece. His seatmate just last week was accusing people of committing crimes, and he hadn't provided any evidence of that. If you go back and read the *Hansard*, you, in fact, interceded, and I raised a point of order on that. Other members have done exactly the same thing. It's not in those members' hands to determine whether something is an illegal act or not an illegal act, but they have been using that term almost on a daily basis since this session started.

I would suggest to the hon. member that if he wants to take umbrage at it – and quite frankly I don't blame him for taking umbrage at it. I take umbrage at it, too, because I think this is an honourable place. I think we should all adhere to a standard where we don't accuse other people of crimes, where we don't sling these innuendoes across. There are appropriate processes for investigating appropriate things or inappropriate things. Even in his own comments he says: withdrawn before it went. Well, which was it? Did it go, or didn't it go? You can't withdraw it before it goes. You can only withdraw it after it goes.

That would be semantics, Mr. Speaker. There's other language. He says that it's not illegal; it's not even against the policy. There is nothing which allows an hon. member to make a donation to another political party out of their constituency funds, whether it's provincial or federal.

We could get into this back and forth on the details of things, but what's very clear is that every time somebody raises these allegations in the House, throws things around loosely, which they do on a daily basis, it casts mud on all of us. It brings the whole process into disrepute. It's all inappropriate, Mr. Speaker, every last bit of it.

I would withdraw the remarks that were made by the hon. Deputy Premier. It's inappropriate to allege that another member has done something illegal, absolutely inappropriate. I would ask that the other side take that into account every day in question period before they bring their malicious and false accusations against the members on this side.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I believe that clarifies this issue, and we can move on to the next point of order. Thank you, Government House Leader for withdrawing those remarks on behalf of and also for the reminder to other members of the House from the opposition to consider some of their remarks and perhaps withdraw them on occasion as well. Let us move on.

At 2:10 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order. Please, a citation.

## Point of Order

### Allegations against Members

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 23:

- (h) makes allegations against another Member;
- (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member;
- (j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature . . . to create disorder.

I'd ask you to call the Member for Calgary-Shaw to account for his totally unparliamentary comments during his question earlier today.

The member specifically named three ministers, myself being one of them –and I almost consider this to be a matter of personal privilege, in fact – in a question in which he was making allegations that we were not providing reports on expenses which were requested under FOIP. The hon. member obviously does his research on Twitter because last week there were a few twits about . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Tweets.

**Mr. Hancock:** No. They were twits.

They were twits making tweets about the fact that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Alberta branch, had made a FOIP request and had been turned down. But, in fact, if they had gone one step further and looked on the website of that organization, they would have found exactly the copies of the letters that were posted in return to those members. I will quote:

Your request . . . is denied under section 29(1) of the Act which states that the head of a public body may refuse to disclose to an applicant information that is to be published or released to the public within sixty days after the applicant's request is received.

The records will be available in the Legislature Library no later than December 14, 2012.

That is on the website of the Taxpayers Federation, the only people who've been raising this issue, and I presume that's where the hon. member got his research done because they're the people who raised the FOIP request.

It's been clearly asked and answered, the time frame is clearly there, yet this member gets up in the House and calls three ministers of the Crown rogues and alleges that they're not willing to release their information, making the innuendo that there's something to hide.

Mr. Speaker, this may sound like a fairly modest point of order. The fact of the matter is – and it goes back to the previous point of order – that the only thing we have in this House, really, is our integrity. We come here as honourable people to serve our constituents. I, for one, am an honest person. I shouldn't have to get up every day and say that I am an honest person, serving the public honestly.

If you want to disagree with me on my viewpoints with respect to a policy issue, have at it. If you want to disagree with me with respect to a matter of public policy, great; let's have a debate. But don't bring this institution down and don't bring me down by alleging that I am somehow dishonest or misusing the taxpayers' money for personal gain. That is not on. That is not right. That is reprehensible.

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the hon. House leader. I want to make it very clear, I believe, on behalf of the member that he was not alleging that there had been an abuse of taxpayer money. We'd have to obviously take a look at the expenses, and I'm assuming that there is nothing in those that we should be worried about, especially from this Government House Leader. I've seen nothing in anything he's done in the past

that would warrant any suggestion that any of his expenses are incorrect. He's an honourable member of this Assembly, for sure, absolutely.

That's not what was alleged in the question. Now, I will say that maybe it was because of the long nights that we've been sitting over the last week or something, but there's no doubt that on both sides there's been some language used that certainly could be better. I think that, clearly, inferring that members of this Assembly are rogues is not parliamentary language. On behalf of the member I'll withdraw that statement as well.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. That concludes that matter.

We've had one withdrawal on behalf of a government member, and now we've had one withdrawal on behalf of an Official Opposition member. That sort of squares that off. Hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, I know you'll be visiting that comment, and I know that the hon. Government House Leader will be visiting his point with his colleague as well.

Let us move on to item 3 then. This is a third point of order, raised at 2:27 by the Government House Leader when the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was speaking.

## Point of Order

### Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This point of order is under Standing Order 23(h) and *Beauchesne's* 489. It refers to when the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was raising a question with the Minister of Health and indicated that this member is spending thousands of taxpayers' dollars misleading Albertans or to mislead Albertans. I'm not quite sure, exactly, of the syntax there. First of all, under 489 an allegation about misleading is clearly out of order and not parliamentary language. Secondly, under 23(h) this is clearly an allegation against a member.

There are many ways to raise appropriate questions in this House, as you've said over and over again. We are, actually, over the course of this fall session going further and further into the abyss of using unparliamentary language, showing a complete lack of respect for each other.

**3:10**

The only way this process can actually work, Mr. Speaker, is if we actually understand that each of us is elected to do a job, that we do and should respect each other as individuals coming to do that job and use language which does not detract from that respect as we try to bring out the areas of clear interest to Albertans. It's not in the interests of Albertans to throw around accusations of lies and misleading and falsehoods and all those sorts of things. It is very much in the interests of Albertans to have questions and answers which clearly delineate what the issues of the day are and how government is dealing with those issues.

There is no reason why government cannot and should not be held to account in an appropriate way in this House, but using the language that's been used in this specific case, the language of misleading Albertans, is a deliberate accusation, a deliberate slur against the Minister of Health, specifically directed to him and specifically using unparliamentary language.

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

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My feeling on this is that this should be more of a point of clarification. I heard the question, too. I do not have the Blues in front of me, but from what I heard the member say, she was clearly referring to the ads being misleading, not the member being misleading, misleading

the Legislature. It was referring to the ads that are running on the television right now, that in the member's opinion are misleading the public with regard to the issue with the doctors' contract negotiations with the government. I hope that clarifies it. If in your opinion or if after examining the Blues she unintentionally said that the member was misleading, then I'm sure she'll retract those comments. But what she was referring to, clearly, were the advertisements themselves.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there others?

Seeing none, let me just remind you here. I don't have all of the Blues yet either, hon. members, but it was clear that the Speaker did hear the term "misleading the House" or words to that effect. I immediately rose and mentioned it to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, so that issue has been clarified.

Let's just be reminded, hon. members, that words like "misleading" or other words we heard today – "bullying" I think I heard today or a day ago – "intimidation," words of that nature, attributed to a member are going to lead to a point of order almost every single time. I've said it before – I hope to one day be able to stop having to say it – and that is that these issues consume enormous amounts of time. That having been clarified and admonished appropriately, let us move on.

Hon. members, I did have another point of order here, but there were so many coming at once, I may have gotten one of them out of order. I believe, Hon. Member for Airdrie, you rose on a point of order as well. I don't have the time noted on that one, unfortunately, but why don't you proceed with it.

#### **Point of Order**

##### **Referring to a Nonmember**

**Mr. Anderson:** Right. There were two, and perhaps these can be quick. If you could just remind the members opposite who are constantly reminding us of this, as are you, Mr. Speaker. A member rose and specifically attacked the former Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. He is not here to defend himself as a former member. Again, I'm just looking for some consistency on both sides in that regard.

**The Speaker:** Are you under 23(h), (i), (j) or somewhere in that neighbourhood? Just give us a citation so that Parliamentary Counsel can review it as well.

**Mr. Anderson:** Absolutely. Specifically, 23(l): "introduces any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly." As you've said many times, we try to avoid, if possible, and make sure that we do not name members that are not here to defend themselves, so I would ask him to take care of that.

Also, I would note, too, that the contributions in question did occur in 2007. The member specifically made an allegation that that money somehow was with the Wildrose board, that it was while he was a Wildrose member. That's absolutely incorrect. The money did go to the PC association, not the Wildrose association.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This very clearly outlines exactly what we've been talking about. What happened during that exchange was that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake made allegations about another member. In doing so, she was not very clear in defining who that member was, so when the Deputy Premier rose to respond, he indicated that the member for that particular district at that particular time was actually a different

member than it is now. It was more in the nature of clarifying that at the time the person that was referred to was not the same person. I was sitting here. That's the nature in which the hon. member rose and clarified.

But it brings about again what we've talked about. I think this has been a very useful discussion this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, because if hon. members would stop maligning other members in the House and stop bringing things in to raise specifics of that nature which are more appropriately dealt with in other forums and would stop bringing the whole reputation of this place into disrepute, others would stop engaging in the same manner, and life would be much better.

The Deputy Premier clearly did not make any allegation against the former Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo but merely indicated in his response to the question that the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo at the time the hon. member was talking about was, in fact, someone other than the current member.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, you know, both the Member for Airdrie and the hon. Government House Leader have made some very valid points. At no time is it appropriate to cast aspersions on other members. At no time is it in the character and in keeping with the traditions of the House to use any opportunity, when you are recognized to speak, in some way to impute false motives either directly or indirectly. I have risen many times on this in the House. The Member for Airdrie is quite correct. I have cited that on many occasions.

I'm not going to go through the complete list again, but take a look at when these items come up. Most often these items such as accusations or attempts at character assassination of one form or another, generally speaking, come up during extended preambles, which are not allowed, prior to supplementary questions. Today, for example, uncharacteristic of the House we actually heard a few members use their private members' statements for purposes of drawing attention to another member of the House, not necessarily in the most polite way. That is not why private members' statements were designed, and I will make a comment on that a little bit further.

So take a look at some of the admonishments of the past and please heed the advice, if you will, of the chair to not engage in that kind of derogatory comment-making. I just get so concerned when I hear members going down that path because I know exactly where it's going to go, and I also know what the previous Speaker frequently admonished all of us about, and that was that more hon. members have talked their way out of this House than ever talked their way into it.

I know that we're dealing with some veterans, and I also know we're dealing with some rookies, so to speak, so I've been fairly lenient up until now. This session will end soon. Government House Leader, you and other House leaders are going to convene a meeting, I hope, and talk about some of these issues. The chair is prepared to enforce whatever you decide. But until that time I have to enforce what's already there.

I appreciate this clarification from both sides of the House. Hopefully, we won't need to rise on it again.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, that concludes that point and for the hon. Government House Leader as well. Did you have a final point of order?

**Mr. Anderson:** No, I don't.

**The Speaker:** It's been dealt with. It's been withdrawn. Okay. Thank you very much.

Let us move on.

## Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

**The Speaker:** Under points of order on Thursday of last week I was asked to rule on a point of order which was raised, I believe, by Edmonton-Strathcona pertaining to certain comments that were attributed to the Minister of Health. I indicated I would give everyone a chance to look at things over the weekend, and then I would rule accordingly. Prior to doing that, I would like recognize, however, the hon. Minister of Health for a comment.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The point of order to which you refer was raised with respect to an exchange between myself and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood beginning on page 961 of *Hansard* from last Thursday, November 22. In response to a question from the hon. member I expressed the view that I did not believe the hon. member was aware of facts that I thought he ought to have been aware of. In the course of conveying that, I used a term that I should not have used to describe that. I did not understand at the time that that remark would have been considered not appropriate, and I'm very pleased to take this opportunity to withdraw my remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health has withdrawn his remarks. I believe that concludes that matter. I see Edmonton-Strathcona nodding her head. Thank you for that as well, and thank you, hon. Minister of Health. That has been accepted.

