



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, December 4, 2012

Issue 27a

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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Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)	Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC)
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Anglin, Joe, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W)	Lemke, Ken, Stony Plain (PC)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)	Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)	Lukaszuk, Hon. Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)
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Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND)	McAllister, Bruce, Chestermere-Rocky View (W), Official Opposition Deputy Whip
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Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)	Olesen, Cathy, Sherwood Park (PC)
Cusanelli, Hon. Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)	Olson, Hon. Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)
Dallas, Hon. Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)	Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (PC)
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)	Pedersen, Blake, Medicine Hat (W)
Denis, Hon. Jonathan, QC, Calgary-Acadia (PC), Deputy Government House Leader	Quadri, Sohail, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)
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Dorward, David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC)	Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC), Premier
Drysdale, Hon. Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)	Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
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Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (W)	Scott, Hon. Donald, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (PC)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)	Sherman, Dr. Raj, Edmonton-Meadowlark (AL), Leader of the Liberal Opposition
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)	Smith, Danielle, Highwood (W), Leader of the Official Opposition
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)	Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Griffiths, Hon. Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)	Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Hale, Jason W., Strathmore-Brooks (W)	Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC), Government House Leader	Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)	Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W), Official Opposition Whip
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Horner, Hon. Doug, Spruce Grove-St. Albert (PC)	Weadick, Hon. Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)
Hughes, Hon. Ken, Calgary-West (PC)	Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)	Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W)
Jeneroux, Matt, Edmonton-South West (PC)	Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Johnson, Hon. Jeff, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (PC)	Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Johnson, Linda, Calgary-Glenmore (PC)	Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC), Government Whip
Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL), Liberal Opposition Whip	
Kennedy-Glans, Donna, Calgary-Varsity (PC)	

**Party standings:**

Progressive Conservative: 61

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

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Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Liz Sim, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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

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

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

Chair: Mr. Amery  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Bikman

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

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

Chair: Mr. Quest  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Anderson
Casey
Dorward
Eggen
Kubinec
Sandhu
Sherman

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

Chair: Mr. Allen  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Luan

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

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Pastoor  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Forsyth

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

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Xiao  
Deputy Chair: Mr. McDonald

Bikman
Blakeman
Brown
DeLong
Eggen
Leskiw
Quadri
Rogers
Wilson

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Zwozdesky  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Young

Calahasen
Dorward
Forsyth
Goudreau
Jablonski
Mason
Quest
Sherman
Smith

**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

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Deputy Chair: Ms L. Johnson

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

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

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

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Anderson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dorward

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

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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

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

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 4, 2012

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let us pray. O Holy Creator, may our conscience always guide us and help us do what best serves our constituents, and may our prayers of today be echoed by our actions of tomorrow. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly a very special guest who's seated in your gallery. He represents the Singing Christmas Tree, a nonprofit organization that supports such charities as 630 CHED, Santas Anonymous, and Edmonton's Food Bank. The Singing Christmas Tree is, once again, an annual production, and it begins this weekend, December 7 through the 9th, at the Jubilee Auditorium in Edmonton, which I hope to attend. The man responsible for this amazing production is executive producer John Cameron, an Edmonton musical wizard who has appeared in shows along with Dave Foster, Josh Groban, Bon Jovi, and others. John, please rise and receive our thanks and best wishes for a most successful weekend with the Singing Christmas Tree.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along that same line, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members another special guest in your gallery who's a member of my staff, in fact my chief of staff, Ms Hana Marinkovic. Now, while John Cameron is busy conducting the Singing Christmas Tree, Hana is busy singing as a member of the Singing Christmas Tree choir. She has a great voice, and she's been using it effectively in the Singing Christmas Tree and, I might say, in my office as well, although not the singing voice. I wish Hana and all the Singing Christmas Tree members a successful run of performances this weekend. I'd ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Young:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a grade 6 class and teacher, Trina Ludwig, from Crestwood elementary junior high school, located in my constituency of Edmonton-Riverview. They are seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask the students and their teacher along with parents Mary Wong and Tara Hatch to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Dorward:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a grade 6 class from St. Brendan school who are here today with their teacher, Ray Bradshaw, accompanied by Sharon Toal and Ken Airhart. It's wonderful that these students are able

to participate and learn about our government right here at the Legislature, and I hope that they all take away a positive experience of their visit. I'd like to now ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, your second introduction, please.

**Mr. Dorward:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well, two individuals who are literally changing the lives of those living with type 1 diabetes, Barb Armstrong, regional manager for north-central Alberta and the Northwest Territories; and Myles Rusak, regional manager for southern Alberta, are here from the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation to help bring awareness and change to the lives of thousands of people in Alberta who are affected by this thus far incurable disease. I would now ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome.

**Mr. Casey:** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the MLA for Edmonton-McClung, who was unable to be here today, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a grade 6 class from St. Martha elementary school and their chaperones. I'd ask that the group from St. Martha school rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three guests from my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont. I've known Dave and Linda Cox for over 35 years. As a matter of fact, I attended Leduc high school with Linda. They are joined by Linda's uncle, Art Balkan, a lifelong resident of Leduc county who has for many years farmed and continues to farm just south of the city of Edmonton limits on the piece of land his father bought in 1905. Both Art and Dave are visiting the Assembly for the very first time. My guests are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Ms Cusanelli:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you a member of my constituency here in the Assembly today, Marianne Kroetsch. Marianne is a parent with a developmental disability who has committed herself to living her everyday life to the highest standard. For this reason, she has been nominated for the Norm McLeod self-advocacy award. Her work with the Connections Counselling and Consulting Foundation of Calgary has allowed Marianne to share her insight regarding the rights of people with disabilities and, most importantly, her experience and success as a mother with a disability raising her daughter. I would now ask that my colleagues please join me in giving her the traditional warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to introduce to you and through you newer members of our Wildrose caucus staff: Naomi Christensen, Joanne Autio, Keith Pridgen, Tim Banman, and Shad Thevenaz. These are essential members of our staff. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** While we wait for some guests to arrive, let me go to the Associate Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a guest and a constituent of mine here today, Jennifer Martin, who is the CEO of TELUS Spark in Calgary. TELUS is at the forefront of innovate learning for the 21st century. It's more than just a building. Working with schools and postsecondary institutions across Alberta, TELUS Spark is promoting an attitude towards learning that is more collaborative between the areas of science and technology, engineering and math, and as they apply to the real world. Please join me in welcoming Jennifer and thanking her for her leadership in this wonderful new initiative for education in Alberta. I believe she's in the members' gallery, so I'd ask her to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, followed by Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two guests who are constituents of mine; namely, Elisa Benterud, who is a student council president at the Strathcona Christian Academy, and Pam Cholak, a constituent and friend who is no stranger to this building, having spent several years here in different capacities. Elisa and Pam are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Hale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly six students from Strathmore high school. These students are in an honours social studies program and are here to learn about the legislative process. As I call their names, I would like to ask them to rise: Cassy Keeler, Genista Kippin, Travis Luehr, Jenna Mohamed, Kelly Rice, Kayla McGougan. Accompanying them today is Richard Boisvert and their teacher, Jill MacDonald. Please join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two introductions. First, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Zachary Weeks and his companion Rodel. Yesterday was the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and Zachary has been a very vocal advocate for those with disabilities for many years. He's worked hard to ensure buildings are accessible and the needs and requirements of those with disabilities are addressed, including the need for good food, good care, and good hygiene. While Zachary is a busy guy, he's taken the time to join us today. I'd ask all members of the Assembly to welcome Zachary Weeks and Rodel to the Assembly. Thank you, hon. members.

**1:40**

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ms Shirley Bidnick and her daughter Rochelle. Shirley is a nurse trying to get care for her parents, like many of us. As we age, our parents also age. Shirley's parents

really need more care, more home care, affordable home care, and she's here to try to ask all members of the Assembly to support our seniors and the most vulnerable to allow them to live with dignity in their places of residence as much as possible. I'd like to ask Shirley and Rochelle to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly all members of our caucus staff. Throughout this fall session they've all worked extremely hard to help us keep the government's feet to the fire. I'm very proud to have such an enthusiastic and intelligent group of individuals on the NDP caucus team.

I would like them now to rise as I call their names and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly: Rupinder Kaur, our principal secretary; John Ashton, our director of caucus services; Adrienne King, my executive assistant and now the communications officer; Olenka Toroshenko, our communications assistant; Maria Vicente, our research officer; Philippe Johnson, a sessional research officer; Brad Lafortune, sessional research assistant. Dakin McDonald is also a sessional research assistant, Pascal Ryffel is our outreach officer, Chris Gallaway is an outreach officer, and Yared Mehzenta is our sessional outreach officer. I would ask them all to please rise on both sides and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to rise to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a group of bright young people from Inner City high school in the constituency of Edmonton-Calder. These students overcome incredible odds every day in order to work toward completing their high school diploma and have found success at Inner City high school because of all of the supports available. I'm proud to say that before I was elected as an MLA, I taught at Inner City high school for over five years.

Teacher Dan Scratch and his grade 12 social studies class are here to learn about the democratic system and politics in Alberta. They are particularly interested in social justice and how this relates to their local community. I'd now like to ask them to rise as I call their names: Jubilee Cardinal, Kim Cardinal, Cheyenne Moses, Sasha Gladu, Skye Gladu, River Newborn, and their teacher, Dan Scratch. I'd ask you to join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a very, very special individual from my constituency, Curtis Hargrove. Curtis has spent the last seven months running across Canada for the Stollery children's hospital with a goal of raising \$1 million. I'll expand on Curtis's journey across Canada during my member's statement later this afternoon. Curtis is here today with his very, very proud parents, Bev and Larry Hargrove, and his support team, Morgan Seward and Noelle Fitzpatrick. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Curtis Hargrove

**Mrs. Leskiw:** That was good timing, sir. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. For a young man from my constituency his journey consists of approximately 7,800 kilometres. Curtis Hargrove's journey began at St. John's, Newfoundland, and will end in just a few short weeks on Vancouver Island in Victoria, B.C. I stand here today to recognize this very fantastic young man and the cause that has fuelled his unwavering determination to run thousands of kilometres to raise \$1 million for cancer research at the Stollery children's hospital.

Luckily for Mr. Hargrove, known as the Cold Lake Runner, he is no stranger to the sport of running. In 2004 he ran the Edmonton Centennial Marathon and placed first. His journey marries his love for running, his passion for helping others, as he did previously in 2007, running across B.C. and Alberta for the Terry Fox Foundation.

Curtis chose to run for the Stollery children's hospital located here in Edmonton given its reputation across the country and the number of children and families it has helped. Mr. Speaker, Curtis has just two short weeks left to reach his goals and so far has raised \$250,000 for cancer research. Since the beginning of the trek he has faced arrest in Quebec and was hospitalized for a short time here in Alberta, but Curtis is a strong believer that you can do anything if you put your mind to it, and I strongly believe that this local hero can reach his goal. If you wish to support his cause, please go to [www.stollerykids.com](http://www.stollerykids.com) to donate.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this statement reflects the admiration I have for this incredible young man as well as for the utmost pride shared by all my constituency in Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Curtis, all the best to you. We're proud of you. Keep on running.

### Tobacco Recovery Lawsuit

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, it is clear the vast majority of Albertans do not believe the Premier when she said that she did not make the decision to award the tobacco litigation contract to close political friends. The evidence against her is airtight, regardless of how many government ministers continue to say that black is white and the sky is green. However, there is also the issue of the actual conflict of interest in this case. Some are focused on the fact that ex-husbands are not included in our province's conflicts legislation, but this is not what is being argued.

We are concerned that there have likely been violations of section 3 of the act, which prohibits a member from using her office to make a decision that improperly furthers another person's private interest. The fact is that there was indeed a close and ongoing personal and political relationship between the now Premier and several members of the law firm in question. Her ex-husband, a senior partner at the firm, led her transition team into the Premier's office. The Premier's chief of staff's wife was hired by the firm just before the election. Firm partners have donated tens of thousands to the PC Party, the Premier's CA, and her leadership bid. The firm has received almost \$1.3 million in legal work since the Premier became Justice minister in 2008 but none prior to that, and a full 30 per cent of the firm's partners have received their QC designation under the Premier's watch.

The combination of these circumstances creates at the very least the appearance or the apprehension that the Premier may have used her office to influence a decision made on behalf of the Crown to improperly further the private interests of her friends in this law firm, thus contravening section 3 of the legislation if true. But make no mistake. Whether a technical conflict is found under our ethics legislation is somewhat irrelevant in the end, especially given just how weak our ethics laws are on these matters compared with virtually every other jurisdiction in the country. Just ask Rob Ford. What matters is whether Albertans feel they can trust the words and actions of this Premier. To that question, Mr. Speaker, the answer is painfully self-evident.

### Speaker's Ruling Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, private members' statements are a very special privilege, as you would know. I don't know how many times I have to remind people to be very careful of the words they choose, the approach they take in their members' statements, and to not cast aspersions on another member here in the Assembly nor on any people who are not in this Assembly and do not have the immunity and the ability to be here in person to speak up for themselves. Let us hope this does not set any kind of a tone for the rest of the day.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Highwood and Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

### Tobacco Recovery Lawsuit

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, your ruling yesterday did nothing to remove the cloud of doubt that lingers over the Premier's handling of the tobacco lawsuit awarded to a law firm that includes a number of her close associates, including the chair of her transition team. How can the Premier explain this document, action request 39754, dated November 17, 2010, where the ADM of legal services references the timeline that includes the minister, now the Premier, making a decision in early December?