I don't believe there are any other points of order or issues outstanding relating to points of order, so we can move on and recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on a question of privilege.

## Privilege Distribution of Election Act Amendments

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) this morning I provided written notice to your office of my intention to raise a matter of privilege today, and that notice has been distributed to all members in the House. This point of privilege relates to my ability as a member to participate fully and fairly in debate around Bill 7, and I'm pursuing this point of privilege in relation to the Chief Electoral Officer, who as an officer of this Assembly is a creature of the Assembly and accountable to this Assembly.

I'd appreciate it if you would allow me to present very briefly the facts and timelines associated with this as well as a brief review of my arguments about why the matter is timely as well as why I will be asking you to conclude that the matter constitutes a prima facie case that there has been a breach of my privilege as a member of the Assembly.

To the issue of the facts, Mr. Speaker, on August 27, 2012, the Chief Electoral Officer provided his recommendations around changes to the Election Act to the Minister of Justice. At that time he copied the chair of the Legislative Offices Committee, but the recommendations were not distributed to members of that committee at the time. The August 27 letter itself was provided to all committee members on Thursday, November 22.

The Legislative Offices Committee met on September 13, 2012. The Chief Electoral Officer was asked about the whereabouts of his recommendations. It was clear from that meeting that they had not been provided to the committee members, and the Chief Electoral Officer did not advise at that time that the committee chair was provided with a copy.

In a follow-up letter dated September 24 directed to the committee chair, the Chief Electoral Officer stated, "Our recommendations for legislative amendment, which address the issues you raise, were sent to the Minister of Justice... for the consideration of the Legislative Assembly." Once again he did not take the opportunity to advise that the recommendations had been provided to the committee chair.

On October 25 opposition critics of Justice and Solicitor General were offered their first briefing on Bill 7, wherein the ministry distributed a list of the recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer that were rejected by the government in developing Bill 7. So a partial list, Mr. Speaker.

On November 19 following opposition protest of it not being included in consultations concerning Bill 7, the Ministry of Justice provided a briefing to opposition members, which coincidentally included the provision of the entire list of Chief Electoral Officer recommendations. That was on November 19, Mr. Speaker.

The very next day, on November 20, the Minister of Justice tabled Bill 7 along with the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations for the amendments. For the first time all members of the Assembly were made aware of their content. There were over 100 recommendations.

At the Legislative Offices Committee meeting of November 23 MLAs had their first opportunity to question the Chief Electoral Officer about the distribution of his recommendations, and he was asked at that time why he had not provided his recommendations to the committee or taken the opportunity to clarify that they had been provided to the chair when advised that members of the committee had not been provided with his recommendations.

His response came in two parts, Mr. Speaker, which is in and of itself a bit concerning. He originally responded by simply advising the committee members of his August 27 letter, which copied the chair of the committee, and he stated that it was his intention at the time that it be distributed to all members. Fair enough. But subsequent to this response he was then asked about the meeting of September 13, when he was clearly made aware that members of the committee were not provided with the recommendations. He was asked why he did not advise the committee at that time that the chair had been provided with the recommendations. He was asked why his subsequent correspondence of September 24 did not advise the committee that the chair had been provided with the recommendations.

Now, to his credit, Mr. Speaker, when pressed on the matter, the Chief Electoral Officer did state that he does and should share some of the responsibility for the failure to distribute his recommendations to the Assembly rather than to the Minister of Justice alone. However, he also stated that he chose not to discuss the failed distribution of the recommendations to all members of the committee with members of the committee because he was unsure of what the process was for that distribution. "I was not aware at this time of what the timeline was for the distribution of the document. When we wrote this letter, we did not know whether or not there was a timeline that was being followed." It is worth noting that this deliberation of whether or not there was a timeline on the part of the Chief Electoral Officer occurred a month after he first sent the recommendations to the Minister of Justice.

Now, on the issue of timeliness, Mr. Speaker, I would argue that this is the first opportunity for me to bring this matter forward for consideration by this Assembly. Although the facts in question span several months, it was not until Thursday, November 22, that the August letter was made available to all members of the Legislature through their disclosure to the Legislative Offices Committee members. It was only with the release of this letter that

the real failure on the part of the Chief Electoral Officer became apparent. It is the combination of the letter dated August 27 and then the Chief Electoral Officer's conduct at the meeting of September 13 and his formal response on September 24 that is the first of a two-part foundation on which we base our concerns. We could not have known about those until at the very earliest Thursday, November 22, when the August letter was delivered to the offices of committee members.

Regardless, Mr. Speaker, the second component of the facts which give rise to our concerns is the response of the Chief Electoral Officer to our questions on this matter, which we only heard at the Legislative Offices meeting of November 23. In particular, it was the Chief Electoral Officer's explanation for why he failed to use the opportunity provided to him on September 13 and again on September 24 to fix the mistake in the distribution of his recommendations which gives rise to the privilege motion here today.

The explanation was made on November 23. Not only was it reasonable for the opposition to bring the matter to the Chief Electoral Officer through the Legislative Offices Committee prior to bringing it before the whole Assembly and yourself, Mr. Speaker; it was really only when we heard the explanation from the Chief Electoral Officer that the extent of the breach became apparent. As such, I would argue that this point of privilege meets the timeliness requirements laid out under the standing orders.

Now, as to why the distribution issue represents a breach of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I have a few brief comments on why it is we would ask you to find that there's a prima facie case to be made. Officers of the Legislature report to and through the legislative branch of our government. This is because certain matters are deemed to be sufficiently worthy of independence from the executive branch of government as to require the full authority and oversight of the whole legislative body which contributes to the governance of our province.

For example, the conduct of individual members of this Assembly is deemed to be worthy of the attention of this whole Assembly through the conflicts of interest commissioner. Investigations into fundamental unfairness of certain actions by the executive branch of government are conducted by the Ombudsman and are, once again, accountable through the whole Assembly. Administration and investigation into the transparency of the executive branch of government is managed by the freedom of information and protection of privacy commissioner, and again she reports through this whole Assembly. Likewise, Mr. Speaker, administration and enforcement of the Election Act is another function which all jurisdictions, including ours, have concluded, quite accurately I would suggest, require independence from the executive branch of government and, instead, require the attention of all members of the Assembly.

Now, as a member of that legislative body, specifically this Legislative Assembly, the rights and privileges of which I know you, Mr. Speaker, value greatly, my ability to do my job is compromised when an officer of this Assembly chooses to report instead to and through the executive branch of government rather than through this Assembly. This is what happened here with the development and distribution of the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer around the need for changes to the Election Act and the election finance administration act as well as others. It is well understood the Chief Electoral Officer must act at all times with objectivity and fairness in order to ensure that the process of implementing and enforcing elections law is beyond reproach.

Allow me to review the standing orders and the relevant legislation. Standing Order 55.01 states that "reports of the Officers of the Legislature shall stand referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices unless otherwise ordered." I do not believe that there are any outstanding orders that would suggest there has been an order otherwise.

With regard to the legislation section 4(5) of the Election Act states that

the Chief Electoral Officer shall, immediately after each enumeration, general election, election under the Senatorial Selection Act, by-election or plebiscite or a plebiscite or referendum under any other Act, prepare and have printed a report including a summary of the Chief Electoral Officer's conduct respecting the enumeration, general election, election under the Senatorial Selection Act, by-election, plebiscite or referendum, as the case may be, a breakdown of results and a summary of costs and shall transmit the report to the Standing Committee, which shall lay the report before the Legislative Assembly,

et cetera, et cetera. Now, as was, I believe, the spirit and intent of this legislation, it has been the accepted practice of previous Chief Electoral Officers that all recommendations for legislative amendments be sent to the Legislative Offices Committee for their consideration and distribution to the Assembly.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, probably the most relevant legislative authority resides in section 3.1(1) of the Election Act, which states:

Before beginning the duties of office, the Chief Electoral Officer shall take an oath to perform the duties of the office faithfully and impartially and, except as provided in this Act, the Senatorial Selection Act or the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, not to disclose any information received by the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer under this or any other Act.

The question of impartiality is critical here.

I would like to quote again from the statement made by the Chief Electoral Officer at the Legislative Offices Committee on November 23. "I was not aware at this time of what the timeline was for the distribution of the document. When we wrote this letter, we did not know whether or not there was a timeline that was being followed." Implicit in this statement is a deference to a so-called timeline, one which by necessity would be defined by those who had the document in relation to those who did not. In short, there is deference to either the Minister of Justice, who is a member of the executive branch of government and the governing party, and/or also to the chair of the committee, who is also by definition a member of the governing party.

In addition, the Chief Electoral Officer did not explain why he believed that there might be some schedule that would permit the Minister of Justice to be in the possession of recommendations from his ostensibly independent legislative office while the Legislative Assembly was without that information for almost three months. He also did not indicate any efforts to inquire into or resolve what would seemingly be a breach of the standing orders and current legislation. The level of deference demonstrated by that statement and its inherent conflict with the obligations of the officer as defined by section 3.1(1) gives rise to my concern that my ability as a Member of the Legislative Assembly to fulfill my functions effectively as they relate to the oversight of the work which falls into the realm of responsibility held by the Chief Electoral Officer is therefore impaired.

In short, we cannot do our job, Mr. Speaker, if the Chief Electoral Officer is unclear that he is responsible to all members

of the Assembly equally and if he fails to conduct himself accordingly. Members of the government, who, coincidentally, were also the beneficiaries of the Chief Electoral Officer's conduct, will undoubtedly argue that this was merely an honest mistake. However, this so-called honest mistake resulted in the executive branch of government and, by extension, the government caucus members of this Assembly receiving and having the opportunity to deliberate upon the work of the Chief Electoral Officer for almost three months longer than all other members of the Assembly.

As the act which appoints the Chief Electoral Officer compels all members of this Assembly to take part in the review of and in some cases the deliberation about matters which fall under his purview, the partial distribution of his recommendations interferes with my ability to fully complete my duties as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, *Maingot* at page 13 states:

If someone improperly interferes with the parliamentary work of a Member of Parliament – i.e. any of the Member's activities that have a connection with a proceeding in Parliament – in such a case that is a matter involving parliamentary privilege.

I would suggest that *Beauchesne's* 92 makes the same point. As such, I respectfully request that you find that I have made a prima facie case of a breach of privilege and that you allow me the appropriate time within which to bring forward a motion with respect to the disposition of this case.

Thank you for listening to my comments.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for her comments. I just wanted to add a few things. First of all, when you look at the actual Standing Order before 15(2), of course 15(1):

A breach of the rights of the Assembly or of the parliamentary rights of any Member constitutes a question of privilege.

It is my submission that there has been no breach based on that standard, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I appreciate that the point of privilege today is against the Chief Electoral Officer and not myself or the Member for Edmonton-McClung. I do nonetheless want to make a submission to you as to why there is no point of privilege here. Incidentally, I have not spoken with the Chief Electoral Officer about this. These submissions are my own.

The mandate for the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, Mr. Speaker, states:

The Standing Committee on Legislative Offices is an all-party committee consisting of 11 Members of the Legislative Assembly. The committee approves the budgets of the Officers of the Legislature, including the Auditor General, the Child and Youth Advocate, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ethics Commissioner, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the Ombudsman, and also reviews the salaries of the Officers on an annual basis.