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps it would serve all of us well if I reminded the House that while Her Majesty's irresponsible opposition tried to divert this House's attention on matters that are perhaps distracting and capture their imagination, this House actually has been very successful in passing some great legislation for Albertans. We stayed focused. [interjections] We passed the Education Act for our children, for all children of Alberta not only for today but probably for the next 20 years. I'll give you a list of others later.

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

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would note that the government has refused about a hundred amendments that have been proposed by the opposition.

Given that another action request, 40333, dated January 13, 2011, has the ADM of legal services noting that, quote, shortly before Christmas the minister, now the Premier, selected the Jensen consortium, what does the Premier have to say about this document?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud that I was the Minister of Justice, and at the time that I was Minister of Justice, we decided to sue big tobacco. We did that on behalf of Albertans because we know that it's important to recover those health care costs. [interjections] Being the minister, we certainly know that in the department there was a process in place, which I was involved in, in terms of progressing the selection, and a decision was made to retain a firm in July of which I had no part. [interjections] But I am very proud of the fact that as Justice minister we decided to sue big tobacco when that Leader of the Opposition has said that she wouldn't.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Airdrie has risen on a point of order at 1:52. It has been noted. I'd just ask that we curtail the interjections. We have the right to ask questions as we see fit within the rules. We have the right to answer them as certain members see fit. Let's abide by that.

The hon. leader.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are not disputing the decision. We are disputing how the decision was made.

Given that there's a memo stating that there will be a decision on a particular firm, another memo indicating that there is a decision on a particular firm, and a third saying that there was a decision on a particular firm, all before she left the Justice portfolio, how can the Premier still claim she didn't make the decision on a particular firm?

**Ms Redford:** I think we're reliving last week, Mr. Speaker. Last week I made it very clear that on this particular day I was not involved in making the decision with respect to which counsel was retained. Since that, we have had a number of events in this institution that, as I understand it, confirm that I can stand by what I said last week, and I will. I'm very disappointed in the irresponsible and the extreme behaviour of the opposition, who will not respect the institution of the Speaker or the Ethics Commissioner, both decisions that we will welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition for your second main set of questions.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are disappointed they can't get a straight answer.

The Premier chose International Tobacco Recovery Lawyers to handle the big tobacco lawsuit, and we believe that there is a breach of the Conflict of Interest Act under section 3, where a breach occurs if a member uses her office to improperly influence a decision to further the private interests of another, in this instance the law firm of her close personal and political friends. The government's position seems to be that the Premier had no conflict, but if she did, some other Justice minister made the decision. How can they still insist that no one did anything wrong?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is the same question we've had the last few days, and it'll be the same answer today. June 21, 2011, very important day, the longest day of the year in that particular year: that is when the contract was formed to hire TRL. There was no binding obligation prior to that. I would suggest that this hon. member should get back to talking about highways, roads, schools, police, things that matter to Albertans.

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, they don't answer those questions either.

Putting myself in the shoes of the Premier, I appreciate that this is difficult for her, but I am asking the Premier to put herself in the shoes of Albertans trying to understand what went on here, and given that she believes that there is no conflict of interest under section 3 of the act, why does she refuse to accept responsibility for making the decision in the first place?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I have to say that, in fact, while I appreciate the fact that Albertans may want to talk about this – and we have been very open and forthright – this is not difficult for me because I know what I was involved in. I know when the decision was made. I stand by my personal integrity and principles. The opposition can stand up every single day and can continue to allege that there was something inappropriate. I am proud of who I am, I am proud of the role that I had as Justice minister, I am proud of what we have done as a government in the past six months, and that is what Albertans voted for.

**Ms Smith:** Given that a number of responses from the Deputy Premier, the current agriculture minister, the current Justice minister suggest that the contract is good for Alberta, one must ask: why is the Premier running from acknowledging her role in choosing this particular firm? Does she feel guilty?

**Ms Redford:** I was listening to the answer to the last two questions, Mr. Speaker. I guess the opposition wasn't. I've said that I am very proud of the fact that I was Justice minister when we as government decided to do this. I am very proud of the fact that we are continuing to pursue this litigation, and as I've said in this House, I believe that the decision that the Justice minister made in the summer of last year was a good decision to represent Alberta's interests. That doesn't change the fact that I did not personally make that decision.

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

#### Ethics Commissioner Referral

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Gary Mar felt this Premier's wrath when she determined that he violated a "code of values and ethics" when he faced allegations of misusing the powers of his office. She ordered that he step aside until the investigation was complete. Now she's denying that she ever did this. Yesterday the Premier said, "it wasn't something that I was involved in," but in March she said, "I asked the Ethics Commissioner to look at that." To the Premier. Albertans are getting tired of your loose interpretation of the truth. Why did you say that you had no involvement in the Gary Mar investigation when you clearly ordered it yourself? [interjections]

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, I must say that as Premier I was incredibly enthusiastic to ensure that the right thing was done. I did ask the Ethics Commissioner to look into this. You will recall that the turn of events was that the Ethics Commissioner said that because Mr. Mar was a public servant, he wasn't able to look into it. At that point the clerk of the Executive Council took over the entire process. At that point I was not involved in it. There is nothing that is not absolutely certain with respect to the facts of this, and I think that's something that is lost daily on the opposition.



### Speaker's Ruling Decorum

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I appreciate the enthusiasm with which you are greeting both the questioner and the answer person. However, those kinds of interjections ought not be tolerated, and I'm not going to tolerate any more today. We've had enough. Please, no more interjections. I don't think that that's how you coach or train your children, to interrupt each other, either at home or on the playground or in school or elsewhere. It's not going to be something that we leave here as an example of how we conduct ourselves once we have grown up.

Let us proceed now with your first supplemental, without preamble, please.

### Ethics Commissioner Referral

*(continued)*

**Mr. Wilson:** Great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given your swift and well-documented action in ordering Mr. Mar to step aside and your apparent refusal to admit you had anything to do with it, what is preventing you from being honest with Albertans and standing by decisions that you have made?

2:00

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, this question, to begin with, doesn't deserve an answer considering the language, but let me be perfectly straight, and maybe there's a lesson which they can draw. When the issue of Mr. Gary Mar came into being, the Premier did the right thing, the thing that they should have done. If you believe that something may have happened that is wrong, you turn to the appropriate body to investigate it, either the Ethics Commissioner or the office of the clerk. If they believe that something nefarious happened, they should have done the same as opposed to dragging everybody through the mud over the last three months instead of talking about health care, education, children, and things that people actually elected us to do. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** You've forced me to take up my list pad, so I have it out. Any more interjections, and you're going to make it on to the list, and then I'll have to not recognize you when your turn comes. There have to be some penalties for breaking rules, and that will be what it is.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, you have the floor for your final supplementary without preamble.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: given that there is clear hypocrisy in ordering someone else to leave their job because of an alleged ethics breach while refusing to do so yourself, did you order Mr. Mar to step down just because most of your caucus chose to support him for leader and you wanted everyone to know who is boss? [interjections]

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, here's a response. I will not dignify that question with a response.

### Speaker's Ruling Decorum

**The Speaker:** We're going to go to the leader of the Alberta Liberal opposition in a few seconds, but I'm hearing some comments from the back row of the government bench here. I would ask whoever it is – I didn't get it in time – to please cease and desist, or you, too, will make my list.

The hon. leader of the Alberta Liberal opposition.

### Tobacco Recovery Lawsuit

*(continued)*

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Liberals support the decision to sue big tobacco but question how the decision was made. The Tobaccogate scandal has Albertans questioning the Premier's uncanny ability to apparently say one thing and then deny any involvement whatsoever. Now she is distancing herself from the decision to select International Tobacco Recovery Lawyers as a firm to represent Albertans in a \$10 billion lawsuit. I've sent the Premier her memo dated December 14, 2010. To the Premier: will you acknowledge that by signing this memo, you as the Justice minister at least may have influenced the decision?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is rather rich coming from a member who about six months ago was screaming and shouting for an independent commission into queue-jumping and now comes out and says that we shouldn't be spending money on investigating queue-jumping.

The facts have been laid out. They have been asked. They have been answered. I have to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that if they ask a hundred more times, they will receive the same answer a hundred more times because there's only one truth.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, given that I asked a question and the Deputy Premier went off on some other rant about something else, allow me to go back to the real Premier – the real Premier – not the guy who wants to be Premier. Premier, there's ample documentation with this memo with your signature on it. Can you please rise? I just want to ask you: if you're really trying to distance yourself from the decision, why didn't you distance yourself from the decision when it counted, before you signed the memo?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, as the Deputy Premier has said, this question was asked and answered. It was asked and answered continually last week but not by the Liberal Party, by the Leader of the Opposition. I'm sure glad to see the leader of the Liberal Party has finally caught up.

**Dr. Sherman:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the Premier and wannabe Premier. Given that as Justice minister the Premier had the opportunity to recuse herself from a decision involving hundreds of millions of dollars, maybe some billions of dollars in contingency fees benefiting a partner in the firm that clearly has strong connections to the Premier, so strong that he helped her transition her front bench, didn't you consider that there would be at least the appearance of a conflict of interest?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, there was nothing for me to recuse myself from because I didn't make the decision.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the New Democratic opposition.

### Physician Services Agreement

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The government signed a deal with the doctors before the election, and after the election they broke it. This agreement was ignored by the Health minister, who imposed a settlement on the doctors. To the Health minister: why won't he admit that he is unable to negotiate an agreement with the AMA before patient care is affected, and do something?

**Ms Redford:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is certainly true that our excellent Minister of Health has been working very hard over the

past 10 months to try to get a deal with doctors, and we have done some very good work. The agreement that the hon. member speaks of was an agreement that was signed some eight or nine months ago that had a number of conditions in it. In fact, going back to the detail of that, it was not any action taken by the government that ended that agreement but an action taken by the AMA. Even after that our minister stood by the terms of that agreement, has until this day, and wants to get a deal with doctors.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much. The Premier answers the minister's questions and vice versa. It's interesting.

I want to ask about the Canada Health Act. The Canada Health Act requires a negotiated settlement with doctors if extra billing is prohibited. It says that at the option of the appropriate provincial organizations, it needs to have . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, let's get to the question. No preamble, please.

**Mr. Mason:** It is the question, Mr. Speaker. The question is to the minister. Is he going to continue this playing footsie with the doctors, not get a deal, and then have some kind of impact on patient care, or will he do what the Health Act says and go to binding arbitration?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can enlighten the hon. member on the provisions of the Canada Health Act. What the Canada Health Act says is that where an agreement exists between a government and an association representing physicians in the province, compensation shall be reasonable. The compensation for physicians in Alberta is the best in the country. It is on average \$80,000 more than the national average for compensation paid to physicians. We make no apologies for that. We pay the best in Canada, we have the best doctors in Canada, and we intend to keep paying them the best.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, you had one more supplemental?

**Mr. Mason:** I do.

**The Speaker:** All right.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given – given – that the Canada Health Act does not talk about one party determining whether or not compensation is fair but provides a mechanism to settle the dispute when two parties disagree, why doesn't the Health minister do the right thing and go to binding arbitration with Alberta's doctors to prevent any work shortage?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Premier said, we have been without an agreement with the Alberta Medical Association for some 20 months now. This government has tried everything reasonable that we can possibly try to achieve that agreement. We stand by our commitment that we believe an agreement is in the best interest of patients and Albertans and physicians. Unfortunately, at the moment the Alberta Medical Association has made a decision not to negotiate. We have presented our best offer. We have asked only that the AMA recognize that there is an upper limit to the additional funding the government is able to provide for this purpose. Beyond that, we're prepared to talk about any issue, and we await their response.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by Red Deer-North.

### **Tobacco Recovery Lawsuit** (continued)

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are billions of dollars up for grabs in the largest litigation case in Alberta's history, yet this Premier seems to have no idea that she made the decision, can't see why Albertans are thinking that there's a perceived conflict of interest, and can't tell Albertans how much they are on the hook for to pay for this government's latest scandal. We know that the government in Newfoundland disclosed the key terms of their agreement, in that case a 30 per cent contingency, which could be a potential \$3 billion in legal fees. If the Premier has nothing to hide, can she show us the terms of this agreement and the other requests for proposals laid out by the competing firms?

2:10

**Mr. Denis:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm rather surprised to get this information because I know this member is a lawyer of many years. If he doesn't believe me, that's fine. But I'm going to quote the former president of the Law Society who sent me an e-mail today. His name is Perry Mack. He indicated:

The disclosure of such information can be expected to be of benefit to the opposing litigants, in this case tobacco companies . . . Disclosure of the contingency [fee] agreement would almost certainly assist the defendants in fighting the case. Releasing that type of information while the lawsuit is ongoing would be unusual and ill advised.

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

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that even the managing partner of the firm that was awarded the contract publicly stated yesterday that he had no objections to releasing the terms of the agreement and given that this government continues to deny that the Premier had a direct hand in awarding this contract, how can this Premier possibly expect Albertans to ever trust another word she says until she releases all the terms?

**Mr. Denis:** Mr. Speaker, I spoke to that very counsel member, our counsel last week as well as last night, and he indicated to me again that he would advise for the same reasons as the independent counsel here why to not release the particular agreement. I'm on the side of everyday Albertans, not big tobacco.

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

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier's own words clearly state that her department's review committee considered all three firms to be capable of conducting the litigation, will the Premier stop blowing smoke, do the right thing, and lay out the documents showing us the agreement as well as the offers put forward so Albertans can see for themselves whether they got a good deal or whether the Premier awarded a super-lucrative contract to a friend? Just show us the agreement.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** I can assure Albertans and this member of the House that, number one, this agreement was not directly negotiated between the department of Justice and the law firm, but there was a third party sort of grinding them down to the lowest. I can also assure Albertans that we as Albertans are paying the lowest contingency fee of any province that is involved in this lawsuit.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Airdrie, you rose on a point of order at 2:12, and it's been noted.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by Airdrie.