It also states:

The committee can entertain Officers' requests regarding proposed changes to legislation and forward the recommendation to the appropriate ministry. However, it is important to note that the committee does not have the mandate to approve changes to legislation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has correctly noted, on May 29 I sent a letter to the Chief Electoral Officer asking him for recommendations to increase the openness and transparency and clarify the rules for disclosing results of

these investigations. The letter was subsequently tabled. The letter does state inter alia: "Amendments to the Elections Act would involve your Office being fully consulted to maintain the independence of your Office and avoid arbitrary amendments passed in the Legislature." On May 31 the Chief Electoral Officer also sent me a letter indicating his willingness to send recommendations to me "based on years of cumulative experience" among staff in his office. Again, the letter was tabled.

There was also some commitment made by several ministers of this side of the House that legislation would be tabled in the fall that would address the issue of the disclosure investigations. Promise made; promise kept. I received the recommendations in the fall, and we went to work on accepting as many of these recommendations as possible, actually 90 out of 101.

Mr. Speaker, my ministerial staff, as the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has noted, met with the opposition on October 25 and again early last week. I also met with the House leader for the third party on October 29. I provided a list of recommendations that we were not accepting and explained that the recommendations were the backbone of the legislation and that I could not supply those as there would be a risk, in my mind, of the bill going out of order.

Mr. Speaker, having met with all three opposition parties, it was never raised once that they wanted a copy of the Chief Electoral Officer's comments.

**Ms Blakeman:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, we don't recognize points of order on points of privilege, but I would ask the hon. Minister of Justice to please continue in wording that suits the traditions of the House.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I submit that this was not a formal report to the Assembly as we receive from many of the independent officers. I would have to differ with the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, in fact, that there was no mistake. There's no obligation on behalf of the Chief Electoral Officer to provide that. We are going to have a debate in this Assembly, and we've tabled all the documents. We haven't even started second reading debate. I would indicate, as I indicated in my May 29 correspondence, that it's important to avoid arbitrary amendments. There's a difference between a recommendation from an independent officer of this Chamber, i.e. the Chief Electoral Officer, and a formal report that's tabled here. These were his recommendations.

I would also indicate, Mr. Speaker, based on my comments, with respect to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, that there is no point of privilege here. I would also indicate that even if there was a point of privilege, which I do not admit but deny, the transcripts from the November 23 meeting of the standing committee that I mentioned are not yet available, so we're just dealing with hearsay and innuendo, things that would not be made admissible in any court of law.

Those are my comments, Mr. Speaker. I would respectfully submit on behalf of the government that there's no point of privilege in this matter.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a really interesting situation. My understanding of a point of privilege is that the ability of a member to do their job has been impeded or impaired or in some way stopped from going forward and that that

is particularly wrong if it reflects on the member in such a way that their constituents would believe they weren't doing a good job or working properly for them.

In this situation we have recommendations that came through an officer who reports to a standing committee of this Legislature. They don't report directly to the Minister of Justice. They report to a legislative committee. Whether we want to get into wordplay, that the Minister of Justice is so fond of, I'm not interested in that. What I'm looking at is whether there was fair play here and whether I was impeded in doing my job, whether the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was impeded in doing her job. I argue that we were.

3:40

There were recommendations that, clearly, a group of people had and another group of people didn't have, and we were supposed to. The Chief Electoral Officer did send them to the chair of the committee with the obvious understanding, which he admitted to during the meeting on Friday, that they would be distributed to the committee. Now, what's interesting is that when it became clear that they had not been distributed to the committee, goodness' sake, everybody seems to forget how process works and what would usually happen and what makes sense. It's just that they all got kind of funny about it. We get these strange things where I point-blank asked the Chief Electoral Officer where the recommendations were. That told him that I didn't have them in my hand and I didn't know where they were. I clearly did not have them.

Now, here's an officer of the Legislature who was to send some information through to this committee. He says he did. He hears very clearly from a member that she doesn't have the information and is actually asking him on the record where it is. Well, he tells us in his written response from the 24th of September that he sent it to the Justice minister. That's all he says. He forgets to tell us that he'd already sent it to the chair of the committee and that it should have been distributed to us. So I'm not sure why those things happened, but that's the crux of this. We needed that information to do a good job.

When I met with the Minister of Justice, I did ask him where the recommendations were. It was the obvious question. He was standing there handing me a package that said: "Okay. These are the recommendations that we are not accepting from all the recommendations that the Chief Electoral Officer gave us." And I said: "I don't have the recommendations. Can I get the recommendations?" He says he told me I couldn't have them. I walked away from there believing that I was going to get them at the end of the meeting. We won't argue about that one. The point is that that committee was supposed to get that information, and it didn't. When the person who was supposed to give us the information knew that we didn't have it, they still did not give it to us. That's what's wrong here.

In the development of the arguments for a very dense bill – Mr. Speaker, this ain't easy stuff. These are four pieces of very technical, detailed information in one act. Yeah, we've had the bill for a couple of weeks here, and we had a briefing in which we had from the Justice minister the recommendations that they weren't going to do. That was helpful. Didn't tell us what they were going to do but, rather, what they weren't going to do. I was supposed to – what? – by osmosis figure out the ones that I didn't get through the committee? Do you see what I'm saying? There is a point here where the timing, the obvious response and process – that is, it went to the committee when it clearly hadn't gone there. He

should have produced it again and not played footsie with us. That continued right up to Friday. So the context, the timing, the obviousness of what should have happened are all important here.

I don't envy you trying to make a decision on this one, Mr. Speaker, because it's complicated. The end result is that you had a number of people here that – I don't know if the government members on the committee got the information or not. I can tell you that the opposition members on the committee did not have the information, and I believe that we were intended to. That's what's wrong with this. We did not get information that we were supposed to get, and we were the committee that was supposed to get it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be quite brief because the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona as well as the House leader for the Liberal opposition did a great job outlining the facts. I think this is a clear prima facie case of a point of privilege. It goes to the basic point of: you have an independent officer who is supposed to report to the Assembly, who is supposed to report to this committee, and instead that report was distributed to just two members, the Justice minister and the chair of a standing committee.

In *Beauchesne* it talks about impairing a member's ability to do their job. I had in fact asked a question to the Justice minister, asking him when the report from the Chief Electoral Officer would be made public. I specifically asked that right here in question period. There was a non answer. If he had the report at that time, it should have been made public. He should have known that we obviously didn't have the report. It's especially egregious in this circumstance because we have legislation that's before us. How are we supposed to do our jobs as opposition members if other people and other members have information before we do? In fact, it appears that they've had it well in advance of the opposition members.

Going to the solution – one of the members alluded to that earlier on – what can be done, I refer the Speaker to page 30 of *Beauchesne's*, where it talks about what the Speaker can do if he is inclined to find that a point of privilege has been met. The mildest form, of course, is that a simple declaration that there has been a breach of privilege is provided, but also I refer the Speaker to paragraph 124, which says that occasionally the individual "will be given an opportunity to purge the contempt and promise better conduct in the future." In my submission that's the minimum of what should be done here.

Of course, given the seriousness of this breach, where you have an independent officer of the Assembly only giving it to the Justice minister or a chair of a standing committee, I would suggest that one potential solution is that this piece of legislation be hoisted to a future session so that all opposition members can have the same information to prepare themselves to debate the bill instead of giving two individuals an undue dissymmetry of information at the outset.

Those are my submissions, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very interesting point of privilege being raised – an important point of privilege being raised – and a very interesting set of facts. What it clearly points to, though, is that there's not a point of privilege here, but there



may be an opportunity to clarify some of the ways in which processes happen. What's clearly in question here is the differentiation between the role of the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices with respect to dealing with Leg. officers and reports that are tabled in the House and referred automatically, as was pointed out by the Standing Orders, to Leg. Offices for review and the ongoing process of setting budgets for Leg. offices and those sorts of pieces. The committee clearly has that role and function.

Legislation has clearly assigned, at law, the responsibility for specific pieces of legislation to members of Executive Council, so various members of Executive Council, primarily the Minister of Justice, have responsibility for the legislation that establishes the Leg. offices and provides the legislative framework for them. Amendments to those legislations are brought by the minister responsible in those areas. In the case of the CEO that would be the Minister of Justice. In the case of the Ombudsman I think that's also the Minister of Justice. In the case of the Ethics Commissioner I believe that's also the Minister of Justice. In the case of the Child and Youth Advocate that would be the Minister of Human Services. In each case there's a minister responsible for the legislation, who also has responsibility there for review and renewal of that legislation from time to time and for bringing that legislation forward.

There is nothing in our Standing Orders or process or practice which suggests how that review of legislation ought to be done or that indicates that there's a specific role for the legislative committee in dealing with that legislation although from time to time there have been times when the standing committee has actually dealt with legislation. Mostly that happens when an officer of the Legislature in their report suggests that there should be amendments to the legislation, and therefore the report goes to the Leg. Offices Committee, and the Leg. Offices Committee then deals with that request. On occasion a Leg. officer has made a request through a Leg. Offices Committee for amendments to their statutes, and there's one, in fact, before the committee now with respect to the Child and Youth Advocate. We're dealing with that process, because I then received as Minister of Human Services a letter from the chair of Leg. Offices saying that Leg. Offices had met, had deliberated, and was recommending to us that there be changes made. So there are a number of ways of going about it.

What's happened in this case is that during the spring session, actually, in which many questions were raised about a particular section of the Election Act and the similar section in the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, which had been interpreted to say that the Chief Electoral Officer was unable to release certain information, it became clear that that was not the interpretation which had been intended when the legislation had been amended to allow administrative penalties and reprimands to be put forward rather than all matters which the Chief Electoral Officer had investigated and found conduct which he believed to be deserving of sanction being referred to a prosecutor for decision.

3:50

So the act was amended. The amendment was interpreted by the Chief Electoral Officer and his office to say that he couldn't release information because that particular piece of the section hadn't been changed. That was part of the discussion in this House last spring. The commitment made by the Minister of Justice was to bring forward an amendment to clarify that it was always the intention that determinations should be released, and that he would approach the Chief Electoral Officer.

I believe he's indicated today that he filed a copy of the letter in the House indicating that he'd asked the Chief Electoral Officer

for the Chief Electoral Officer's views on amendments to the act. That's an entirely appropriate process, Mr. Speaker. It's entirely appropriate not to have a kind of discussion with a Legislature officer with respect to the operations of their office, but asking advice with respect to the constating legislation is entirely appropriate, and it's done.

Then the question is: when the officer of the Legislature, in this case the Chief Electoral Officer, responds to that request, he is perfectly entitled to respond to that request directly to the minister responsible for the legislation. He may share that with the chair of the committee – as I understand it, in this circumstance that was shared with the chair of the committee – but he's not bound to do that because it's a different portion of the role. It's relating to the drafting and the changing of legislation. It's the government's purview to bring before the House any proposed amendments to the legislation. The House may then determine to refer that proposed legislation to a committee for further review if it wishes. We have to be very clear that up until now, at least, there had been these two very distinct functions, and the Legislative Offices Committee deals with the Legislature officers and their independence on behalf of the House.

The government still has the responsibility to deal with the legislation and to review that legislation from time to time and ask for input on that review and may ask for input on that review from the officer of the Legislature and get a response on that. It's not unparliamentary for him to do that. It's not unparliamentary for the Legislature officer to respond in that way. Asking for and receiving advice with respect to bringing forward amendments to the legislation is certainly something that's within the purview of the minister. It's certainly something that the Chief Electoral Officer, even as an officer of this Legislature, may respond to, and it in no way interferes with other members' ability to do their jobs to have that happen. The members have the same opportunity they have with every piece of legislation that comes before this House, to deal with it fully and completely at the various stages at which it's debated in the House.