### Openness and Transparency in Government

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, when I was elected, I made a commitment to my constituents that I would bring their issues to government and be their advocate. There's been a lot of daily drama in the Assembly during this session. As a result, many of my constituents are wondering what the government has accomplished and if it will make a difference in their lives or the communities. My first question is to the Deputy Premier. Can he tell us what this session's activities have done for the average Albertan, and why should they care? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Deputy Premier, I'll allow you to briefly comment in response to the hon. member's question.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the opposition is laughing as this question is being asked because, obviously, they have no interest in the true work that happened in this House. I think members of this House – not all members, the other side excluded – should be proud of the fact that we passed an Education Act, that we passed a regulatory process that is a one-window approach, that we opened up hospitals, and that we opened up schools while the gimmicks have been going on on the other side of the House. [interjections]

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier has a vision of a more open and transparent government, can the Deputy Premier review what has been done to achieve this vision?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, I think one legislation that we all should be proud of, including you, is the fact that we passed the election accountability act. Again, another promise that was made during the election campaign that has been delivered on. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Airdrie, you rose on a point of order at 2:14. It's been noted.

Final supplemental without preamble, please, hon. member.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Deputy Premier: what have Albertans been telling you about government policies and directions especially as it pertains to what's been accomplished so far in this legislative session?

### Speaker's Ruling Decorum

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, you know, it's difficult for me to put you onto my list when five or six or seven of you all speak at the same time with your interjections. I'm going to sharpen my focus on all of you here in this next couple of minutes because you just can't hear. You can't hear the questions. You can't hear the answers. People have the floor. Let's give them the courtesy of continuing their questions and answers to their best abilities.

The hon. Deputy Premier.

### Openness and Transparency in Government (continued)

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I must correct myself. The act was introduced, not passed, but I have good confidence in the House that it will be passed.

Another thing that has happened while the distractions were carrying on is that we have as the government instituted a policy of transparency relevant to the expenditures not only of elected members but of all employees, executives, and board members in Alberta.

But to your point, Mr. Speaker, I'd suggest to you, if I may, not to chastise him for being loud because it is a good thing that Albertans can't hear what is being said on the other side.

### Justice System Review

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, the individual tasked with investigating the Airdrie sex abuse case which was dropped due to court and Crown delays said last week that his 300 overburdened Crown prosecutors may need to start abandoning minor charges so that violent offences are prosecuted within a reasonable time frame rather than risking the charges being dropped entirely. To the Minister of Justice: why did you and the Premier repeatedly deny that a shortage of court and Crown resources was to blame for the Airdrie sex abuse case being dropped and then accuse the opposition of being disloyal for making that claim, which was, in fact, the truth?

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One thing that I would agree with this member on is that one case like that is one too many. That is why I launched the investigation. We're looking forward to the results of the investigation. But I will remind this member that we have 302 very capable Crown prosecutors in this province, 69 of which have been added since 2006.

**Mr. Anderson:** It surely doesn't keep up with population growth. Given that the problem of cases being dropped for lack of resources was exacerbated during your and the Premier's time as Justice minister, what immediate steps are you taking to adequately fund our Justice system, and will your government consider redirecting funds from the \$2 billion that you're handing out to private companies to pump CO<sub>2</sub> into the ground in order to do so without going deeper into deficit?

**Mr. Denis:** Mr. Speaker, I indicate again that we have the fourth-highest number of Crown prosecutors in Canada, and we are the fourth most populated province. I would suggest that this member needs to have a much stronger view of our Justice system, which is working. Where we have issues – guess what? – we call an independent investigation. That's what's happening.

**Mr. Anderson:** You did not call an independent investigation. I don't know how he can say that, Mr. Speaker.

Two final questions, Minister. On what date are we to expect the results of the internal – internal – investigation into the Airdrie sex abuse case to be completed and made public, and will you contact the victim in the near future to apologize on behalf of your ministry for how her case was handled and discuss the possibility of assisting her to recoup some of the legal and other costs incurred by her and her family in the course of this absolute debacle?

**Mr. Denis:** Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated before to this member, one case is too many. I have full confidence in the assistant deputy minister who is handling this independent investigation. We indicated at the time that we called it that it would take approximately two months or within that period. It's independent, and there is no political interference. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** I almost caught you but not quite. I'll try harder.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

### Anthony Henday Drive

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many of us know, this past summer saw a substantial amount of construction take place on the southwest leg of Anthony Henday Drive in my constituency of Edmonton-South West. Based upon the materials and design used in construction, we were given to understand that the road would require no maintenance for at least 25 years. My question is directed to the hon. Minister of Transportation. Why is it that after a period of only six years Anthony Henday Drive is being repaved and causing delays in certain sections?

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question because I asked it myself. What I found out is that the work that was done on the southwest Anthony Henday this summer was actually maintenance work on some of the concrete portions of the road. This was done to prevent major maintenance being needed in the future. This particular portion of the road was built using a concrete design option, which is a little unusual. Preventative maintenance now will result in a road that is designed to last nearly twice as long as an asphalt option with a reduced long-term maintenance situation. So this option is expected to create a long-term value for Albertans, and it's one of the many things that we're doing for their benefit.

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

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: when Anthony Henday is to be complete, will it be a true ring road for the city of Edmonton and actually bring the results it promised?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, when we announced the P3, an investment of \$1.8 billion, in July for the construction and operation of the northeast Anthony Henday, including bridges across the North Saskatchewan – at this point we've invested \$4 billion on the Henday to date, and it's 90 per cent complete. The last leg will be open for traffic in 2016. I'm pleased to say that at completion there will be 78 kilometres of free-flow traffic. It will be a ring road. Whether it provides the benefits that we hoped for, I guess the future will tell, but I can tell you that we put the best possible program in place, and that gives us the best chance of getting those benefits.

2:20

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

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that I have two young daughters whom I drive to school on the Anthony Henday every single day, with 78 kilometres planned with an absence of traffic lights, how do we intend to ensure that we have traffic driving at safe speeds?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that we won't do it alone. We'll do it with the co-operation of Albertans, as we do with all traffic safety. We'll work with the city police and the RCMP. We'll work out our traffic safety plan, we'll do education, we'll do enforcement, and we'll combine that with the good engineering that actually is the Anthony Henday.

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

### Collective Bargaining with Teachers

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my view, the current proposal put forward by the Alberta Teachers' Association achieves the fiscal goals of the government: ensures cost containment for school boards, secures meaningful improvements in the conditions of teachers' professional practice, and provides stability for Alberta students and their families. My question is to the Minister of Education. Given that this appears, to me at least, to be an eminently reasonable proposal, what are the minister's hang-ups of the current proposal put forward by the ATA?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, like I said yesterday, there's probably not enough time to get into a few of the details that we'd like to talk about with respect to this. The member is right. You know, we are fairly close on many issues, but there are a couple of glaring concerns. I would tell you that one of the main objectives, one of the main responsibilities of the Minister of Education is to ensure that there's excellence in teaching. We take that very seriously, and that's why we're taking our time to try and get this deal right for Alberta's kids.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, I applaud the goal of excellence in teaching, but does the minister understand that any deal would place reasonable limits on teachers' instructional time and include a process to identify and reduce the low-value administrative and bureaucratic tasks routinely assigned to teachers? Will the minister understand this in the new agreement?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, and that's exactly why I proposed that piece. But there are other pieces that do cause concern, and those are pieces that we typically talk about as being hard caps, hard caps on the minutes or hours a teacher can work in a week. Some jurisdictions have hard caps of 31 hours of assignable time for a teacher in a week. Another hard cap that is proposed is 907 minutes of instruction per year for a teacher. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that there are many teachers around the province, excellent teachers, that are working more than those hours, that are working more than those minutes because it's required in small, rural schools. If we go to hard caps, they're inflexible; we'll close rural schools. We're not going to be a party to that.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I challenge the minister on that statement given that small school divisions like the Northland school division, which has many small schools, have been dealing with hard caps for a long time. So is not the minister's answer simply a red herring?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** I don't believe so, Mr. Speaker. One of the things we talk about is the strength in our system, the diversity. The strength is that every kid is unique. We need that flexibility. We want to move to a system that has even more flexibility. You can't have flexibility when you have a cookie-cutter one size fits all right across the province.

One of the main issues with the hard caps that we have in place today is that with the school divisions that have them in place, the teachers that are working under them are just as profound in their concerns on workload as the teachers that don't have them. I'm submitting that it is not the silver bullet and that we want to look

for other solutions to the workload issues that the teachers are bringing forward.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

#### Castle-Crown Wilderness Area

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Castle wilderness is cherished by the residents of Lethbridge and the rest of southern Alberta. The government's policies towards the Castle, however, have been very inconsistent. They have not stopped logging, destructive random camping, and rapid environmental degradation in the area. My questions are to the minister of tourism. When will you commit to doing what residents are clearly asking for and even what your government's own reports have recommended and designate a wildland provincial park for the Castle wilderness area?

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

**Ms Cusanelli:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank this member for his question. Some of the response would actually come from my hon. colleague, to whom I will convey your question, specifically with regard to . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Castle-Crown.

**Ms Cusanelli:** . . . Castle logging. Thank you very much.

With respect to wildlife parks at this point what we are looking at are regional plans. Perhaps within the framework of our discussions we will be able to have a wholesome discussion around that. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you. Given that the South Saskatchewan regional plan is just the latest in a litany of consultations, reports, and frameworks, all of which up till now have pointed to the same conclusion, and given that clear-cut logging has devastating environmental consequences that jeopardize the most important watershed in southern Alberta, what's stopping the minister – it's under your purview – from declaring the Castle to be a wildland provincial park for everyone to enjoy?

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

**Mr. Hughes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to answer on behalf of our colleague as the Acting Minister of ESRD. We all know that those of us who grew up in southern Alberta have a deep attachment to the land: the landscape, the foothills, the mountains, the Castle area. Clearly, that is why we are looking at this very closely under the South Saskatchewan regional planning process to ensure that we respect the environmental aspects of that corner of the province, which is so special to all of us.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we've had consultations and reports for the last 40 years and given that 87 per cent of the residents of Lethbridge and Coaldale and everyone from the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce to the Alberta Wilderness Association support the creation of a provincial wildland park in the Castle, doesn't one of the ministers over there think that it's time to do the right thing and designate a wildland provincial park in the Castle wilderness area?

**Mr. Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, you know that this input, the advice from this member and the input from residents of all of southern Alberta, will be taken into account in terms of the plan. This is, actually, the first time that right across the watershed basin across southern Alberta work is being done to ensure that we respect the environmental values, that we respect the property rights, that we respect the activities that are going on in that part of the province, and that we value and cherish and make the most of this tremendous landscape.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### Personal Care Standards in Seniors' Facilities

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This House and Albertans have heard a lot of discussion regarding the outrageous once-per-week bath policy in place in many care centres across Alberta. Last week the Associate Minister of Seniors said, "I've discussed this matter with the Health minister, and together we're going to have a look at this issue." I hope that the Health minister and the associate minister had a good, long discussion about it because seniors and their caregivers are demanding answers and action. To the Associate Minister of Seniors. Albertans want to know if this meeting has taken place and what was discussed. Did you decide on any course of action to reverse the degrading, unhealthy, and disrespectful once-per-week bath policy?

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that there are more than 25,000 Albertans that live in our seniors' facilities, whether they're seniors or folks with disabilities, and we have 753 licensed facilities in this province that I'm very, very proud of. I made the commitment to this member and to all members here that the minister and I will have a good look at this issue, and I look forward to your other questions.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, first supplemental, without preamble.

**Mrs. Towle:** It's truly disappointing that this issue wasn't important enough to have a discussion with the Health minister.

**The Speaker:** Without preamble.

**Mrs. Towle:** Again to the Associate Minister of Seniors: have you consulted with other care facilities who are managing to actually give the residents more than one bath per week to figure out how to provide proper bathing for seniors in care?

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Mr. Speaker, there's nothing like going home on the weekend to check on reality. I did have the opportunity to make sure that when seniors or our loved ones move into seniors' facilities, there is a proper care plan developed and that the caregivers follow that proper care plan. It's not up to the minister to develop those care plans, but it's important that our family members and all Albertans know that these care plans are followed, that they're followed with respect and followed with care and followed with love by our caregivers.

**Mrs. Towle:** You're the advocate for seniors across this province and you license these facilities.

## Speaker's Ruling Preambles to Supplementary Questions

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please. I think we just need to be reminded yet again about no preambles. I've been very tolerant and very patient, recognizing that some of us in this building are new, but the rule is the rule. The reason that the rule is there is so that it doesn't yield any inflammation on anybody's part, any inflammatory responses back and forth. So let's rise above this again.

Hon. member, you have the floor. You have a supplemental without preamble. I'm sure it's ready. Please proceed with it.

### 2:30 Personal Care Standards in Seniors' Facilities (continued)

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that seniors and their caregivers deserve better from this government and that this government licenses all care facilities across Alberta, when can Albertans expect your office to actually do something about this problem and fix what most everyone except you thinks is a horrendous and degrading bath policy?

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we do license and inspect over 753 facilities across this province. Like the member, I do care deeply about the residents that live in our facilities, and I will ensure to have a good, solid look at this issue going forward, sir.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by Calgary-Fish Creek.