Now, going forward, it would be useful to clarify because there's nothing really – I've looked at this with respect to this situation on a couple of occasions when it's been a question of how you go about amending the constating act for a Legislature officer and what process ought to be followed. We may wish to follow that up and set up a process to be followed, but in fact there is not one now.

In fact, there are two distinct functions that need to be understood. One is the role and function of the Legislature officer as an independent officer of the House, reporting to the House and responding to the committee with respect to his or her reports to the House and dealing with the committee with respect to the necessities of life, if you will, in terms of budget and operation. Then there's the legislative process, which is clearly a function of the Legislature and operates in the same role and manner as for every other piece of legislation in this House.

There are many boards, the Labour Relations Board being one of them, the Workers Compensation Board being another one of them, where they are independent boards, but their legislation belongs to this House, and the person who is charged with the evergreening of that legislation is a member of Executive Council. That member of Executive Council must have the opportunity to consult with the Chief Electoral Officer or the head of any of those boards or agencies in order to get advice as to whether that legislation is working appropriately, which does not in any way preclude, Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices from time to time requesting the CEO to come before the

committee and talk about changes that could be made and make recommendations from that side.

It's a fine point, Mr. Speaker, but it's a very important one, because the processes are ongoing processes which need to happen. They need to happen with clarity. We don't have actual clarity in our rules and standing orders at the moment with respect to these functions, but it's very important that a member of Executive Council charged with responsibility to improve an act, particularly when the House has demanded that changes be made to the act, be able to bring forward those changes and do so with the advice of the appropriate person in terms of what they believe should be extant in the act both in terms of the specific issue that was raised and the invitation of the Minister of Justice to all other issues.

So no point of privilege. Clearly, it's an issue that needs some clarity around it, and clearly nothing has impeded the hon. members opposite from their ability. Even though it's an act with a lot of details, I would suggest it's not as complex an act as one of the members opposite suggested. It's very clear. You can go section by section and look at it and say, "Okay. That's what that's about," and come to some determination very quickly as to whether or not you believe that that is an important amendment, and you can look and see which other amendments you think might have been important.

No member's ability to carry out their duty has been impeded, but it does beg the question, Mr. Speaker, of whether we should delineate more appropriately a process for things to go before standing committees.

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

**Mr. Anderson:** Very briefly, but it's a very important point. I'm not going to dwell on or repeat what's been said already, but I would note this. If you turn to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and look at pages 82 and 83, Mr. Speaker, there's something very serious that needs to be addressed here. Obviously, we're talking about the point of privilege, and sometimes if it doesn't fall exactly within a point of privilege, it can be found in contempt of parliament. I think that in this case it's actually quite clear that there has been a contempt of parliament and therefore a breach of privilege.

If you look in this document and look at page 83 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, specifically:

The United Kingdom Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege attempted to provide a list of some types of contempt [of parliament],

what it would look like. Two of the points are specific to this case. First off:

Deliberately altering, suppressing, concealing or destroying a paper required to be produced for the House or a committee.

The second point is:

Without reasonable excuse, refusing to answer a question or provide information or produce papers formally required by the House or a committee.

Mr. Speaker, it's very clear. We've got the Blues, and we've got the *Hansard* for that. In a second I will read it into the record because it is very germane to this.

If you look at the first point, "Concealing . . . a paper required to be produced for the House or a committee" – it has to be deliberately concealing. We do understand that, Mr. Speaker. I think it's pretty clear from the discussions that have been had here and the evidence given by the House leaders and the deputy House leader, who is also the Justice critic, who was involved in these discussions, that there is no doubt that the Justice minister knew

that he had the report . . . [interjection] I don't see how that's out of order. He knew that he had the report and deliberately did not give that report to the opposition. He knew he had that report. He had it sent to him previously. I think that's very clear.

To the second point, "Without reasonable excuse, refusing to answer a question or provide information," I take you to the *Hansard* from October 29, 2012. The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills specifically asked – I'm going to skip the preamble:

Will the Justice minister . . .

when referring to this report,

. . . then simply reveal to the Legislature the Chief Electoral Officer's report and recommendations today, or will he continue to hide behind this government's pattern of secrecy?

The answer given by the hon. Justice minister was:

Mr. Speaker, if this member has a particular complaint about any particular financing, I suggest he go and talk to the Chief Electoral Officer, who is an independent officer of the Legislature. He does not report to me. He does not report to anybody else.

That is very clearly: "without reasonable excuse, refusing to answer a question or provide information or produce papers formally required by the House or a committee." He knew he had these papers. He was asked a question about these papers.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, if this is not a point of privilege, then it absolutely is a contempt of parliament. I think that it is very serious. This should not be downplayed. You've had 41 years to make this clear, hon. Government House Leader. This could not be any more clear as a point of privilege and a contempt of parliament.

I would think that with regard to solutions to it, frankly, this is so serious that it does need to be contemplated to table this legislation and bring it back once we've all had an opportunity to properly go over these recommendations, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, this is a unique circumstance. Uncharacteristically, I'm going to allow the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to clarify a quick point, and then we'll go to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. Briefly, please.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I was going to simply rely on my opportunity to very briefly end debate, but I'm certainly prepared to let the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill precede me.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. You did have considerable time at the beginning, which we appreciated.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak to this issue. There is no point of privilege in this case. The minister responsible for the administration of the Election Act made a direct request of the Chief Electoral Officer to give his suggestions for what changes he thought might be appropriate, and that's exactly what he did. The document that he sent back with the recommendations is not a formal report to this House. It was not a formal report to the committee. I would submit that there is no requirement for distribution of that letter and the accompanying recommendations to all members of the committee, let alone dictating the timing of that distribution.

Nonetheless, would it have been preferable for that document, given its importance, to be distributed to all of the members of the committee? Yes, it probably would have. However, in my

respectful submission, Mr. Speaker, the CEO did nothing wrong. There was no intention on his part to hide the contents of the recommendations from the members of the committee, as the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has alleged. In fact, he did copy the chair of the committee. Obviously, it was clearly not his intention to deny that information to the committee. However, for one reason or another that was not distributed to all of the members of the committee. If anything, there was a misunderstanding, and I would submit it was nothing more than that. It was a misunderstanding regarding the distribution of that document.

You know, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona is inferring ulterior motives and bias and impugning the character of the Chief Electoral Officer. But what I would submit, Mr. Speaker, is that what it boils down to is merely a misunderstanding. There's no point of privilege, and nothing wrong was done.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, very briefly, please.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Ever so briefly, going to two points made by the hon. Government House Leader, he says that the distinction here in the issue is subtle, and he is correct. It's subtle. But notwithstanding its subtlety, it is profoundly important, and it is incumbent upon all members of this House to understand it and comprehend it fully. Adoption of the interpretation advocated by the Government House Leader would result in the mitigation of the role of any officer of the Legislature to being that of simply a senior member of the executive branch of government.

At one point the House leader equated the operations of the Chief Electoral Officer to the operations of the board of the Workers' Compensation Board. Well, with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, that board by legislation reports through the minister. The import of a Chief Electoral Officer or any officer of the Legislature is that they report through this Assembly. The last thing we need is to adopt an interpretation that would allow for a precedent where it is okay for officers of the Legislature to act like senior bureaucrats and have one-off sideline conversations with members of the executive branch of government. That goes against the very point of their establishment.

Now, quite frankly, I don't expect the executive branch of government or the Minister of Justice to disclose to me legislation at any point before they choose to introduce it. That's their prerogative. It's not exactly fair, but it is what it is, and that's the tradition of the House. However, I do expect any officer of the Legislature who does work and comes up with recommendations and relies upon his expertise, absolutely – any minister can ask that Chief Electoral Officer or any other officer of the Legislature for advice, for recommendations, all that stuff. That's completely appropriate.

What is not appropriate is for the response to that request for advice to be done off the side of a desk between only some members of the Assembly. That goes to the very heart of what it means for somebody to be an officer of this Legislature. When they report, when they come up with opinions, when they advise, it should be done for the benefit of this whole Assembly and through this whole Assembly so we can all participate in it. To adopt the proposals suggested by the Government House Leader will be to absolutely undermine the credibility of the concept of an officer of this Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. I've mentioned this before because we've already heard at least one point of privilege in this House. I've raised it before that points of privilege are extremely serious matters. They do require a lot of study and a lot of effort to come to a proper conclusion. In fact, they are so serious that some of the books that were cited today, parliamentary books such as *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which I encourage you to visit and visit often, has over 100 pages – well, actually 101, I believe – dedicated to points of privilege of various sorts and issues arising out of it. Similarly, *Beauchesne's* has pages on it; similarly, *Erskine May* has pages and pages on it. The tables of contents are sometimes pages long when trying to describe privilege, and a lot of you would know that.

Nonetheless, I want to make a couple of quick points. First of all, all of the speakers made some very, very good points in defence of the position that they were occupying. In fact, uncharacteristically, I think we've heard from I believe six or seven different members today, or at least that many speeches were heard. In spite of the fact that I've heard and listened to or been part of numerous points of privilege over my years in this Assembly, I don't recall having met this particular issue before. This one seems to go into a different area, and I'm sure some of the veteran members would probably agree with me.

Secondly, it concerns an officer, who is a member as such. Not a member in the way you are a member, but he's an officer of the Legislature, so he has a different sort of classification of job, if you will. The reporting structures have to be looked at here. The committee that was raised and pointed to by a number of speakers: I have to review some of that as well just to make sure that I'm understanding it all.

I'll take a little bit of time to study this one. I'm not sure I'll be able to get it all digested and consult with Parliamentary Counsel and others and read all the references that speakers raised in time to render a decision by tomorrow, but I will take the appropriate amount of time to study this one, I can assure you. I'll go through all the citations, I'll go through all of the speeches that were written and read, and I'll come to a conclusion, I hope, within a couple of days on this one.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, thank you for raising it. Hon. members who have participated in debate, thank you for your points of view as well.

I believe that that concludes orders and points of privilege for today, so we will now move on.

I've just had a reminder from Parliamentary Counsel that there was a request made by the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Thank you for that, hon. member, and I did go through this as well. I got very involved in the point of privilege, and I was just about ready to overlook this one, and I'm glad I didn't. Thank you to the table as well.

4:10

## Statement by the Speaker

### Private Members' Public Bills

**The Speaker:** Before we go to Orders of the Day, I want to comment briefly on the order of business that is about to occur. Last Thursday the chair received a request from the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park requesting early consideration of his private member's bill, Bill 201, for third reading immediately following Committee of the Whole this afternoon. The chair tabled the memorandum last Thursday, November 22, 2012, and it is recorded as Sessional Paper 301/2012. Given that this is the first

time in this Legislature that this issue of early consideration of a private member's bill has arisen, the chair wants to explain to the members how we're going to proceed with this.

First of all, I'm obliged to inform all of you at the very edge here that this request is hypothetical at this point since there are still 74 minutes remaining for consideration of the bill itself in Committee of the Whole. Now, before Committee of the Whole is called, the House must first conclude second reading debate on Bill 202, of which 23 minutes still remain. If there is any available time remaining for private members' bills this afternoon, then further to the hon. member's request the House would then proceed to third reading of Bill 201. If there is no time remaining following the bill being reported from Committee of the Whole, Standing Order 8 requires that third reading of the bill be called first next Monday, December 3.

Now, by way of quick background, this process concerning early consideration of private members' bills has been in place since 1997, and there have been numerous occasions when the Speaker has cautioned the House about these types of requests as they do give rise to potential conflicts with other members. Now, previous Legislatures, in fact even the one immediately before us, have been cautioned about this practice as recently as March 14 of this year, and that can be found at page 514 of *Hansard* for that day. I would reiterate the suggestions of Speaker Kowalski on March 14 and going back to 2001 that this matter should be given further review by either House leaders or a committee of the Assembly so that due consideration is given to options that do not unduly prejudice other members and the progress of their private members' bills.

Just to recap, we'll see how this goes with time allocation and everything else. I did have an opportunity to hear from the member, and I believe that member took some liberties to speak with others so that potential conflict could be avoided. So there's a good spirit of co-operation that was attempted to be built. That will be the process that we will follow for this afternoon.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't wish to prolong this any longer than need be, but under 13(2) I'd like to ask you to explain one piece of your ruling. You indicated that Bill 202 would come up, I think, for a further 23, 24 minutes. I note from *Hansard* at page 513 on November 5 that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill was recognized to close debate, and therefore there are only actually five minutes, actually four minutes and 50 seconds, as I recall. He rose to close debate and started by saying, "Given the time . . . I would [ask] that it be called 5 o'clock." So he, in essence, rose to close debate and then moved for the consent of the House to change the clock. While he was doing that, the clock hit 5, and I then rose to ask that we have unanimous consent to extend. But it's very clear from the record that the hon. member was recognized to close debate, and therefore there are not 23 or 24 minutes. There are only five, or actually four minutes and 50 seconds, to be precise.

**The Speaker:** Just a moment. Hon. Government House Leader, I was reviewing this matter, actually, over the lunch hour along with a number of other things, and since there has been some issue raised about this, I want to just take a brief moment here and just recap what actually occurred on that day. I've been receiving numerous pieces of paper here as you can see.

Just seconds before 5 o'clock the Acting Speaker recognized the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, at which point the

Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill rose and according to *Hansard* said: "Well, Madam Speaker, I'm prepared to give a closing speech, but given the time I think I would move that it be called 5 o'clock." Now, the Government House Leader at exactly 5 o'clock according to *Hansard* rose and said:

Madam Speaker, I beg your leave to ask for unanimous consent of the House to allow the hon. member his five minutes to close debate so this bill can be voted on, and then we would proceed with the motion at 5:05 or when the vote is done.

Unanimous consent at that point was denied, and the House went on to Motions Other than Government Motions.

So Bill 202, to be clear, was last considered by this House on Monday, November 5. The bill was moved for second reading, and it received 97 minutes of debate. As noted on the Order Paper, this bill still has 23 minutes remaining for second reading, which includes five minutes for the sponsor to close debate.

There is some misunderstanding as to whether or not the sponsor was recognized to close debate on November 5. That was not the case, and that is not what the hon. member was apparently recognized for. Although the sponsor was recognized by the chair, he actually rose to move that, "It be called 5 o'clock," as I just read out and as is noted, for those of you who wish to look, on page 513 of *Hansard* for that day. Then I read the request that was made by the hon. Government House Leader for the sponsor to close debate. That was denied.

Now, there is a record of who speaks and in what order and how they get recognized and so on, which you're able to seek clarification on if you wish. The point is that, to be clear, there are still 18 minutes remaining for other members to speak at second reading of Bill 202, following which the sponsor will be entitled to speak for up to five minutes to close that debate. I would refer all of you to Standing Order 8(7)(a) if you want to acquaint yourselves further with the rules governing second reading debate of private members' bills, which most of you, I'm sure, are very familiar with.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, you had indicated earlier that you wanted to rise on a point of clarification, and then the Member for Airdrie.

**Ms Blakeman:** I did. I'm just aware that if we don't get at it, there won't be much time to do anything with the member's bill 201.

I wanted to put it on the record again how strong my dismay and objection to this particular procedure is. Nothing against this particular member. I've raised this objection with anyone that's ever done it. I think asking to waive Standing Order 8(7)(c) really is unfair because it does mean that someone at the end of the queue has not got a hope in heck of getting their bill up and even being able to say: "Mom, Dad, look. I actually got a bill before the Assembly."

I recognize that the member has gone to some lengths to consult his colleagues to see if it's okay, and I know it's entirely within the ability of the Speaker to grant the early leave. In fact, the precedent is that he does grant the early leave. Goodness knows that we've been admonished often enough as House leaders to deal with the dang thing and haven't managed to do it. We will mark it on our hands in ink to try and get that done before the next sitting, but I still think it's wrong.

Thank you.

**Mr. Anderson:** On a point of clarification as well. I don't know. Are we starting business right now? If not, I just do have a

question of clarification with regard to Written Questions. There is a written question to deal with. Do we deal with that now, before, or after? Yes? Okay. I just wanted to clarify that.

### Orders of the Day

#### Written Questions

[The Clerk read the following written questions, which had been accepted]

#### Availability of Mental Health and Addiction Beds

- Q2. Mrs. Forsyth:  
How many mental health beds and addiction beds on average were available to Albertans in 2011?

#### Calgary South Health Campus

- Q3. Dr. Swann:  
What was the original 2007 estimate of construction costs and projected opening day for the south campus hospital in Calgary versus the actual cost on completion and actual opening date?

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

#### 4:20 Availability of Long-term Care Nursing Beds

- Q1. Mrs. Forsyth asked that the following question be accepted.  
How many long-term care nursing beds on average were available to Albertans in 2011?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Written Question 1 be accepted. I look forward to the minister's response, and then I will provide some comments after that.

**The Speaker:** Is there an amendment here?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** I understand, Mr. Speaker – and I'll be corrected by you if you want – that I have to move the question first, and then if there's an amendment, it has to come from the minister. There may be an amendment on the table, but we're not aware of that. It hasn't been tabled, so we need to discuss the question first before we move an amendment.

**The Speaker:** You have an amendment to this?

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Yes, I do.

**The Speaker:** Before this? Okay. Move your amendment, please.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to propose an amendment to the question posed by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I understand the copies are ready and able to be distributed.

**The Speaker:** We'll just take a second here and clarify where we're at with this, please. There's an amendment being circulated here.

Go ahead. Distribute the amendment, please, quickly.

Hon. Associate Minister, do you wish to read the amendment into the record while the pages continue and conclude distribution of it?

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Mr. Speaker, for the record the amendment reads that Written Question 1 be amended by striking out "on average were available to Albertans in 2011" to be replaced with "were available to Albertans as of March 31, 2012." The amended

written question would read as follows: How many long-term care nursing beds were available to Albertans as of March 31, 2012?

Mr. Speaker, the minister is proposing this change because the Ministry of Health conducts a survey at the end of March of the number of long-term care beds that are staffed and in operation. This amendment allows the minister to provide an answer to the hon. member that is making the request.

All colleagues in the Legislature today, I'd ask that you accept the amendment to this question so we can get proper information to the hon. member across.

**The Speaker:** Speaking to the amendment?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Yes. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that I'm challenged by this amendment because we heard from the Clerk just prior to this that they've accepted Written Question 2, which is the exact same question that we're asking about long-term care beds but it was about mental health beds and addiction beds. So for the associate minister to stand up and say that they don't have these figures till the end of March on their long-term care nursing beds perplexes me because if they can find out about the mental health beds and the addiction beds that were available to Albertans, the identical question of Question 2 – they have no answer.

We have been trying for some time to get how many long-term care nursing beds there are. The associate minister knows that I did question him about that when we were debating the budget. At that particular time, I think at the very end of the day, we had three or four different numbers thrown at us. I cannot for the life of me understand why this government cannot tell us at this particular time exactly how many long-term care nursing beds we have in this province because it's economics. It's very simple. It's about demand. I mean, currently I am dealing with my mom that's in the hospital. I can guarantee you that they need to know if there is a long-term care nursing bed available or if there's not.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

It's embarrassing, I would suggest, for the government not to be able to have these numbers in front of them because they have to move these patients back and forth. They're a bottleneck within the system right now. I can tell you that by phoning any one of the doctor contacts that I have, they'll be able to tell you exactly how many seniors they have tied up in an acute-care bed in the hospital and where these seniors have to move to. My colleague the Seniors critic may want to add to this particular amendment.

Associate Minister, quite frankly, this is embarrassing for you and your government. It was embarrassing when I questioned you during the budget. You threw three or four different numbers on how many long-term care nursing beds you have. Surely to goodness after that embarrassment when we were in the budget debate, you would know eight and a half months later how many beds you have. You're the government. You're supposed to be able to know exactly how many beds you have in the system. Both you and the Minister of Health stand up continuously and repeatedly about how you're adding 1,000 more continuing care beds to the system. Please, on behalf of Albertans, tell us how many long-term care nursing beds you currently have in the system.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The amendment here also raises huge concerns for me as the Seniors critic. I did read

through the estimates, and I've read through many of the discussions that the hon. Associate Minister of Seniors has had and provided, and there are at least three different numbers that are provided on how many long-term care nursing beds there are. More importantly, this government talks about a continuing care strategy and the funding that goes along with it. Albertans have a right and this government has a duty to tell them exactly: are the dollars going to continuing care beds? Are the dollars going to long-term care nursing beds, which we know are drastically different?

Currently the funding model is based on hours of care, and the dollars from taxpayers are going to facilities based on those hours of care, and they're based on care levels. For example, a continuing care facility that's housing SL3s and SL4s might have allocated long-term care nursing beds which receive a different funding model. If this government doesn't know where those taxpayer dollars are going, how can Albertans be assured that taxpayer dollars are being spent appropriately? It seems that the only people who currently know where the \$16 billion health care budget it being allotted would be this government. Surely, this government would know what those numbers were for any given year and especially for 2011.

It is very, very imperative that we make sure that we are spending taxpayer dollars in an appropriate way, that we're making sure dollars get to the right places and appropriate care. This government tells us every day that that's what they're doing. It's interesting also that repeatedly in the House this question has been asked about how many long-term care nursing beds there are, how many continuing care beds there are, how they'll be funded, and how the continuing care strategy is going to affect Albertans going forward. Repeatedly we're told that this information is available, that we're just supposed to do our homework, that we're supposed to go and find it. Yet, clearly, the government doesn't even have the answer.

If the government doesn't have the answer, how is this opposition supposed to? More importantly, how are Albertans supposed to stand up and understand exactly where their taxpayer dollars are going? How do we hold the government accountable that you truly are creating 1,000 more long-term care nursing beds as you continuously state you're doing?

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others? I'll recognize the Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question, I guess, around an amendment is that usually an amendment is – you change the intent of the question, and I think we have that here because we're changing it by a full year. The intent of the question was to ask, as it says in the question: how many were available to Albertans in 2011? Now we've changed the intent of it to 2012. I've been around county council a long time, and as soon as you add an amendment and you change the intent of it, it's not an amendment anymore. You're changing what the question is. The question was very clearly written by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. The question was for long-term care beds. I'm confused on how we can have an amendment that changes the clear date on it.

4:30

**The Deputy Speaker:** Other members? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in opposition to this amendment for one simple reason. As a person who has an

accounting background and an understanding of how government actually operates . . . [interjection] Oh, I do. I've got lots in my background. I actually went to university for it. I have a lot of education, hon. member.

Government keeps records. One thing government does that everyone complains about is the bureaucracy of the paperwork. Had the request been for 2001 or 1991, it seriously would have required a tremendous amount of work to go back into archives. But we're looking at just going back to what should have been readily available, around March of this year, for all of 2011. It should have allowed all the accounting to come forward.

I'm troubled by the amendment because this information should be readily accessible through departmental research that should actually be able to produce these numbers. We're not talking about something that goes back multiple years. We're just talking, you know, roughly 18 months or a little bit longer than that. That information should be available. That's really, in my opinion, not a difficult task for any person taking care of the budget or any accounting person that is actually responsible for record maintenance.