### CRISP Report on Cold Lake Oil Sands Area

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents often come to me with questions about ongoing oil and gas development in the Bonnyville-Cold Lake area. A CRISP plan is under way for the Cold Lake oil sands area, and I'm interested to see how it will impact the residents in my area. My first question is to the hon. Minister of Energy. What concerns were expressed at the public hearings and stakeholder consultations that were held in my area of Bonnyville-Cold Lake?

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

**Mr. Hughes:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank this very effective and persistent member in this House.

You know, there were participants, folks from across the area who participated in the open houses, that had a very strong interest in a high level of water quality, which is an important issue for the Cold Lake area. There's also general agreement that there needs to be over time more transportation in and out of the Cold Lake oil sands area, including roads, bus, perhaps air. As oil production grows in this part of the province, we are going to need to have a greater infrastructure over the next several decades.

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

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you. To the same minister, without any preambles: what have you learned from the CRISP report and implementation process that you feel would be applicable to my area?

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

**Mr. Hughes:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The CRISP reports, which are the comprehensive regional infrastructure sustainability plans, actually allow for creating a process of engagement amongst municipal-level governments and First Nations and aboriginal communities in the area. It ensures that the needs are well defined and that the government of Alberta is in a position to respond to those needs when those needs become imminent.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** My final question to the same minister, without any givens: when is this CRISP report scheduled to be released, and is there a timeline for the implementation?

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

**Mr. Hughes:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We will be releasing this report in the very near future. At that point we will be in a position to speak with all Albertans in the Cold Lake oil sands area about the long-term implementation of this plan. This is not about next year. It's not about two years. It's not just about three years. There is a three-year window. There are another 10 years after that and another 10 or 15 years after that as we look at what is needed to respond to the immense growth that is going to go on in that community over the next 40 years.

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

### Family Care Clinics

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday afternoon this government confirmed what most Albertans already suspected, that this government has absolutely no idea how it will pay for its costly campaign promises. I asked for the nitty-gritty on how much their 140 family care clinics promise would cost. The Health minister responded that the costs are unknown. Well, they weren't unknown when they said that the campaign platform was fully costed. They weren't unknown when they said that it would come from in-year savings. They weren't unknown when they said that it would come from the existing budget. To the Minister of Health: are you really now saying that you have no idea how much it will cost Albertans to keep this promise, and why weren't you up front about it when you made the commitment?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, the ability of the hon. member to rephrase previous questions in a way that would seem to suit her purpose never ceases to amaze me. In Written Questions the hon. member asked for standardized costs relating to various aspects of family care clinics. As I explained to the hon. member and as I hoped she would understand as a result of the election campaign, this government is leading a number of improvements in primary health care delivery across the province. These improvements are focused on analysis of community health needs. They are focused on allowing communities to participate in developing plans to meet those needs. They will be unique plans that respond to their particular situation.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Given the \$3 billion hole that our province is falling into, your unwillingness to discuss health economics – those are your words – and the fact that you haven't looked at the cost-effectiveness of what were supposed to be our three pilot projects, how can the Minister of Health have us believe that the hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, of dollars that will be spent on family care clinics will be money well spent?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the first flaw in the hon. member's logic is her assumption that we are going to simply spend new money in order to achieve our objectives to improve access to primary health care across Alberta. What, in fact, we are doing, as I explained in an answer to one of her questions yesterday, is that we are looking at existing resources across the province in the form of physical infrastructure, in the form of teams of health professionals that deliver care, in the form of clinical protocols and processes and programs that they have developed to support Albertans, for example, living with chronic disease, to see how we reorganize those resources in order to deliver a better product. I would expect that as a member of the party opposite she should be very interested in that.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Given the lack of trust that this government has sown with the doctors of our province, as evidenced by their new full-page advertisement, and given the lack of trust Albertans are feeling with this government over your broken promises, will the Minister of Health please tell the Assembly the cost of the family care clinics?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, this government, as was committed to in the answer to the hon. member's written questions and as we've committed to before, will provide the costs of individual family care clinics as they are rolled out. We will also disclose to the House the cost of enhancements that we will be offering to primary care networks in order to further the very important work that they do. If the hon. member opposite wants a cookie-cutter approach to primary health care in Alberta and she wants to impose a model of care on particular communities that stay tied to a standard cost, she's welcome to go out and market that to Albertans.

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

#### **Firefighting Services in Crowsnest Pass**

**Mr. Young:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was recently contacted by an Albertan from the constituency of Livingstone-Macleod who brought to my attention issues surrounding the effectiveness of fire services in Crowsnest Pass and was concerned that this issue was not being brought forward. I am honoured to bring the concerns of this community to this Assembly. My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: following the resignation of volunteer firefighters after municipal administration relieved the Blairmore station chief of his duties, what have you done to help resolve or mediate this situation?

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We understand that every municipality can have some challenges and difficulties, so we sort of operate on three levels of engagement. First, we ultimately respect municipalities to manage their own affairs and their right to do that. Secondly, we're there to offer any assistance in any critical issues that they may need. Finally, we're there to step in if there is some critical issue that would affect the health or well-being of people within that municipality. Our department and the fire commissioner's office within our department has worked very closely with the municipality to provide them with any resources they need that are available. My understanding is that they have been handling the situation exceptionally well.

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

**Mr. Young:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental. An internal dispute is one thing, but Albertans in the region need reliable fire services. Can you assure the residents in the constituency of Livingstone-Macleod that the emergency services are still available and will continue to be available in the future?

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, our department has been working, as I said, very closely with the fire department and with the municipality to ensure that. Our fire commissioner's office has been down there several times communicating with the department. My understanding is that though they've had a few volunteer firefighters resign their positions, they've had more than that come back, and they're well on their way to ensuring that they have consistent firefighting services for the municipality.

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

**Mr. Young:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I've been told that a petition has been delivered to your office to review the municipality's operations.

**Some Hon. Members:** Preamble.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, tighten up here, please.

**Mr. Young:** Okay. I'll start again.

**The Speaker:** Just start again with no preamble. Just ask the question.

**Mr. Young:** Given that a petition has been delivered to your office to review the municipality's operations, will you do that? Will you review the municipality's operations?

2:40

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

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always unfortunate when we get such a petition, but we take every single petition and every single complaint that comes to our office very seriously, and we work very closely with municipalities to make sure that they're functioning appropriately. The petition was approved, so we will be doing an inspection. We will make sure that we work with the municipality so that they are operating in the most effective manner and that the citizens in that municipality can be confident they're getting the best service possible.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we go to Members' Statements, might we have unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much.

#### **Introduction of Guests**

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by the Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two people that work exceptionally hard at a very difficult task; that is, trying to make me look good. First of all, we've got my legislative assistant, Ryan Osterberg, who also works with the hon. Member for Stony Plain. He's been in the service of the LAO for just over a year and is a resident of Sherwood Park. He's here to accompany my brand new constituency assistant, Shirley Lin, who is here for her first trip to the Alberta Legislature and also for the winter constituency seminar. Shirley was previously one of the editors with *Fort McMurray Today*. My recollection of my first meeting with her was that she was covering a story of a fundraiser in Fort McMurray, and I took a pie in the face, and she was there with her cameras. We're very fortunate that she has a degree in journalism and a minor in politics, and I'm very glad to have her as part of my team and working for the residents of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Speaker, they're seated in the visitors' gallery, and I'd ask that they rise to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to introduce to you and through you Nicole Blake, who is my constituency assistant for Fort McMurray-Conklin. She's been with me for about two months in that role, and she's somebody that I've known for a long time and that I consider a very close friend. Like so many other people in my region, she came for the opportunities that exist in the Fort McMurray-Conklin area, and she is succeeding. She has made a life for both herself and her husband. I'm very proud that she is able to work for me. If Nicole Blake could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the entire House an extremely intelligent group of young students and their parent helpers from Mrs. Kerry Faber's grade 6 class at Ekota elementary school. The school's belief states: "with the shared commitment of students, parents, and staff we create a safe and caring learning community in which every student achieves academic success." Joining Mrs. Faber today are parent helpers Joe Friend, Linda Campbell,\* Ron Friend, and Don Kwas. At this time I'd ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 20 seconds from now we'll go back to Members' Statements, and we'll begin with Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

### Members' Statements (continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### Government Accountability

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today is likely the last day of this fall session of the Legislature, and it's been one of the most acrimonious in recent history. The government is ending the session early by invoking closure. It is doing so

because it can no longer face opposition scrutiny of its actions. Indeed, the Legislature has become dysfunctional.

This is not because of opposition antics, as some would suggest, but because the government has thwarted legitimate debate and questioning. It has raised avoiding accountability to a fine art.

Questions about illegal election donations are not answered, and when complaints are made to the Chief Electoral Officer, investigations are kept secret along with any findings or penalties that might be imposed. The government's so-called reforms will shroud any offences more than three years old in permanent secrecy, including several high-profile cases.

Questions about potential conflicts of interest have been ignored or prevented outright. The answers that are given are contradicted by documentary evidence with no repercussions. Vital election finance legislation has been drafted with no input from the political parties directly affected except, of course, the Progressive Conservatives. The Chief Electoral Officer provided advice directly to the government but not to opposition MLAs despite his mandate as an officer of this Legislature.

All 29 opposition amendments to Bill 4, the whistle-blower protection act, were defeated, many with no one from the government even getting up to speak. Opposition parties have so far presented 106 amendments to government legislation, and the government has voted down all but two.

From the outset of the fall session the government has pushed legislation through the Assembly, regularly sitting past midnight. Finally, the government has imposed closure on Bill 7, a critically important piece of legislation affecting the financing of provincial and municipal elections. By limiting debate to two hours in committee and two hours at third reading of the bill, they ensure that many opposition amendments cannot even be made and that debate is severely limited.

The government's arrogance and disdain for the democratic traditions of the Legislative Assembly have predictably generated much frustration on the part of opposition MLAs.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, thank you. Your time has elapsed.

The Government House Leader rose on a point of order at 2:47, right at the conclusion, I believe. You rose on a point of order right after he had concluded? Is that right? We don't normally do points of order on private members' statements, as you know, hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker, but we don't ordinarily make that type of accusation and falsity in a member's statement.

**The Speaker:** We'll deal with this matter at the conclusion here right away.

Let us go on with Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### World Diabetes Day

**Mr. Dorward:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 14, 2012, millions of people around the world marked United Nations World Diabetes Day, WDD. In part it coincides with the birthday of Dr. Frederick Banting, the Canadian codiscoverer of insulin, and it is an international campaign to raise public awareness about this chronic disease for which there is no cure yet.

This November marked the fourth year of the five-year focus on diabetes education and prevention. The event followed the United Nations summit on noncommunicable diseases in 2011 as there continues to be an urgent need to strengthen the momentum generated by the event and to widen the awareness of the factors responsible for the disease and the solutions required to counter it.

\*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.



It is important to appeal to the hearts of concerned individuals and the general public to achieve these goals, Mr. Speaker. Internationally the campaign aims to educate, engage, and empower the general public on diabetes.

Many WDD events revolve around the concept of a blue circle, the international symbol of diabetes. In Canada, Mr. Speaker, JDRF was a key player in leading World Diabetes Day events across the country and in the world. JDRF Canada is the leading global organization focused on type 1 diabetes, T1D, research and the largest charitable funder and advocate for T1D research. Founded in 1974 by parents of children with T1D, JDRF is passionate about improving the lives of all people affected by this disease. Canada is definitely a leader in this area. JDRF has made a bold impact on the research landscape by setting the agenda world-wide. Through over a hundred locations in the world JDRF offers a diverse support network. We all appreciate the work that they have done here in Canada and in the world through the UN, very proud of that, because so many of us in one way or another have been affected by diabetes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Letter from a Senior

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, I want to thank Dorothy, the dear senior in Edmonton who made this beautiful scarf for me. I'm going to speak on behalf of her and many other seniors across this province from a letter.

My Dear MLAs,

Please be patient and understand what I'm going through. One of us raised you and wants you to remember us.

If I repeat, don't say, "You said that already." Please remember that when you were little, I read you the same story every night. When I'm walking slow, take my hand as I did when you were little and offer guidance, not harsh words.

Remember, I bathed you every night, so please don't tell me it's okay if I only get bathed once a week.

When I mess in my diaper, it is no different than when I cleaned you up. Remember, I washed you up, cleaned you up, and we started all over again.

Remember, I fed you home-cooked meals and made sure your food was hot and nutritious. Please don't tell me it is okay for me to eat food when I'm really not sure what I'm eating.

2:50

I like and admire the caregivers that are taking care of me. They do a great job. There just aren't enough of them.

Remember, I've taught you to be honest to yourself, to be kind to others, and, more importantly, to take care of yourself. I took care of you, and now it is time for you to take care of me.

With warmth, love, and compassion,

Your parent.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, did you have a tabling?

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling five copies of the report Bringing Lethbridge Home, the five-year plan to end homelessness. Lethbridge is very proud of their success: 199 households from homelessness to permanent housing; 205 people had intensive follow-up support; shelter occupancy was reduced from 25 per cent to 70 per cent fewer people living rough; 500 volunteers were involved; affordable housing increased by 10

units, for a total of 635 units since 2008. Social Housing in Action continues to work toward ending homelessness.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Okay. I was just about to remind you to just table the document, and we can all read it. Thank you. Is that it? It is concluded?

**Ms Pastoor:** That's it. Thank you.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table 764 e-mails that I have received after the government members on the Members' Services Committee voted to give MLAs an 8.1 per cent raise. These are not form letters. In fact, the vast, vast majority were individually written by Albertans upset with the government. I know many of the members on the Members' Services Committee have seen this because they were all CCed. I would like to table them.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have six tablings if you'll permit me, three from myself and three from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. The first is a letter by a registered nurse who has worked 50 years in long-term care. I'll just give you one quote: the sad joke among nursing staff is that it's much better to be a prisoner than a senior in Alberta; prisoners get a shower a day.

The second, Mr. Speaker, is from an eight-year-old, whose name is Richard Mather, appealing for protection for habitat and wildlife, especially the sage grouse, whom he's concerned about being threatened in Alberta.

The third is the President's Letter from the Alberta Medical Association commenting on the strategies by the AMA to try and counter the misrepresentation of the negotiation breakdown.

From Edmonton-Meadowlark another tabling, quoting the dissatisfaction with Canadian democracy, published in the *Ottawa Citizen*.

Another from various media calling for the consistent application of the rules to the Premier that were applied to Mr. Mar.

Finally, a series of articles from the *Globe and Mail* having to do with Mr. Mar's dismissal.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Highwood.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got two tablings, which I referenced today. Action request 39754 indicated the timeline for the decision in choosing the International Tobacco Recovery consortium, which included a decision by the then minister, now the Premier, in early December. Five copies of that.

In addition, action request 40333, another memo from the ADM of legal services noting that shortly before Christmas the then minister, now the Premier, selected the Jensen consortium. Five copies of that as well.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

**Mr. Anderson:** Just one tabling, Mr. Speaker, from Ross Casswell, whose wife suffers from MS. Apparently, the pharmacists of Alberta are thinking of not allowing air miles when you go buy pharmaceutical drugs, which will really hurt him as he and wife rely on that to travel for treatment and other things. I would urge the Minister of Health to look into this at all speed. I've got five copies.

**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 235 e-mails that we received after inviting Albertans to express their opinions over the government's handling of the tobacco lawsuit. The invitation was issued yesterday, and we received 235 e-mails in roughly three or four hours.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you. One more tabling, Mr. Speaker, from the Alberta Association of Seniors Helping Seniors, calling on the government to restore seniors' programs and services to the same levels as before the Klein government cut these seniors' programs and services.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in the flurry of notes that arrived in the last little while, I inadvertently overlooked one of our members for a private member's statement. I'd like to ask for your unanimous consent to return so that this member can deliver his two-minute statement. Are we all agreed?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, with apologies, proceed.

#### Alternative Health Practices

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you. It's a true honour to rise again to give a statement to support my constituency. I'd like to bring the House's attention to alternative wellness practices and their health benefits as I believe their effectiveness has been underestimated. Mr. Speaker, in today's high-pace, high-stress society it is important to pay attention to personal wellness as our day-to-day activities can take a toll on our physical and mental condition. The consequences of ignoring such can be very costly.

Alternative health practices refer to such activities as yoga, tai chi, and qigong. They provide excellent alternatives to alleviate stress and improve one's well-being. Recent studies have shown that yoga could assist in lowering blood pressure and heart rate. This, in turn, helps reduce the risk of heart disease, a condition which affects thousands of Albertans. Tai chi and qigong are other alternatives which involve a system of relaxation and breathing techniques and have been practised in Asia for centuries. Studies have repeatedly shown that these activities can help reduce anxiety and depression and boost one's immune system function.

I believe that we should do more to help increase the awareness of those alternative wellness practices and their health benefits. One of the great initiatives undertaken by the government of Alberta is Healthy U, which promotes healthy choices for food and active lifestyles, including practising nontraditional exercises. A healthy you leads to a healthy Alberta, which, in turn, leads to a lower cost for Alberta health care. I believe Albertans are well served in this way, and we should send a positive message to our government to continue doing the right thing.

Thank you.

#### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the

hon. Mr. Horner, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Conflicts of Interest Act Report of Selected Payments to the Members and Former Members of the Legislative Assembly and Persons Directly Associated with Members of the Legislative Assembly, year ended March 31, 2012.

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Questions about the Subject of a Privilege Motion

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there were a few points of order that were raised. Just prior to that, I want to address some notes that were sent up, some questions that were asked in the last little while with respect to how the proceedings worked today and why it is that the Speaker allowed questions and comments and other things pertaining to the issue of tobacco litigation and things related to that.

First, however, I must explain why they were ruled out of order yesterday as one final reminder. Yesterday in accordance with pages 502 and 503 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* I indicated to you: "Furthermore, a question should not . . . deal with the subject matter of a question of privilege previously raised, on which the Speaker reserved his decision." That was the circumstance yesterday. That was not the circumstance today. So when you're responding to your constituents, hon. members, and you're looking for clarification, there you have it now in *Hansard*. That issue was resolved yesterday, and the Speaker ruled on it, as you know.

3:00

Today is a new day, different circumstances, and that particular rule did not apply. However, all other rules still do apply: no personal attacks; do not cast aspersions on one another or on others, and do not make statements or create actions that might result in some disobedience or some disorder or disruptions in the House. Those rules still apply along with all the others.

That having been said, we're going to move to our points of order here. Just before we do that, just one other quick reminder, which is on page 634 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. Let me just read you this quick note because sometimes it is applicable, obviously, and it is potentially applicable here. "A Member may not direct remarks to the House or engage in debate by raising a matter under the guise of a point of order." So let's just keep that in mind for whoever raises points of order today or in subsequent sessions. This is not an opportunity to prolong debate as such.

Let's hear the points of order that we have here. I have, I think, three or four, maybe five. Let's start with Airdrie, please.

#### Point of Order

##### Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one of the points of order. The deputy House leader for the Wildrose will deal with the first one that I had to deal with. It's actually a point of clarification on your comments under section 13(2) of the standing orders. I would just ask the Speaker to clarify: in future when there is a specific subject that is not to be broached in question period, as was the case yesterday, because of a rule that you pointed out, could your office please inform us, the opposition members, of that ruling so that we can prepare for question period accordingly?

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. Which citation are you rising under on your point of order?

**Mr. Anderson:** Under 13(2) of the standing orders.

**The Speaker:** So you're asking for a clarification on something in a general sense?

**Mr. Anderson:** On what you just said. In future if there's going to be subject matter that we're not permitted on that day to deal with, could you please inform our offices before so we can prepare accordingly?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, thank you for the question. While I'm not going to get into a debate with you on it, let me just mention the following: I did exactly that. Unfortunately, I was not able to do it until just before Members' Statements started. If you'll remember, our introductions of guests and so on ran very long yesterday, so we didn't actually get to the first member's statement – in fact, we didn't get to one, as I recall, but I did clarify it as quickly as I could. That would be the traditional place.

However, as a cautionary note I will take that comment under advisement and see what we can do in the future to provide more notice, recognizing that there a lot of new people in the Assembly, and not everybody could clearly understand yesterday what the point of privilege really was about and how the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* pages 502-503, the quote I just read out a few minutes ago, would apply in that case but did not apply today. So let's bear that in mind.

Now let's move on. The next point of order.

#### **Point of Order Allegations against Members**

**Mr. Anderson:** The only point of order that I will bring up is under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j) and is this issue with the members of government – it happened twice today, once with the Premier and once with the Solicitor General – when they said specifically that the Wildrose is in the pockets of big tobacco. Clearly, that was meant, as you often say, to incite disorder in the House. They know that that is not the case, that that's not what we're questioning, and that, in fact, we approve of the case moving forward. We're not questioning the need for it but just the decision, how it was made and so forth. So that's just a point of clarification.

**The Speaker:** I would agree. It's a point of clarification. In fact, there are two. We can probably address them both at the same time, hon. Member for Airdrie. In the first comment the hon. Premier said, "But I am very proud of the fact that as Justice minister we decided to sue big tobacco when that Leader of the Opposition has said that she wouldn't."

Your second point of order is with respect to a comment made by the Minister of Justice shortly thereafter, I believe, in which the hon. Minister of Justice said, among other things, "I'm on the side of everyday Albertans, not big tobacco." The context within which that was said was, in the Speaker's view, important, so I'm going to ask the hon. Minister of Justice to please clarify what he had intended there, and we will move on. Briefly.

**Mr. Denis:** Well, Mr. Speaker, my comment was that I was on the side of everyday Albertans, not big tobacco. There was not an intimation towards any other member here, and I apologize if anyone would have perceived that.

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

Was there another point of order that was over here? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

#### **Point of Order Anticipation**

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising on this point of order on behalf of the Member for Airdrie under Standing Order 23(e). In a response to a question from the Member for Red Deer-North the Deputy Premier referred to the Election Accountability Amendment Act, 2012, indicating that it was passed. Of course, subsection (e) of the standing orders states that it is improper to anticipate, "contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day." I do have the Order Paper in front of me, which notes that the Election Accountability Amendment Act is on the Order Paper for Committee of the Whole today. I'd ask him to withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. In fact, the Deputy Premier made a statement similar to what you're commenting on, and I believe he immediately corrected himself as well. It's a good reminder for everyone. I don't think this bears anything further. It was in fact corrected right at that time. But you're quite correct, hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. We should not anticipate in that manner, and we'll try and ensure that it doesn't happen again.

I believe that concludes our points of order. I did want to make one clarification, however, with respect to a comment that was raised by the Government House Leader.

The hon. Government House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Factual Accuracy**

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rose under 23(1), "introduces any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly." The practice of members' statements has been a very important practice in this House, and the general rule has been that members' statements are not interrupted. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood during his members' statement, however, made a number of false statements that can't be characterized any other way when he made the allegation – and I think it is an allegation against me, which would be another rule, 23(h) – that somehow we had invoked closure or time allocation.

In fact, what's happened is that a notice of motion was put on the Order Paper, hasn't been invoked, hasn't been utilized but put on the Order Paper in the event that it's necessary to deal with the time remaining in this session with respect to the remaining bill before the House. I would ask that the hon. member be asked to withdraw the statement that we've invoked that. It may in fact be appropriate tomorrow. I don't know. But it wasn't appropriate today because it hasn't been done. I understand the hon. member wants to make these hyperbolic statements about how bad the government is – you know, hair on him; that's what he does all the time – but they should be at least based on some meritable point. To suggest that closure had been invoked at this stage is absolutely wrong.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Government House Leader, for the point. I'm going to just comment on this very quickly and then recognize the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I would agree that this is a point of clarification; it's not so much a point of order. But it is an opportunity for us to please be careful, again, with our choice of words. In your statement, hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, you indicated a few things

that caused some people to stir. One of them was, “Today is likely the last day of this fall session.” That one is speculative, perhaps.

Nonetheless, I believe it’s the comment when you said, “Finally, the government has imposed closure on Bill 7.” Factually – and I think all hon. members would know this – that is not true. There is a notice of motion which if the government chooses to put into effect, it may do. But that motion would have to be put forward to you at a time of the government’s choosing if it so wishes. Until that time, it has no merit in fact because it has not yet been exercised.

3:10

The other point was with respect to a comment made during your statement in which you said, “The Chief Electoral Officer provided advice directly to the government but not to opposition MLAs despite his mandate as an officer of this Legislature.” There are a couple of clarifications that need to be referenced for all of you. I think you need to be cautioned, hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, not to make statements about persons outside the House in that manner. It’s not of a huge or grave concern for the way that you may have felt you did it. Nonetheless, I have admonished other members in this respect, so I am reminding you at this time as well. We invite you to clarify your point of view, and then we’ll move on.

**Mr. Mason:** I don’t really have anything to say, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** All right. Well, then, that ends that matter. It’s been sufficiently clarified. We will move on.

### Orders of the Day

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, just take your seats for a moment if you would, please. There’s a tradition in this House that I was just reminded of here, and that is that we take time out from time to time to thank the people who help us in this Assembly in order that we might be able to better help Albertans outside this Assembly. On this occasion I’m going to ask and recognize for a brief comment in this regard the Deputy Speaker with your indulgence, please.

### Page Recognition

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members of the House for their indulgence. Hon. members, it is with pleasure that we present gifts to our hard-working pages at this wonderful time of the year. These young people work exceptionally hard to make sure that the work of the members in this Assembly flows like a well-oiled machine. We are truly blessed by their dedication to the task at hand.

The following four pages joined us in 2010: Ellen McClure, the head page; Helen Cashman, the Speaker’s page; James Bonnell; Mackenzie Martin. In 2011 the following six pages joined us: Donald Ademaj, Alyssa Edgerton, Claire Edwards, Perrin Michalyszyn, Gabriella Peter, and Tierra Stokes. Finally, in 2012 we were joined by the following pages: Chantelle Bryce, Ann Dang, Stephanie Nedoshytko, Danielle Seymour, Melina Sinclair, Ben Thronson, Elizabeth Winton, and Matthew Owens.

I ask you to join me in recognizing the efforts of our diligent pages, who daily show patience and understanding of our many demands, and they are many, Mr. Speaker. They carry out their tasks with attention to duty, including some very late nights, as you recall, in the past few weeks. These gifts are from the personal contribution of every member of our Assembly, and

along with these gifts we offer our best wishes. We’re honoured to have our pages work with us in the Legislature to serve Albertans.

I will now ask our Deputy Chair of Committees to hand a gift to Ellen McClure. Ellen is the head page, who is representing all of the pages today. Ellen in turn will present each of the rest of the pages with their individual gifts later.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. Let the record show that our pages received a standing ovation, and that they have truly earned it this session. Thank you all.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I’d like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 7 Election Accountability Amendment Act, 2012

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yesterday we saw on the bill that several amendments were put forward to this government, what we would see as reasonable amendments, and they were unanimously rejected I think by pretty much every single member on the other side. One that was particularly egregious was the going back seven years to shine light on any individual that made an illegal donation to a political party. This is not just an allegation of illegality. It’s a situation where the Chief Electoral Officer has already found that an illegal donation has been made and in some cases applied penalties.