I'm troubled by it because – and I hate to say this because I do not want to incite certain members – it almost looks like a cover-up. [interjection] I know. We went there. The perception of that alone is fundamentally wrong. I just want to point that out. It's not generally a cover-up that is always the problem or a bias that is a problem. It is the public perception of it that always creates the problem. Here we can avoid it completely by just producing the records and eliminating the perception.

Thank you very much.

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

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm new to the Legislature, and this is the first opportunity that I've had to see how written questions are delivered. Now, I guess I'm just a little bit worried about setting the precedent. The very first written question that comes back is one where the government doesn't actually return what it is the opposition is asking for but answers the question that they want to answer in the way they want to answer it. We have enough of that in question period, the fact that they don't actually answer our questions in question period. We're trying to use the process as it's been outlined in the House rules. We are taking forward questions that require them to do some research. They've had plenty of time to go and dig up this information.

It troubles me that already, on the very first question coming back, we're not getting the information that we want. The hon. member is asking for something very specific, and she's been asking for it in question period in a number of different ways not only in this legislative session but in previous ones before the election. She wants to know on average how many beds were available to Albertans in 2011. It is an average. It's important for us to get that average.

If you take a point in time, I suppose as the government is proposing to do with their amended question, to know how much it was as of March 31, 2012, well, how do we know that they didn't happen to choose the date that was the high-water mark of the number of beds that were available? Or how do we know that they didn't happen to choose the date that was the low-water mark? I think the average is what's very important.

We understand that there's an ebb and flow of long-term care beds. We understand that there are going to be some that are converted. That's what the government is doing. They're talking about continuing care. They're talking about moving away from

long-term care. We know that they've already closed 20 beds for long-term care in Carmangay. So we understand that there have been some changes over the course of the year. Having the amended question does not get at the information that the hon. member is looking for. She's looking to understand the average for 2011. I can tell you where this question is probably going. She's probably going to ask a follow-up question at some future point about what it was in 2010 so that we can have some point of comparison.

If we cannot get the information that we're looking for in this question, how are we to know that there is any integrity in this process? How am I to know that when my questions are due tomorrow, I'm going to get the information that I've asked for? Or any of the other hon. members: how are they to know that they are going to get the information that they had asked for?

I would also note that this amendment came in late. It came in at 11:03. I would expect that the government would actually follow its own rules and make sure that it's submitting – it may only be three minutes, but I can tell you that if we did something three minutes late, the doors would be locked. I think that there is a precedent here, that we have rules we expect everyone to follow. I think that this is not in keeping with what the member has asked.

If the government doesn't have this information, if the government can't get this information, that's even more scary because they're supposed to know this. They're overseeing a health system that is one of the most expensive health systems in the entire country. It is the portion of our budget that is the largest expenditure of taxpayer dollars. If we can't get basic information like this, having waited months and months and months to get it, asking for it in a way which I think is quite clear, it does call into question how we could possibly use this process that's been put to us as members to be able to use the written questions to be able to get detailed information.

We cannot get this information any other way, and I would ask the Speaker to instruct the government to go back and sharpen its pencils and find the answer to this question. If they can't give it to us today – it sounds like they can't – then let us find out when they can get us this information. From what I've heard from my hon. colleague, this is not adequate. This is not what she asked for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make a brief comment on this. The question as posited by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is imprecise and incapable of calculation, I would respectfully submit. She said: "How many long-term care nursing beds on average were available to Albertans in 2011?" Average of what? Daily average, 365? Weekly average, 52 numbers? The average per month? What the minister has offered to give you is something that has some precision to it. I mean, average of what? Average on a daily basis? Weekly? Monthly? We don't know.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek to close debate on the amendment. Your speech at this time will be to close debate on this amendment if I recognize you. Oh, I just need a little help from the table.

Hon. member, you've already spoken on the amendment. I just needed to be clear on that.

I'll recognize the Member for Airdrie, who has not spoken on the amendment.

**Mr. Anderson:** Well, here's the problem with what the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill said. Written Question 2 is:

Mrs. Forsyth to ask the Government the following question:

How many mental health beds and addiction beds on average were available to Albertans in 2011?

Guess what? They accepted that, and they provided an answer to it. Now, we're happy to see what that is.

Written Question 1 is: "How many long-term care nursing beds on average were available to Albertans in 2011?" My reading of that is that we're talking about the average over the period of a year. I think that's what 2011 is referring to, a year. I think that's what that means.

Clearly, I'm assuming that's what was meant when Written Question 2 was answered. It uses the exact same language. You have to admit, hon. members, that it's kind of inconceivable that they would have the information needed to answer Written Question 2 regarding mental health beds and addiction beds but do not have the ability to answer Written Question 1. I mean, how can you not have that information?

4:40

This is a continuing problem here. The continuing problem is that, hon. minister, you keep saying continuing care beds, and we know what you're talking about, and we agree with you. There needs to be aging in the right place. We all get that, and we agree with it. But there absolutely is an acute short supply of long-term care beds, long-term nursing beds. We know that . . .

**Mrs. Forsyth:** David, why don't you come to the nursing home with me and visit my mom?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** He'll be there shortly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members. The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mr. Anderson:** You know what? Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education just made a comment about this member's age, and that is totally inappropriate. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, please. The Member for Airdrie has the floor. If we can keep the side conversations down, we might get through this motion. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mr. Anderson:** I apologize. The Minister of Education was making a comment about the Minister of Human Services' age. I just heard that. My apologies to the minister on that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Back to the amendment, hon. member.

**Mr. Anderson:** A little defensive about mom, okay?

I just think it's really important, you know, that we understand that this debate has gone on for a while with regard to continuing care beds. All we're asking for is that the government give us the numbers so we can have a debate on this. They have the numbers, they know they have the numbers, yet they continue to refuse to answer the question. It's the easiest question in the world. Frankly, it would be beyond belief – if they don't know the answer to this question, then they're not competent to run the government. It's that simple. They should know the answer to this question so we can understand what the needs are going forward, Mr. Speaker.

In the health care system we all know in here that it costs a lot more to run an acute-care bed in a hospital than it does a long-term bed, yet we have many, many, many seniors sitting in hospital beds or laying down in hospital beds right now that

This government, this Education minister and others that come in and say: oh, what would the Wildrose cut? Well, we wouldn't cut stuff. We'd do things with half a brain. We would say: look, you know what? Maybe what we'll do is that instead of putting . . . [interjections] It's so easy, it only takes half a brain. That's right.

If we could take some of those folks out of the acute-care beds in hospitals and put them into long-term care beds, which are cheaper, more affordable, better care for the situation, then we would be able to free up a whole bunch of new hospital beds and wouldn't have to build as many massive, billion-dollar new facilities anyway. Sure, we'll have to build more, but we'd get the same results with spending less. That's what we're offering here.

But until we know the basic answers to this basic question, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be hard to debate this issue and have an intelligent conversation. It's just going to go back to the lowest common denominator. Well, where would you cut if you want to add those beds? No. We want to redistribute resources in a way that will get us more bang for our buck, so to speak, and that's just good, sound, prudent fiscal management. If they don't have an answer to this, it shows just how poorly mismanaged the system is, Mr. Speaker.

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

You can only speak once, hon. member, so I'll recognize another member.

Seeing no other speakers, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on the amendment carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:45 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allen	Fritz	McQueen
Amery	Goudreau	Olesen
Bhardwaj	Hancock	Olson
Bhullar	Horner	Quadri
Brown	Hughes	Quest
Calahasen	Jablonski	Rodney
Campbell	Jansen	Sarich
Cao	Johnson, J.	Scott
Casey	Johnson, L.	Starke
Dallas	Khan	VanderBurg
Denis	Kubinec	Webber
Fawcett	Leskiw	Xiao
Fenske	Luan	Young
Fraser	McDonald	

Against the motion:

Anderson	Hale	Saskiw
Anglin	Hehr	Smith
Bikman	Kang	Stier
Blakeman	McAllister	Strankman
Donovan	Notley	Towle
Forsyth	Pedersen	Wilson
Fox	Rowe	
Totals:	For – 41	Against – 20

[Motion on amendment carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** We'll now go back to debate on the question.

You've already spoken, Mrs. Forsyth.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** I spoke on the amendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Do you want to close debate? If you speak now, you will close debate. If you wish to, that's fine.

Other speakers on the question?

Do you wish to close debate?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Okay. Yes, I'll close debate. Well, Mr. Speaker, again, it's a disappointing day, obviously. We have been asking this question for some time and thought that, well, if we can't get the answer in budget and we can't get the answer in question period, maybe we'll try a written question because that's yet another process. So three times asked, I guess, not third time lucky this time. It's unfortunate because, quite frankly, I think Albertans need to know this.

On behalf of Albertans I'm going to tell the government how disappointed we are in them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, we'll now call the question as amended.

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 1 as amended carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:58 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allen	Fritz	McDonald
Amery	Goudreau	McQueen
Bhardwaj	Hughes	Olesen
Bhullar	Jablonski	Olson
Calahasen	Jansen	Quadri
Cao	Johnson, J.	Rodney
Casey	Johnson, L.	Sarich
Dallas	Khan	Scott
Denis	Kubinec	Starke
Fawcett	Leskiw	VanderBurg
Fenske	Luan	Webber
Fraser	Lukaszuk	Xiao

**5:10**

Against the motion:

Anglin	Hancock	Saskiw
Bikman	Hehr	Sherman
Blakeman	Horner	Stier
Brown	Kang	Strankman
Donovan	McAllister	Swann
Forsyth	Notley	Towle
Fox	Pedersen	Wilson
Hale	Rowe	

Totals: For – 36 Against – 23

[Written Question 1 as amended carried]



## Motions Other than Government Motions

### Public Funding of Private Schools

504. Mr. Hehr moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to implement a policy to eliminate public funding to private schools.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, before I recognize the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, I'd like to recognize the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 33(1) and (2) and section 2(2) and (5) of the Conflicts of Interest Act and with the advice of the Ethics Commissioner I must advise the Assembly that I am withdrawing from debate and from the vote and from the meeting on this particular motion. I wanted to ensure that I got this on the record.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
We'll allow the member to leave the Chamber.  
I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank all members for being here to pay attention to some of the points I make. Hopefully, it'll go along the lines of discussing the direction of education in this province. In my time in this Legislature I've come to understand that above any other government department or what we do here in this Legislature, education is the single most important thing we can do not only for our children but our society as a whole.

As we look at the changing landscape of what we will need in a society, maybe not now but 50 years from now, a hundred years from now, having continued vigilance on this file, having a continuous commitment to the roles, the responsibilities of what we pass on to our younger generation in the form of education is of utmost importance. In my view, Mr. Speaker, that is best served through a publicly funded education system which shares the values of all our citizens, where children of whatever background – whatever religious background, cultural background, whether they're wealthy or poor – can attend a public education system that is rivalled by none other throughout the world.

Albertans along with our fellow Canadians share a civic culture that includes both individual and community values as well as political institutions such as democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights. We transmit these shared civic values from one generation to the next through the education system, and I submit we do this most successfully through public education. In my view, the government of Alberta has lost track of the role that public education plays in the nurturing of our civic culture. Embracing choice and thinking that more choice leads to better results is misguided at best and has serious implications to our broader society. We must remember that by embracing choice, we are sometimes embracing the concept of consumerism, and consumerism by its nature leads to fragmentation, which is very problematic when you're trying to instill a shared civic culture.