The other provision that was voted down was the requirement that if someone does not repay an administrative penalty, it be made public within 30 days and published on the Chief Electoral Officer’s website, which, again, seems very reasonable, but apparently that openness and transparency is not wanted here.

The other provision that was voted down was the requirement that the Chief Electoral Officer actually publicly disclose any findings of wrongdoing. It’s shocking, when you have a government that publicly comes forward saying that openness and transparency is a cornerstone of the government, that they would not want something like this to be made public. It was very disappointing.

The other amendment, of course, that was put forward by the hon. member of the New Democratic Party essentially increased the fines so that if someone had made, for example, a \$430,000 donation, which was \$400,000 over the contribution limit, there would be a \$400,000 fine rather than just a \$10,000 slap on the wrist.

We do have numerous other amendments, Madam Chair, and I’d like to present one right now. I have the requisite copies.

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

We’ll pause for a moment while we distribute copies of that amendment, and this amendment will be known as A13, your lucky amendment.

We can proceed with amendment A13, hon. member.

3:20

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Madam Chair. What this amendment does is that it repeals, essentially, section (a) of section 32(3).

What the government has done here is, you know, on the surface of it, made it look like there's openness and transparency by requiring quarterly reporting of financial statements for constituency associations and political parties, but in reality what it does is that it just adds more work without giving more information.

The same information, a list of donors over the \$250 limit, can be filed each and every year. Making constituency associations file every quarter is a penalty on smaller parties with fewer volunteers, making it harder for them to comply with the regulations. The Wildrose wants more information to be revealed, not onerous requirements placed on volunteers to repeat information without adding anything. It's, of course, important that we limit donations with respect to corporate and union influence rather than force political parties to file quarterly. This simply makes it harder for organizations to operate.

I know that there are many constituency associations, particularly in nonelection years, that remain somewhat dormant at times, and it's very difficult to in some instances find volunteers with the requisite experience to do all these filings. It just adds red tape. If the government wants to add red tape, they can do it in many other areas, and they have done so, but the last place that they should add red tape is on volunteers in this circumstance. I don't think it provides any extra transparency to have a constituency association file something quarterly, particularly when their max donation is \$1,000 per donor. I don't think any reasonable person would think that a \$1,000 donation not filed until year-end somehow would have some type of perverse influence on any decision-making capacity of any Member of this Legislative Assembly.

I think this is a very reasonable amendment. I hope that the government decides not to add extra burden, extra red tape not only on the constituency associations but also on the Chief Electoral Officer. His office is now going to have to deal with, you know, a quadrupling of paper rather than simply reviewing audited financial statements from a political party perspective and the filings from a constituency association that are required to be filed annually.

I don't understand the reason for this change. I don't think it was in the Chief Electoral Officer's list of recommendations. The hon. Justice minister has always said: "We were waiting for the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations. That's what we act on." In this amendment that he put forward it was nowhere to be found, and I think the Chief Electoral Officer didn't put it in there because he, obviously, likely didn't see any benefit to it and would just see an unnecessary increase in his workload and his staff's. Instead of investigating potential wrongdoings, they're going to be looking at paper and paper, mounds and mounds of paper, often, I'm assuming, in circumstances where they're simply going to be blank filings. Even to get signatures during summertime, when people are on holidays, is just an exceptional burden to place on volunteers, and I think it'll reduce the amount of engagement of volunteers and people that want to get involved in the political process, which is contrary to what I think the intention of these amendments are.

I think it's quite telling that the Chief Electoral Officer didn't put this in his report, and I think a lot of constituency associations, a lot of volunteers from all parties are going to be very frustrated by this ill-advised amendment by the government.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. First off, I believe that an identical if not almost identical amendment was already dealt with last night, and please correct me if I'm wrong.

My one comment is this. I find it really rich for the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills to talk about openness and accountability, which he has points on, but at the same time to oppose something that would do just that. I would indicate what I said last night, Madam Chair, that this encourages better accountability in local associations because every three months they push things through, not just pushing the receipts in at the end of the calendar year.

Madam Chair, I will be opposing this amendment. I encourage all other members to follow suit.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Parliamentary Counsel has advised me that there are different elements to this amendment.

**Mr. Denis:** I apologize.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you very much.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. What the government is proposing doing here has similarities to, actually, the .05 legislation, that they brought forward, in this regard, that what this is doing is not going to in any way, shape, or form increase transparency, just like the .05 law is not going to improve public safety. Instead of directing enforcement resources towards things that are the problem – there are so many issues in our electoral system right now, and we all know some of those because we've had first-hand experience with it. There are things that do need to be investigated. There are things that do need to be disclosed better.

For example, we have all these different amendments that are going to actually do something to improve disclosure and so forth, and this amendment just does not do that. I mean, it's already being disclosed. Why do you need to disclose it every quarter and just tie up the Chief Electoral Officer's office even further? It doesn't make any sense. Not only that, but it ties up our volunteers. We all have volunteers in here. Some of our boards are bigger than others. Some are actually quite small. They're not very big. They have maybe a few folks on them. Why are we tying them up with paperwork once a quarter?

I mean, I could see the party maybe having to do this. Maybe they do already do this. I don't think so, but I could see the parties needing to do this, and they have the resources, generally, to do so. But regular constituency associations? I do see a lot of heads on the other side nodding to this.

Let's just be reasonable about this. There's no point in burdening our volunteers, who work very hard already, who have limited time, especially when boards do tend to shrink a little bit in off-election years, so starting next year, just because people, you know, get really going during the election and the run-up to the election. Boards increase, and there's lots of help.

It doesn't do anything. Again, if this was increasing transparency, we'd be for it, but it's not. It's increasing workload, and there's going to be an unforeseen, unintended consequence to this in that the Chief Electoral Officer is going to be tied up with useless paperwork instead of investigating some matters that do need to be investigated. His office has limited resources. He's come to a committee of this Legislature just recently asking and pleading for more cash, funding for his office, in order that he can conduct the investigations already under the act. There are, obviously, some more transparency requirements in this bill. We've got to make sure that what we're introducing here are

things that are actually going to increase transparency, not things that are going to randomly, you know, just create more paperwork.

I would think, you know, there are folks on the other side who've been very clear that they're not in favour of unneeded red tape. That's what this is, totally unneeded red tape. This does not increase transparency. It doesn't increase accountability. It increases nothing except workload on local volunteers and workload on the Chief Electoral Officer.

Like the case with the .05 legislation, where we have court time and police time and enforcement resources used to go after folks who are not dangerous at all on our highways instead of using that to go after the folks that are over .08 that are killing people on our highways and roads, instead of doing that, we're using our enforcement resources on something that isn't a problem. We should be using our enforcement resources on things that are a problem, Madam Chair. As that goes just with the drinking and driving legislation, the .05 law, so it applies to this, too.

Again, I would say that this is a reason, another example, Madam Chair, why issues like this and bills this thick need more than a couple of days of debate and need to be referred to legislative committees. These are the exact types of ridiculous rules that get plugged into these bills that create just completely unnecessary hardship on not only volunteer citizens, whom we all respect and all have on our local CA boards, but also on the Chief Electoral Officer and cause costs to go up. There are things that won't be enforced under this act because workers at the Chief Electoral Officer's office will be filing paperwork needlessly.

I would ask hon. members opposite – you've only accepted two out of 107 amendments thus far, certainly nothing substantial. I will agree that this is not the most substantial piece of this legislation, but surely this is something that the majority of folks in here can agree is not necessary. The Chief Electoral Officer has not made the recommendation on it. Let's support this. Let's get one amendment and show that, actually, the democratic process works. I just know from the number of heads bobbing over there that they agree on this one, so let's pass this amendment and make it reasonable for our volunteers and for the Chief Electoral Officer.

3:30

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

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I hesitate to get involved in this particular portion of the debate, but I do want to just make a couple of points. First of all, the hon. member suggests that there is no value to this. In fact, I would suggest to him that there is a great deal of value. A lot of the issues and concerns that have been raised that are so-called serious infractions of the act are really just errors of process. The errors of process come because one can't know until all the reports are in exactly how much somebody has contributed to a particular area. I'll use as an example that at the end of the year I'm often in a position in my constituency association that I'm required to return funds. Why? Because there's a maximum of \$1,000 per year to five constituencies, and when somebody breaks that by making a gift, we have no way of knowing that until the end of the year, when the consolidation is done and somebody can come back.

Now, that could be an infraction of the act that I could be hauled up for or that my constituency association could be hauled up for. The reality is that if these were reported on a quarterly basis, it would be caught earlier in time, and those sorts of infractions wouldn't happen. There are other types of infractions of that nature, which are mistakes that are made, quite honest

mistakes that are made, because there are volunteers that do this work. They are in each of our constituency associations. There are 87 constituency associations across the province. Until all of this material goes through the receiving process through the party, you don't pick up these sorts of issues.

Again, there are other particular things that are mistakes. People sell tickets to, for example, a lobster boil. They might sell a ticket to a lobster boil and then the cheque might come from an inappropriate place. If you review that on a constant basis, those errors can be picked up. I think all of us should be alert to that. All of us should be trying to ensure that on an ongoing basis the act is being followed and that all requirements of the act are being followed. But we do work in 87 different constituency associations with respect to each of the parties, and there are volunteers involved, and there will be mistakes made.

By adding a quarterly reporting function, it just adds to the ability for all of this to be consolidated and for those mistakes to be caught on a timely basis and corrected before the year-end, because it's a year-end contribution limit, not an in-year contribution limit. So those things can be corrected while they're still mistakes and before they're actually breaches. There is actually a valid reason to have this type of reporting in.

Now, with respect to the volume of paper this does not have to be a significantly onerous piece. It can actually be streamlined quite well with respect to automated reporting mechanisms, things that we have these days, so that part of the process can certainly take place. There's no need for any of the allegations that the Chief Electoral Officer will be distracted from doing more important investigatory work.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak on this amendment, and I speak in support of the amendment. The reason that I'm speaking to it is because I just have to wonder: did the Justice minister ever have the discussion with the Chief Electoral Officer as to whether or not this would be onerous? We're all assuming that it may or may not be onerous, but if that discussion has never happened, how do you even know? Maybe this is okay in the cities, but I know that in many rural constituencies we rely on an elderly population to do some of these duties for us. Maybe, you know, they're not quite up on the automated systems that everybody talks about. More importantly, if you're asking them to disclose quarterly, literally what happens is that by the time they get the first quarter done, they're immediately starting into the second quarter, and it could take them three months to pull all this information together.

I know for a fact that in my own constituency we don't have the automatic pay for memberships. My memberships come into my constituency association, they're written by cheque, and the person who looks after my memberships collects them and submits them once a month, all at one time. And because he doesn't want to send cash in the mail, he actually drives them down to Calgary. He tries to find a day when he's got something else to do, and he drives them down to the party office in Calgary.

Not every constituency has this abundance of up-to-snuff volunteers that can just do this all voluntarily. We're relying on volunteers – these are not paid people – to do this, and we're asking them to increase their workload when, really, right now they're doing it out of the goodness of their heart.

I think everybody in this room is talking about disclosure, and there's no question that we want a more open and transparent process. But one also has to ask: is the reason they're asking for

quarterly reporting so that they can see who's supporting what party, so that then whatever actions can be taken will be taken? It is a question. Why do you need to know quarterly who's donating to what party on either side of this House? It is a question that's out there. When you start asking people to disclose quarterly, there is a reason you're doing that. Their names become public. They don't mind doing that at the end of the year, but there could be some people out there who believe that there might be alternate motivations for why they would like to disclose quarterly.

The other question is that it's my understanding that the Chief Electoral Officer has come back – I'm not exactly sure in which committee it was – already saying that his office is overloaded and that he needs more dollars. If his office is already overloaded and he needs more money to do the work that he's currently doing, then Bill 7 is going to add on some more workload to him, and if we've never had the discussion with him with regard to how this will add to his workload, there might be a question as to what kind of fiscal impact that has.

The other part of this is that it's interesting, you know, that this government spent a lot of time reducing the amount of disclosure from under \$375 to \$250. That's fine. I don't personally have a problem with that. But if you're going to disclose quarterly, that adds a lot of workload. There is quite a difference between the person who's going to donate \$250 and the person who may donate \$375.01. So it would seem to me that that's going to add to the workload, too, of a volunteer who's here helping us out.

The government would have you believe that this is about transparency, but in reality it's adding a workload. It's putting more demands onto our volunteers, who already in some constituencies, especially in nonelection years, might be taxed. And it shows that, literally, going forward, the amount of reporting is still going to be equal to what we would have had in the yearly reporting. Yes, you're right; maybe we could have caught the person who donated \$200 over the limits. That's possible. But we're not catching them now either. Are you honestly saying that in the last quarter that would be so much more relevant and prevalent that you could immediately stop that donation? Not likely because in the last quarter they're still working on the third quarter. Then they're submitting it, and then the fourth quarter starts.

So the person who's doing those donations or memberships or however the money is coming in is usually keeping a tally or trying their best, and if that's already an issue, then that shows that that person is probably overworked, because they're doing this on their own private time.

I understand that probably the Justice minister will decide not to support this amendment just for the sake of not supporting this amendment and that he'll say that it's to be open and transparent and accountable. Yet it's interesting that he won't support the amendment that ends the corporate donations either, and he won't support the amendment that goes back seven years, and he won't support the amendment that offers full disclosure.

If we want to talk about true openness and true accountability, then maybe we should have started there by the time we got here. But to put this onerous workload onto volunteers – and all across Alberta every single one of us has volunteers in our riding associations who do this work. Some of us have better volunteers than others, and that's great. For those ridings that can do this, that's fabulous. But that doesn't apply to all 87 ridings. What it does is that it really targets smaller parties. For that reason, I support this amendment.

3:40

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Horner:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I've been listening intently to the different views on whether or not our association should be reporting on a regular basis. I actually did talk to my association in one of our monthly meetings and asked them whether they felt that us reporting and being transparent on a quarterly basis would be onerous. I have a 'rurban' riding, so I have volunteers from the country and I have volunteers from the city. I have volunteers from two different cities, so they actually have to go from one city to another city to get to my meetings, which also sometimes causes some grief. Frankly, they made it quite clear to me that they have absolutely no problem with this. Therefore, I won't be supporting the amendment.

The other thing I would suggest to you is that the number of amendments doesn't mean that all of the amendments were of high quality and needed to be passed. If the number of amendments is very large, perhaps the quality of them isn't that good.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak for the first time, actually, on this bill, which is careening through at a breakneck pace. There are so many things wrong with this bill. I must beg to differ with the previous speaker because, indeed, the reason there are so many amendments to this bill is because it was not fully consulted on.

Certainly, anybody would admit and acknowledge that parties are stakeholders, and parties ought then to have been consulted. I can't say one way or the other whether people in the government party at some point or another got to be consulted as a result of their caucus members having the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations for three months longer than the rest of us, but I can say that officials in our party certainly were not consulted. We are frantically now trying to deal with the issues that we have been presented with, with almost no notice, by a party that seems very interested in bullying its way through this particular piece of legislation.

It's ironic, Madam Chair, because this is a piece of legislation that governs elections, and there is no process within our democratic system which is more fundamental to notions of accountability and transparency and democracy than elections. The laws around elections should be openly discussed and consulted on equally by all parties and all members of all parties. Instead, we have this dog-and-pony show, where we're going to get about a day and a half of debate on an extremely complex piece of legislation. So I take issue, therefore, with the comments made by the last speaker because it really is quite offensive to our democratic system, this process that is under way right now.

On the motion that is on the floor, I speak on behalf of a party which, of course, here we are, the fourth party over here at this end of the Legislature, you know, one row of seats away from sitting out in the front hall. We are a small party, so it would've actually been quite nice had somebody consulted with the administrators in our party about what was a reasonable way to proceed.

I think back to the debate that went on around changes in legislation around the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. At that time, strangely, the officer of the Legislature who was responsible for that actually consulted with the agencies and the groups that would have been impacted by the legislation. One of the groups that they consulted with were small nonprofits. The fact of the matter is that small nonprofits are exempted from elements of that legislation because it would've been too onerous for them.

Had there been any consultation, Madam Chair, with our particular organization, which is a stakeholder to this piece of legislation, this government would have heard that smaller parties are oppressed by extensive administrative requirements. The fact of the matter is that we don't get \$450,000 cheques written to us by Daryl Katz. We, in fact, have a principle and a rule in our party that we don't accept corporate donations. Notwithstanding that the law allows it, we don't accept them. We run on less money because we think that ideas are what matters, not just dollars.

The fact of the matter is that we don't have a gargantuan staff. We don't have electronic accounting systems as was referred to by one of the previous speakers. We have one or two full-time staff and a whole bunch of volunteers, and none of those people were consulted on this piece of legislation. None of them were consulted about what this particular requirement would mean.

Now, I find it particularly ironic because over here we have a defence saying, "Oh, this will increase transparency; this will increase accountability," but this is coming from a group of people that just last night rejected a motion that would have made their very well-funded, well-staffed party accountable for receiving donations that were otherwise illegal. They rejected that amendment. For them to then say that we're going to pile a whole swack of administrative obligations onto parties regardless of their size or their resources and without ever consulting with them "because we believe in accountability," Madam Chair, is utterly ridiculous. It's laughable, it's hypocritical, and it is yet another one of the many statements that have come from that side of this House, which is very, very much testing the population's willingness to believe in their credibility anymore because the hypocrisy is becoming quite overwhelming.

This particular amendment is just one of many worthwhile amendments, most of which we probably will not get an opportunity to speak to. Had there been consultation either by the Chief Electoral Officer or by members of this government with one of the key stakeholders in this electoral system, which is our party, which has existed since 1963 and, before that, existed in the early 30s, which has been around as long as their party, smaller yes, but here all along, a clear stakeholder in our democratic system – not one word of consultation, Madam Chair, not one. Then we get this little proposal, that was clearly put together by a bunch of people who have a lot of office staff sitting around with lots of time on their hands and who have no trouble putting together and meeting these standards.

But democracy isn't just about folks that are in big, well-funded offices with lots and lots and lots of electronics to help them and lots and lots of money to keep all their staff working all the time. It's also about small parties where groups of volunteers come together and work very hard to make sure that they meet all the rules that are necessary in order to ensure that they run a full slate of candidates every election and that they file all their documents in accordance with the laws and the rules that they are compelled to follow. That's what we've done for – well, I don't know; we're in 2012 – 80 years in this province.

But, Madam Chair, it really is quite offensive to be in a position now where after all that time we're getting a piece of legislation like this one, which clearly – clearly – was developed in the backrooms by a small group of people, without any effort to actually consult with some of the key stakeholders in the process. This is one of the many, many, many oversights that comes from that failure on this government's part in that there is just absolutely no understanding about what this kind of obligation will do to smaller parties that work very, very hard to meet the rules that currently exist in order to ensure that even after 41 years in this province Albertans have a broad range of electoral choices.

We work very hard to make that happen. This particular clause in the legislation is going to make it even harder.

This government would know that if they had talked to us. They didn't bother. So now what they should do is accept the amendment. They probably won't. Things will carry on exactly the same as they have before, and when folks over there get their backs up and get all indignant because people on this side get a little irritated by the process and by the constant assertion of the majority to the exclusion of well-thought-out minority voices, then they're simply going to have to deal with the consequences because that's what happens when you conduct yourself in the manner that this government has. In particular, it is brought together very nicely in the way this piece of legislation has moved through the process. From the very beginning to this point now, Madam Chair, the course and the history of this legislation encapsulates the arrogance and the failure to actually take action to be accountable, to be transparent, to be consultative, to be respectful of Albertans, all Albertans. All of that is reflected in the way this bill has been handled to this point.

We certainly are in favour of this amendment, and we urge all members of this Assembly to support it. Thank you.

3:50

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

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Dorward:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be brief. A good practice, actually, would be to reconcile monthly, certainly not annually. I think this just helps organizations to get closer to a true reconciliation, which will help them at the end of the day in the annual reconciliation and will allow them to be able to find problems as they go along, as has already been stated. In fact, when we discussed this in our caucus – and we do get a chance to discuss things in our caucus quite a lot. We talked a lot about it, five meetings, in fact, on this particular bill. We had ample chance to discuss these issues, and I did. I phoned right after one of these meetings my finance chair, who is a very, very busy person. To my surprise, quite frankly, he was a hundred per cent supportive of this. He said that in his experience – and he's been doing this for about 22 years – there'll be great support for this across the province.

Finally, I've got to say that you cannot assume that this is an extra cost to the elections people at central offices. Unless I missed something, I don't see anything in there where they're required to do anything necessarily with the information that's going to cause them a lot of work. They can simply take this information and use it how they will. The sum of the parts is the same. The four quarterly reports go in, and they are the annual.

I don't agree with this amendment, and I won't be supporting it.

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

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I actually had a chance to consult with my riding and even the Sylvan Lake constituency. Of course, you can imagine that they're more than satisfied with an annual return.

I want to comment on a couple of items. The idea that this would somehow catch somebody donating over the limit to multiple constituencies, as if that was not going to be caught on an annual basis, or the idea that this would prevent it, is just not substantiated with any facts or with any merit in the sense that someone can still make the mistake, and you still have to find the mistake, and you still have to return the money one way or the other. Of course, why should the party care? The party is not



responsible. We didn't accept that amendment last night. There's really not a lot of concern on the party's side in dealing with this.

We did actually get a chance to talk about this a little bit under a different motion because we still were dealing with the quarterly filing. Goodness gracious, there were false aspersions cast at me on the issue of accountability dealing with looking up election donations. It was kind of interesting because I got accused of FOIPing somebody, an hon. member in this Assembly, or my party got accused of that. I did a little checking because it's directly related to this amendment on looking for contributions that may or may not violate the rules or regulations. What I discovered is that my own town got FOIPed – and I didn't know that – by the same people that FOIPed this other member's community. I found that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake had her community FOIPed. Basically, what we found is that no individual was FOIPed.

There is research ongoing, and I don't think there's any merit in any personal attacks or anything such as that. It's just research. Asking that this be filed on a quarterly basis would never change that. That kind of research would still take place because there's no accountability on the party's side. We want to look at information on where party donations are coming from. We will still do our research accordingly. This won't change that. This isn't going to change people being found to be in violation any more than they would be found in violation at the end of the year on an annual return.

The idea that it won't cause any more paperwork or costs to Elections Alberta I would disagree with. We're talking about, if we just count the parties in this Assembly and not the parties even outside, roughly estimated, 1,400 filings annually. Those 1,400 filings have to be processed by Elections Alberta. They will be processed on a quarterly basis, but they still have to be processed. The amount of work that will take: well, that's just the extra number of filings less, I guess, 348. Is that really worth it?

Really, what's happening here: the increased paperwork does not increase transparency. The transparency still occurs on the annual basis; the knowledge that we're going to gain is still going to be there on the annual return. So if you look at particularly the September date, when that quarter ends, that filing would most likely be – and I'm going to assume or presume that Elections Alberta would still use their current methodology, which would allow 30 days or 60 days for a filing, whatever the dates they set. We then will be still dealing with: how important is it to get that information, say, in November or October versus January? Is that really a huge advantage? The disclosure is the same. Again, I don't see where this actually increases any transparency. Transparency remains the same, but the paperwork increases for no other reason.

To the hon. member who disparaged every amendment that has been brought forward on this bill – and I make the presumption that that includes this amendment – as being substandard or poor in quality, I would suggest that there have been numerous arguments against the amendments that have been of lesser quality and significantly so in some cases.

In particular, there was an amendment brought forward on the issue: can the Chief Electoral Officer go out and meet other parties that are registered parties but are not necessarily represented in the Legislature? I never heard one argument why, but it was rejected.

On this amendment here I'm listening to the arguments. In my view, in quality they're less than the actual amendment, if you want to go down that road. Where is the increased transparency? Is time that important in the sense that I need to know in June versus in January? I don't see the value of it. What I see the value of is holding people accountable, but we've been down that road.

Those amendments were rejected, so if we're not about holding the party accountable and just putting all the onus on the people making the donations, then the arguments against this amendment don't carry a lot of weight. We need to look at what this amendment does. What is the value of continuing with that quarterly reporting? It doesn't change this so-called error in process. If there's an error in process, we'll find it on the quarterly basis, yes, but we will find the error in process on an annual basis. It's as simple as that.

Now, on the issue of dealing with party reporting, the importance of that is significant in many regards, but nothing is, in my mind, more important than the actual election campaign return. That is the one that generally takes in the most money, and that's the one where we see the campaign expenditures.

The typical fundraising of constituencies: some constituencies are far more active, and they will draw a lot more money. But for the most part when constituencies hold their fundraising events, they generally don't spend a whole lot of money. The expenses really come in when elections are called, those funds are transferred, and an election campaign is fully under way. That's a whole different ball game, a whole different set of books.

It is important, in my mind, that maybe the party at the provincial level be held to a different standard than some of the CAs in the sense that maybe we can do a quarterly return on a party, but to pick on the CAs, I don't see the value to it, none at all.

I'll tell you something. Living in Alberta, I wouldn't go to a lobster boil. Never. I'd go to a lobster boil out on the east coast. In Alberta I'd go to a beef fundraiser because we support Alberta beef over here. I had to throw that one out. I suppose if I go back east, we'll fly Alberta beef back east and hold a fundraiser.

I just want to finish and close with the idea that this is a contradiction. Everything that this government has said up to this point, particularly where it dealt with energy, was on the whole streamlining process: let's eliminate bureaucracy, particularly the bureaucracy that doesn't really help. That's what that bill was about.

**4:00**

That's what this amendment is about, to eliminate overly bureaucratic processes that really don't bring any greater value to the process, which is the whole idea of all this excess paperwork for one thing and one thing only, excess paperwork. The transparency will still be there. The disclosure will still be there. This does not offer to or increase any of the transparency or disclosure. What is the importance of the quarterly statements? Why is that time frame so important? I don't see where the value is in that. Maybe the hon. member can elaborate on that, but it's not here in any of the arguments that have been given so far.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any other comments on amendment A13?

Seeing none, I'll ask the question.

[Motion on amendment A13 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are now back on Bill 7.

**Mr. Saskiw:** I'm very pleased to produce an amendment that took a lot of work to get prepared, and I'd like to thank Parliamentary Counsel for that. I have the requisite copies.

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

We will distribute copies of that amendment now. We'll pause until members have a copy.

Hon. member, you can proceed with amendment A14 to Bill 7, Election Accountability Amendment Act, 2012.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Madam Chair. What this amendment does – and I'll explain it later – is that it essentially bans corporate donations in Alberta. We're here today because Alberta's electoral system needs changes, big changes. A series of high-profile scandals involving huge corporate political donations and tax dollars being funneled to political parties has shaken the public's confidence in our democratic process. Albertans want to know that elections are fair and that political parties can't be bought by special interests and that the sole stakeholder in our elections is and always will be the individual voter.