I think I was remiss, Mr. Speaker, when I didn't note that the nature of my motion today is to eliminate funding for private schools. It is my view that private schools tend to divide children on the basis of wealth, religion, cultural values, and the like. In my view, they do not lead to building a tolerant and understanding society, a society that says that we're all in this together, a society that recognizes that we are Alberta today, a multiethnic, very

diverse society that embraces all views equally and embraces all values on democracy and our participation in a civil society above all else.

If we think about this, the public school is really a place where these values are taught and learned and enshrined. It's where kids from all backgrounds get to go regardless of wealth, regardless of religion and the like.

**Ms Blakeman:** Sexual orientation.

**Mr. Hehr:** And sexual orientation, yes. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre pointed that out.

Regardless of all of these things that are listed, they all get to attend, children with disabilities as well. Our public schools are open to them. I believe this has been a tremendous success of our society, and we should not lose that going forward.

The current Alberta policy in regard to the funding of private schools is, in my view, somewhat against these general principles. Right now in Alberta we fund private schools to 70 per cent of the funding level of what the children would receive if they went to a public school. This Alberta policy is by far the most generous of any other of our provincial counterparts. In fact, most provinces do not engage in funding private schools at all. They deem it unegalitarian and not serving in the best interests of their overall educational goals.

Let's look at private schools. If we're being honest with ourselves, if we really look at private schools as they exist today, they tend to separate on the basis of wealth. We have institutions out there like – let's name them – Strathcona-Tweedsmuir, West Island College, the Webber Academy that charge between \$15,000 and \$20,000 for people to attend that school. Let's face it. Let's be clear: not every Albertan can go to that school. They have been priced out of that school. They are unable because of their economic circumstances to go to that school. This is a cogent example. We have 3,000 families, I believe, in this province who can't even pay their school fees, that are less than \$180 a year, and we expect, under a misguided notion, that they can attend some of these elite private schools or private schools for the wealthy. That is just a misnomer.

Also, let's face it. When it comes to private schools, if they're not for the wealthy or the elite, they tend to be of certain cultural or religious distinctions. That's a fact. It's something we can't deny. People who wish to have a look at the world that resembles that of their own family tend to start these schools, and children of one religion or one cultural community often go to those institutions. Does this lead to a pluralistic society? Does this lead to us understanding each other? Does this lead to us learning how to respect differences and respect others' opinions? In my view, it does not. If you spend your entire life with only one group of people, it's very difficult to understand other groups.

5:20

We must remember that we have set up a policy here in Alberta that actually encourages that type of fragmentation. It encourages people to do this. It actually makes it easier for them to set up this type of schooling, one that doesn't recognize our overarching goals of this Legislature, which should be to have a civilized society that embraces diversity and respect for others and understands that at the end of the day we've got to care, share, and play together.

Furthermore, many private schools aren't accessible to all our children for other reasons. I brought up the instance last year in question period of the Edmonton Islamic school, which on their website said that children with disabilities need not apply. It

openly stated that on their website. Private schools have an ability to pick and choose their students. They are allowed to exclude students, whether on the basis of disability, maybe on sexual orientation, maybe if they don't condone the religious philosophies of that school.

Should we as a Legislature be funding that type of institution, that has exclusions to it? You know, our Human Rights Act says that we shouldn't allow that. Should we as a government really be allowing for this type of institution to exist, that openly discriminates and openly discriminates not only on disability and some visible things but on the wealth component? Our goal in this Legislature should be to try to foster equality of opportunity. The philosophy of whether you're... [Mr. Hehr's speaking time expired] You got the general view.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo for putting forward this motion as education is something very close to my heart. As many of the hon. members in this House know, I was a schoolteacher for 18 years. As such, I was able to see the real strengths of our education system. I saw the excellent work done by teachers and staff in all areas of our education system, and I've always been very, very proud of it. We do have one of the best education systems in the world. Alberta schools are world class, and so are our teachers and staff.

The member wishes for the House to endorse the following: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to implement a policy to eliminate public funding to private schools." I do not believe that the implementation of such a policy would be in the best interest of our school system. Perhaps the member believes that the resources currently directed to support students in private schools would instead be directed toward current public school students. Most importantly, economic analysis disproves this assumption. This belief ignores the potential impact of an increase in tuition at private schools. It is possible that cutting support for students attending private schools would induce significant shifts in where students attend school. These shifts could raise enrolment in public schools. This would in turn put extra strain on provincial resources, possibly to an extent that exceeds current resources directed to support private schools.

We can equally expect that many registered private schools would easily assume the status of unregistered private schools. If private schools are going to lose funding anyway, why would they still comply with those regulations and standards set out by the province in order to determine whether they should receive funding? Effectively, this would result in less adherence to the standards expected of public schools. As such, it would reduce standardization and provincial compliance among private schools.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that the member has considered all of the potential consequences of implementing this proposed policy. In fact, British Columbia estimated that educating the close to 75,000 private school students in the public system would cost an additional \$564 million annually. This amount is \$306 million larger than the current operating grants to support students attending private schools. As such, per-child costs are actually lower for students attending private schools, thus allowing the government to direct finances elsewhere.

For example, resources could be used to increase specialized supports in the public system or to limit the education property tax. This is why many provinces like British Columbia and

Alberta provide support for students attending private schools. British Columbia provides up to 50 per cent of per-student grants to nearly all students attending private schools in the province. Saskatchewan has implemented similar supports to encourage choice in their education system. The government of Saskatchewan contributes funds on behalf of students attending private schools up to 50 per cent of the provincial per-student average. To be eligible for government support in Saskatchewan, schools, hon. member, must participate in the provincial student assessment program.

The government of Quebec has supported private education systems since 1968. Upon meeting certain standards, students attending private schools are eligible for approximately 50 per cent of the per-child amount paid to public schools. Based on a government report from 2006 to 2007, the most recent available, the Quebec government's contribution to private school funding is significantly larger than the parental contribution in the form of tuition. Imagine that: the home of social democracy in Canada supporting private education to such a significant degree. Mr. Speaker, I bet some of my friends of that persuasion in the House are rather surprised by that fact.

Our friends in Manitoba are also supporting students in private schools with support of 50 per cent of the provincial per-pupil amount upon the school meeting certain qualifications. We do know that governments across Canada from all ideological backgrounds have recognized the benefits of providing support to students attending private schools.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in this debate, and I would like to again thank the hon. member for bringing this motion forward. We may not always agree in this House, but the exchange of ideas is at the core of our democracy. I will enjoy hearing other members' points of view on this matter, and I urge all hon. members to consider the unintended consequences of the government following the recommended course of action proposed in this motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Chestermere-Rocky View, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by providing my genuine appreciation to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo for bringing forward this motion. It's an important motion, and it raises an issue which is long overdue. I can say that the NDP caucus also supports the substance of the motion with respect to what it's calling for. I have one small proviso that I'd like to make with respect to that, but I'll get to that in a minute. I'd like to first begin by talking about why the motion is so important and why the principle is so important.

When you look at the fact that we're providing 70 per cent of the funding, that 70 per cent of what goes to public schools on a per capita basis is also going to fund private schools, I think it's really important to look at whether we actually have that money to play with. Now, the government loves to say: "Oh, yes. Well, if you stop funding the 70 per cent to private schools, in fact we'll have to increase the funding by 30 per cent for all those students that come flooding back into the public education system."

5:30

Well, the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of these private schools charge a tuition of around \$20,000 to \$25,000 a year. Now, if you suddenly say to them that they're going to have to spend another \$3,000 a year to stay in their exclusive private

school, the odds are good that a very good chunk of them are not going to come rushing back to the public system. Quite the opposite. They're just going to pay the other \$3,000 a year and continue to rely on the income which gets them through the door to that exclusive private school in the first place. So I don't buy the argument that the government keeps putting forward on this because I don't believe it represents good economics.

Then the question becomes: is our public school system in such great shape that we can afford to kick a further 70 per cent out the door to families who are going to use their economic advantage to provide greater educational opportunities for their children in comparison to the average Alberta child? I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot afford that in our public education system.

We have class sizes that have long since exceeded that which has been recommended by relatively objective, neutral groups who have identified the amount of kids that ought to be in each class in order to achieve best practices. We have in excess of that in all grades, even in the so-called younger grades that the government says it's focusing on in order to justify being so far in excess of those guidelines in the older grades.

We have a gargantuan infrastructure deficit when it comes to funding education, and we hear about that regularly in the Legislature. We have a policy of not banning school fees. So as it is, our public schools are often going to parents with hat in hand asking them to write additional cheques. For low- and middle-income families, that can represent a hardship and a challenge.

We are the only province in the country, Mr. Speaker, that does not fund school lunch programs, something which, all the research shows unequivocally, significantly increases the educational outcomes of kids who are otherwise at risk. Yet somehow we don't do it. Here we just accept that out the goodness of their hearts restaurant owners around the city will happily drop off extra food periodically at the schools where kids are going to school hungry. That is shameful.

Of course, ultimately, we do not provide anywhere near the supports that we should be providing to our special-needs students in the schools. It's that particular group that I want to talk about that does give me the slight qualification on my support to this motion, although I will definitely vote in support of it because the long-term objective is one which I absolutely support entirely.

But before we get to that, why do we have a public system of education? Well, the idea behind that was to provide to all children of citizens of this province an equality of opportunity, to provide to them an equality of access, to provide to them an equality of the quality to which they get access with respect to their education, and to ensure that we are able to educate all children in this province in the civic values that are consistent with the pluralistic society in which we live. We do that in the public system through a mechanism that ensures public accountability, transparency in terms of how our schools are run, and also electoral accountability through the opportunity to elect not only our Minister of Education but also our school board trustees. So that's what our public system does.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, that we can get in a public system is a common understanding of the rights and responsibilities of children and parents and all citizens in this society to respect certain basic fundamental values which we all sign on to when we are part of this society, those which are reflected in our Constitution, in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and in our human

rights code. Those are things that should be fully and unapologetically taught in all of our schools.

So what happens when we end up funding private schools instead? Well, in effect, Mr. Speaker, we subsidize not inclusivity but exclusivity. We subsidize a lack of equality of access and a lack of equality of opportunity. In many cases many of these schools do provide an elevated education because they fund and the parents pay 3 to 1, 4 to 1 in terms of their money versus the public dollar that goes in there. So we're not providing equality of access because the majority of students in Alberta cannot afford nor can their families afford to attend those schools.

Now, in addition, as has already been mentioned, many of these schools also deny access on the basis of other issues which, frankly, they have no business denying people on at the same time that they are receiving public dollars. They should not be denying access to these schools on the basis of whether or not you have special needs. They should not be denying access to these schools on the basis of whether or not you think women are equal participants in society. These are things that we should not be funding. Parents may have choice, but we should not be using taxpayers' dollars to fund schools which happen to on occasion teach that women are somewhat secondary players in society, for instance.

What we need to do, Mr. Speaker, is ensure that we fund properly our public schools, which represent our civic values and which enjoy the benefit of all those accountabilities which I talked about.

Now, I would like to say briefly, Mr. Speaker, that the one thing that an NDP government, if I had my way, would do when it came to looking at this kind of motion is that I would ensure that we did not move forward on it until such time as we were able to promise without qualification to those families who scrimp and save and sacrifice to put their children into expensive private schools because the public system has abandoned their children with special needs. I know that there are families out there who have done that, who sacrifice, who pay for things well beyond what their income level could possibly provide because the public system is unable or unwilling to provide the support that their children need in order to succeed in the education system.

We have a recent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada which actually outlined that the public system does need to provide appropriate support for our special-needs children. But what happens right now is that there are a lot of special-needs families that are accessing private schools because that is the only place their children can get the attention and the support that they need to learn what they actually have the ability to learn, Mr. Speaker, with just a little bit of extra help so that those kids will graduate with the same academic background, the same qualifications, all those kinds of things, but they will have needed a little bit more time from a teacher, a little bit more time from a speech pathologist, a little bit more time from an OT, whatever, but they will ultimately get there.

Right now what's happening is that our public system is not doing its job with respect to those students. It is failing those students. Now, I'll be fair. It's not just the Alberta government that's doing it; it is happening across the country. But this is supposed to be the richest province in the country, and if we cannot do right by our special-needs students, then I don't know who else can.

Now, the fact of the matter is that even though some families

are doing that, of course, what we know is that many, many families really can't afford to get into these private schools that give extra help to the special-needs kids. What we're doing is once again putting an additional level of discrimination against those special-needs kids because not only aren't they able to get the support they need, but their families can't afford to pay the extra super-duper premium that is required in this province to make sure that there is fairness of education.

I support the motion. Thank you.

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

I'll recognize the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark and then Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. McAllister:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As much as I respect and admire the track record of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo and as much as I respect any discussion on education, I'm not going to be able to support this member's motion. I agree with what was said on the other side and, you know, had a minispeech prepared, but I think I'd just like to present a few points as many of them have been covered already and many of them, I believe, are the direct opposite of what was just presented.

I think a distinguishing feature of Alberta schools is the fact that we have the choices that we do. It is all about choice in Alberta education. It's what makes us so strong. Kids have options to go to different schools. Public schools are doing a great job, and I want to say that I'm a big supporter. Every chance I get I tell people that my children go to the public school system. I went to the public school system. You could argue that they might have done a little bit better with me, but here I am, in any event, and I'm quite proud of how things went.

5:40

It's hard for them to be all things to all people in public schools. The inclusion issue that we've talked about here – I know the Minister of Education and I have talked about it. I've heard it from several around the province. It's hard to balance all the needs in today's classrooms. Some of these private schools are wonderful about providing opportunities for kids that they might not otherwise have.

This motion, if passed, would take away those options for a lot of kids. To suggest that the government shouldn't provide any funding I think is disconnected from what I hear when I go around the province. I hear from people that, obviously, choice is good, and we should be supporting parents and kids to go ahead and access education in different ways.

You could also present, I think, if you looked at the debate and just tried to separate any of the emotion that ties you to the pro or con, that choice has made our public system stronger. Public schools have stepped up because of it. They've offered unique programs as well. It is a benefit to the system. If we were to take all these kids out of the private system and put them into the public system – and I know that one member suggested that would happen and another suggested it might not – I'm not sure we'd have funding right now in the public system the way that it's set up. If you had to top up that 30 per cent for all of the kids that could no longer go, if you took away the funding for private schools and essentially eliminated that choice for many kids, I don't know what the dollar figure would be, but that would be worse for public education, not to mention that I'm not sure where we could put them all.

You ask where the government would get the money if we did such a thing. The previous speaker did mention fees. On that point I agree with her wholeheartedly. I promise not to use this as a

soapbox issue to get onto the fees subject, but it will indulge me to make a point. We've gotten to a point now in the public system that mandatory fees have become, you know, a way of survival for a lot of boards to make things work. If we were to suddenly eliminate the funding for private schools, I can't imagine the fees that our kids would be charged in the public system.

Parents want choice for their own reasons. If that niche market exists, and if a school can make a go of it, I think what we're doing is increasing, you know, the level of tolerance in society. We're giving people a chance to grow in their own areas. We're not saying: "It's one size fits all. This is public education. That's it." It's one of the greatest things about Alberta.

In my riding we have a specialized Sikh school. It's a tremendous school. The kids are phenomenal coming out of that school. They have every right to go to that private school. You know, another is the Edge school in Springbank. That's wonderful. We've talked about Quest in the past, I know, in my caucus and the great work that it does. I think, if I'm not mistaken, that Quest did begin as a not-for-profit society to enable students with special challenges to learn and develop to their maximum potential in a caring and safe environment, something that allows them to focus on exactly that and provides that for parents and their students. Why shouldn't they have access to that if there's a market for it? Clearly, it's our duty to make sure that those things happen. They grew into a designated special education school. I believe, again, they combine therapy and education in each of the classrooms. The goal is so that students can achieve their maximum potential. That is the goal, I know, of any school, be it public, private, home-school, charter. Every child is unique.

We are so blessed in Alberta and as parents to have the choices that we have. As I said earlier, I'm a big fan of the public system, but I'm not a fan of taking money away from the private schools and systems because I think they serve us well.

I mentioned choice and innovation. We'd be remiss if we didn't mention charter schools and, you know, the great work that they've been able to do. You can see the pride when you go around and travel and meet with these individuals and find out how the students are responding. I said earlier that public schools have responded to competition in private. I believe that they have. They've increased the programs that they offer kids. We should be discussing ways, I think, to continue the culture of educational choice in Alberta and to provide for our kids in innovation in our province. I clearly won't be supporting this motion.

I just want to make one final point. Sometimes people want to label those that choose another option as intolerant. That's the part that really sticks with me and the great majority of people that I speak to. It is not intolerant to have religious views of your own. It is not intolerant to think that sport is good for your child or art is good for your child or that this special need suits you. That is tolerance. That is what's made Alberta what it is. And a bouquet to that side, who recognized that with Bill 3, and to the current Education minister, who made the changes that he did.

Again to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo: thank you for the motion. I think I've made my points loud and clear. I won't be supporting it. I will conclude by saying that I think we've got the greatest education system in the world although some pressure points. We've got to work on those, but I'm proud of it.

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

I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Edmonton-McClung.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to support the motion from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Liberals believe in

freedom of the individual, equality of opportunity, and fairness to future generations. It doesn't matter who you are or where you're from; your child should have a chance in this province and in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in choice within the public system. Choice is a good thing. In Edmonton we have Meadowlark Christian school in Edmonton-Meadowlark. We have French schools. We have sports schools. If your children want to take film or art, there are many different, diverse aspects of education you can get within the public system. We have Catholic schools here. There is choice, and that's one of the reasons we have one of the best education systems.

That education system also does come with many problems. I'll tell you what the problem with our public education system right now is, Mr. Speaker. We have 650 fewer teachers today than we had two years ago in Alberta, 650 fewer teachers at a time when there's so much more to teach and the needs of the children are greater than ever. Now, we have a 20 to 25 per cent high school noncompletion rate. Do those 650 fewer teachers have something to do with that? Maybe.

Mr. Speaker, we also are in the midst of a baby boom. We're going to have 100,000 more children in the school system 10 years from now. Albertans are making love more than ever, and we have immigration on top of that. That's a good thing. With immigration comes high needs. I know. I was the son of new immigrants. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie stood up and spoke. He should know. In his community there are tens of thousands of brand new Canadians who've showed up with their kids with high needs. In his community, where he was a teacher, there are fewer teachers today than there were two years ago and more kids with high needs.

The government's job is to fund public education with public tax dollars. The current Conservative government has been starving the public education system for years, so our school boards have to nickel and dime families for school fees, and they're going to increase even more by 2014. School fees for a child to go to grade 1 are akin to what tuition was for university a couple of decades ago. I know it's pretty tough for hard-working families with three, four kids. That's a couple of thousand dollars a year. We've got children showing up at school hungry. You can't learn on an empty stomach.

5:50

Government's job is to equalize these barriers, especially for our children. Now, it's okay if you're rich and you've got money and you want to send your kid to a school that charges 20, 30 grand. That's all right. You should have that choice, but it shouldn't be funded with public tax dollars when the needs of the public school system are so great. Many of these institutions cherry-pick the students. They have the choice of who they want to attend, and that's wrong. Mr. Speaker, we as a government are not here to subsidize the wealthy, but I'm not surprised because that's what the right-wing Conservative government wants to do. They've been subsidizing the wealthy in every part of society.

To those who say, "Hey, if we bring these kids into the public system, the public system is going to be stressed," excuse me? Going to be stressed? Unless these members haven't noticed, the public system is already stressed and distressed because of the fact that they've starved public schools from funding. Twenty-four thousand students – 24,000 students – when we have a cohort of about 600,000 students in the province are only about 4 or 5 per cent. Well, you know what? The public system delivers education

efficiently. Adding 24,000 students to that education system with 600,000 and bringing back that funding will not stress it as much as it's currently being stressed.

With all due respect to the other members, this is why I said that it is a problem if you have a right-wing Conservative government and a right-wing conservative opposition. We support education. We think we have a good education system, a very good education system. We just believe it has an opportunity to be a great education system that delivers a quality education for every child in this province regardless of race, colour, creed, sex, or socioeconomic background. I'm a product of a public education system, as are my children. I thank the Minister of Education. I acknowledge the challenges that he has. The reason we're speaking up is to actually support the current Minister of Education so that he would have more funds for the public education system, that he has to manage.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to a very important matter. It's really about the future of our province and the future of our children. Thank you.

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

I recognize the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Xiao:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got a lot to say about this issue. Unfortunately, there are probably only six minutes left, but I'll still try to make my points here.

You know, I'm very happy today to talk about this issue, education. By listening to all the members who spoke before me, I've got to remember, people, one fundamental issue, that the parents of all of the kids are taxpayers as well. My children have absolutely the same rights as any other children to have the funding for their education, to have their education funded by public dollars.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, through the chair, please.

**Mr. Xiao:** Yeah. Sure.

That's why I'm going to tell you that as parents we all have the same interest in having the best possible education for our children in the world. However, I must say that we have very different ideas on how this can be achieved. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start straight off by telling the member that I'm not going to support this motion. There are a number of reasons for this. For me, the biggest reason is that I believe it's all about freedom of choice. I think there's an important role for private schools to play in our education system.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk personally about my children. I have two boys. One is 24 now, and the other one is going to be 18 years old next year. Both of them went through slightly different paths. My eldest son, Allen, graduated from Tempo School. It's a private school in Edmonton. He graduated from junior high and then proceeded to his high school education in a public school called Old Scona academic high school. The reason he went to Tempo was because he liked the programs. Only Tempo School offered a Latin program, and they offered an extensive program about world history and about geography.

I can tell you a story, Mr. Speaker. In 2005 we as a family travelled to Europe. We went to the Vatican. We went to the Sunday prayers by Pope John Paul II. When I heard that my son could translate all the Latin into English, it was amazing. It was amazing. By training I'm a geologist. I know some Latin, but I was so thrilled to see that my son could translate Latin into

English when we were visiting the Vatican. I can tell you that this is something that a public school cannot offer. Also, he knew all about the history of Europe. He actually booked all the hotels in Europe by himself just based on historical stories. But he was very disappointed, I can tell you. When we checked into those hotels, we couldn't find a trace of anything, you know, from the Second World War. It doesn't matter. That shows that he had such an extensive knowledge about world history.

I'm very happy to tell you right now that he is going to graduate with his second bachelor degree, in history. He received, I believe, the only award for Russian studies in the University of Alberta this year. He speaks very good Russian. I have to say that I have to attribute all of this, his achievement, to his education in Tempo School. I can tell you that he's getting two degrees. He just got an LSAT score – we've got some lawyers here – of 166. He is well

on his way to being a lawyer. I can tell you that. My second son is graduating from Old Scona academic high school with distinction this year, and his average is 96. So we have a very sound public school system and also a very good private school system.

I really support both systems. It's all about freedom of choice. I always remind the members that we as parents are taxpayers. I expect my children's education to be funded by tax dollars.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, the House will stand adjourned at 6 p.m. We will conclude this matter at the next available opportunity for private members' business, which, time permitting, will be next Monday. We will conclude this motion. The House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]

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