For years Alberta's electoral process has been open to abuse by donors with deep pockets. The result has been mounting skepticism from the voting public and governments that, at the very least, appear to be bound to their big-time corporate and union contributors. Even this appearance is damaging to our democracy. However, in some cases it goes beyond that. Albertans need look no further than the power line companies, their frequent appearance on PC financial disclosures, and the lucrative contracts awarded to them by the PC cabinet under Bill 50. It all amounts to this. Alberta's election laws are medieval, and the proposed changes to them under Bill 7, the Election Accountability Amendment Act, 2012, don't go nearly far enough. Bill 7 is a tune-up. What we need is an overhaul.

I'm proud to announce a Wildrose amendment to ban all corporate donations to political parties. This is a no-brainer. Albertans want this. They've told us they want this. Other jurisdictions have long since taken corporate and union donations out of the equation. It's time for Alberta to get with it and do the same. Ending these types of megadonations from agenda-driven corporations and unions will eliminate the perceived cloud of corruption that hangs over our system and make individual voters the sole financers of our election campaigns.

The Wildrose would also limit the maximum individual contribution from \$15,000 in a nonelection year to \$5,000 and from \$30,000 in an election year to \$10,000. This is an essential component of our package of reforms. It reduces limits that were too high to begin with and closes a loophole that would have allowed wealthy donors to sidestep the corporate and union ban. By cutting the maximum contribution by two-thirds, we'd further limit the perceived influence of big donors while at the same time allow individuals to make substantive donations to candidates and parties they believe in.

The most important change that can be made in this legislative session is if the government agrees to show leadership on this. We are calling on the government to make substantial elections reform a key part of this bill today; namely, eliminating corporate and union donations and reducing contribution limits. It's not too late for them to do the right thing and accept this change to Bill 7. It's time to get big money out of politics and give elections back to whom they belong, the voters.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills's comment. At the same time I do find it rather interesting that his party has accepted over a million dollars to date in corporate donations and now suddenly wants to ban them. I don't know what the motivation is here. I don't know.

I would suggest, Madam Chair, that this new-found epiphany that many members opposite have had . . . [interjections] I'll ignore the boos and catcalls over there. This has more to do with political expediency than it does a matter of principle.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm rising in support of this amendment to ban corporate donations. As the Minister of Justice just pointed out, every member in this House probably – perhaps not this House. I don't want to speak for everyone, but I would say that most members in this House have indeed accepted corporate donations or union donations in the past. I myself have not gotten a union donation – I'm shocked about that – but I certainly have had many corporations donate to my campaign, and certainly many, many corporations donate to the Wildrose Party. That is not in dispute. Of course, literally millions upon millions of dollars have been donated to PC Party and the Wildrose Party, particularly to the PCs over the last 40 years and so forth.

What we're talking about here: obviously, I don't think our party – and I will not speak for the other parties – is interested in, as the saying goes, bringing a knife to a gunfight in our elections. We're not going to come in and all of a sudden give the governing party any more advantages than they already have. They get to write the election rules. They get to appoint most of the folks involved. They certainly shouldn't be able, clearly, to fundraise more money than the opposition parties because the opposition parties are not accepting corporate donations while they are.

What we are saying to Albertans at this time is that if elected in 2016, a Wildrose government would immediately pass legislation to ban corporate donations and union donations, and we think that there are many reasons for that and many good reasons for that.

The first reason is, frankly – and I'm going to admit very much so that for some of us who obviously consider ourselves conservatives, sometimes there's a feeling and thought, there's kind of this ideological argument that's made that all people should be able to donate as much money as they want to the political process and that there should be no restrictions. I do understand that – freedom of association, freedom of speech – and money and donating is a form of speech and so forth. I understand people want to protect that, but if you look across the world, whether it be the United States, whether it be Alberta, whether it be other places in Canada prior to election laws banning donations being put in place federally, for example, I think the evidence is just simply such that big money, big corporate money, influences not only the results of elections but influences the decisions of government. It does.

I watched a special on I believe it was CNN recently on the impact . . .

4:10

**Ms Notley:** I hope it's not Fox.

**Mr. Anderson:** No, it wasn't. It was CNN.

I watched a special on CNN recently – it might have been on NBC; I forget – and it talked about the influence that big money has on the political process in the United States, and it was shocking. There you have members in the House of Representatives, that have to run every two years, and they would literally have to raise \$3 million to \$4 million, sometimes \$5 million or \$6 million per election every two years.

Now, of those of us running in provincial elections every four years, most of us probably haven't spent north of \$100,000 in a

given CA. I know that there are one or two of us in here that have. Not me, but there are, I know, others here that have spent that much money. I would say that the vast majority have not spent that much money on an election. But could you imagine \$2 million to \$3 million every two years that you have to raise just to stay in office? So many times, if you look at the voting records of the people that are receiving these massive amounts of donations from their large donors and umbrella organizations that are set up in order to essentially get around certain election laws so they can funnel a whole bunch of money into these accounts, it's just hard to make any conclusion other than that money is affecting their votes. The evidence doesn't lie.

Although our election laws are not as completely freewheeling as the ones in the United States are, they are certainly the most lax in the country. I feel very strongly that this is something where, when I was first elected in 2008, there is no doubt I would have said: "You know what? We shouldn't be limiting the amount that people can spend or their corporations can spend on the political process." But seeing what has happened over the last five years now, since I was elected in 2008, has completely changed my view on it. It's opened my eyes to it.

The biggest thing is the power lines. I have been absolutely shocked that this government continues this incredible debacle of building these \$16 billion in new transmission lines. If you look not just at the donations from these companies that are involved but also their sponsorships, there's a loophole that allows these companies to sponsor events and call it advertising, thereby getting around the loopholes entirely. In other words, even though they might not be on the disclosure as donating, they could have donated \$20,000, \$30,000, \$50,000 to the governing party. That is actually a regular practice, and it is used a lot. It makes one wonder when you see these things happening: how can it not affect the decision of government?

There was a former member of this House, and he is now a judge. I actually enjoyed him. I liked his sense of humour. I think a lot of members on that side of the House remember this. One of the things he would always say: I cannot be bought, but you may try. He would always say that when they would talk about, you know, the issue of people giving gifts to government and so forth. He would say: I cannot be bought, but you may try. I thought that was very funny, but the problem is that it's not a good enough standard.

Although that individual, I believe, did have that integrity and I believe many people have that integrity, that they cannot be bought – you can try to buy them off, but they cannot be bought in the end – that their vote cannot be bought, I think that the temptation for some folks in power, not just elected members but folks that are involved in parties and so forth, is just too strong sometimes when they are desperate for cash, when they need the money to be re-elected or to have a chance of being re-elected, to go down that road and change their points of view because of the money that they need in their bank account.

I think that if it's not real, it certainly is perceived, and that is just as damaging, the perception, because people believe that politicians, particularly in this province right now – honestly, there's a huge belief out there – are susceptible to being bought off by the highest bidder. Let me put it this way. I don't think it's a correct assessment, but I think it is a fair assessment. It's an understandable assessment given the amount of money that's thrown around, given . . . [interjection] The hon. Deputy Premier.

It's an understandable assessment given the amount of money that's coming around and being thrown around. I think that it's very clear and very needed that we do ban corporate and union donations for that purpose.

If Bill 50 and those power lines that are going to cause so much distress on people's electricity bills are not enough, one need only look at the issue of the owner of a local professional hockey team and the last-minute, \$430,000 donation. We're not sure if it was in one cheque yet. We don't know. That is another example where people look at that and they say: "Good grief. How can we allow that to happen in a place like Alberta?" It just looks terrible. It looks terrible because of the amount. It looks terrible because that individual is involved in a project or, actually, multiple projects that involve government at different levels. It looks terrible.

So whether there's truth to it or not, whether it's true or not that the government is going to change policy or alter policy or approve anything, whether that's true or not, the thought of it and the perception are out there. I think it's an understandable perception, Madam Chair.

I think you see this in all sorts of areas. You see it for specific tax credits that are given. You see it in the way that specific regulations are changed, whether they be employment regulations that are more pro-worker or less pro-worker. I mean, there are all kinds of things that we do on a day-to-day level that involve corporate interests, and I think that we need to admit that as politicians. We need to admit that these influences are strong, and we need to admit that it is not in the best interests of Albertans and that, frankly, Albertans do not want us to be accepting political donations from corporations going forward. I think that it is clear. I think that people are tired of it. They're tired of the money. They're tired of the scandal. They're tired of questioning whether a government is doing this because of special interests or because they genuinely feel that it's right for democracy.

Now, I will note in this speech that I have not cast one aspersion, or however we're going to say it, on the other side saying that they are guilty of X, Y, and Z. I want to stick to mostly the perception of it because the perception is very real, very, very real. We need to address it, and it is the right thing to do.

Now, I don't for a moment believe that we will not be able to properly fund our campaigns in bringing in these rules. If you look at the federal rules the Conservative government is overseeing at this time, I believe it was actually brought in by the – was it brought in by the Liberals? I can't remember.

**Ms Notley:** Yeah, it was.

**Mr. Anderson:** Was it? It was brought in by the Liberals – and it hasn't been changed by the Conservatives – to ban corporate and union donations and to take the limit down to \$1,000 per individual.

Now, we're not saying that that needs to come down to \$1,000. The reason we keep it at \$5,000 is because the thought goes that at the time they brought that low amount in, there was a per-vote subsidy that went to the political parties of a certain amount to keep, you know, the political parties active and able to do their business and so forth. We're not in favour of a political subsidy, so we would rather have a higher limit than \$1,000 for individual contributors. Five thousand is not a magic number. Maybe \$2,500 is the right number. Maybe \$7,500 is the right number. Maybe \$4,000 is the right number. We're putting \$5,000 on the table, thinking that that's more realistic and more reasonable than \$15,000.

**4:20**

We think it's a good start, and I think the federal parties are able to function, they're able to do the work that they need to do with that \$1,000 limit on individual donations and the banning of corporate and union donations. I think that we would go a long

way in this province to improving our democracy, to improving all of the reputations of the folks in here and all of the parties in here, who all get a lot of their donations from corporations. In fact, I was somewhat surprised to note that the Wildrose actually receives the least, as a percentage, from corporations and the most from individual donors. The PCs receive the most from corporations and the least from individual grassroots donors. I think the Liberals and NDs are in the middle there on a per-person basis.

That is something to consider. I think that, again, it's not so much about leveling the playing field. It's about making sure that people don't have the perception, real or imagined, that the government is making decisions because they are being influenced through the donations of corporations or unions or high donors, and that's why we brought the amount down. I think we should pass this amendment, we should see past the ideology, and we should do the right thing and ban these types of donations.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to be able to rise to speak with much enthusiasm in favour of this amendment. I want to begin by congratulating the staff, potentially the House leader – I'm not sure – for the Official Opposition for their stick-to-itiveness in terms of getting this particular amendment onto the floor. In case people aren't aware, what's going on here is that they are proposing to ban corporate donations, but they are not proposing to ban union donations. To be fair to them, the reason they are not proposing to ban union donations is because the bill itself was structured in such a way that Parliamentary Counsel indicated it would not be in order were we or anybody to try to bring in a motion that would result in both union and corporate donations being banned.

But as it was, the bill was structured in such a way that it was possible to at least bring something in banning corporate donations, and I must say that I congratulate the members of the Official Opposition for managing to navigate through the carefully constructed bill that would otherwise have prevented us having this good conversation. It is an important conversation.

It was an important conversation before we had the debacle which we all were subjected to, you know, a month ago, when it became clear that one particular community member had been able to write a somewhere from \$375,000 to \$450,000 cheque to the governing party two or three days immediately prior to the election. That's shocking, Madam Chair. That is the kind of thing that results in influence, and it certainly results in the appearance of influence. It certainly significantly undermines the credibility of this whole Assembly because the average Albertan is going to look at a situation where somebody writes a cheque for \$450,000 and at the same time is lobbying the government to write back to him a cheque for \$100 million. It's hardly surprising that people would be deeply disturbed by that arrangement and that relationship.

Obviously, the answer is to avoid having those kinds of relationships arise in the future. I'm quite surprised in some ways, Madam Chair, at the sort of political acuity or political intuition of the folks over on the other side because it seemed to me that the best way to deal with this issue would have been simply to go: yeah, this does not look good, and it's about time we entered the 18th century with the rest of the country and put a ban on corporate and union donations. That would have been the politically astute road to take.

Indeed, you know, there were more than a few conversations offline, as they say, between our caucus and members of the

governing caucus in the hopes that they might actually see the wisdom of doing that, not only to benefit through fairness and equality within our election system but also to increase the level of credibility that we all enjoy in this Assembly vis-à-vis the rest of the population. Unfortunately, they chose not to. Interestingly, the Official Opposition chose instead to go that route.

I want to certainly congratulate the Member for Airdrie. We've had conversations about this in the past. I have to say, "You've come a long way," and I'm pleased. I'd like to think that we had something to do with that. You know, there are a few other issues that I think you're aware of that I plan to succeed on before we finish this term. We'll see where we end up. But this is a biggie; there's no question. Bringing about a 20th-century or even, as I said, a 19th-century set of election financing laws in this province would be a dramatic and fabulous and incredible step forward.

How can these situations impact government? Have we seen any indication or any record of it in the past? Well, here's an example, Madam Chair. I remember, leading into the 2008 election, there were a bunch of unions, interestingly not a bunch of unions that typically fund our party even though everyone seems to think that, you know, there are buckets of them. A bunch of unions got together and decided that they were going to engage in the political process using their dollars. According to the folks on the other side a dollar is like a vote, and a limit on a dollar is a limit on free speech and freedom of expression and yada, yada, yada. They embraced that thought, and they decided they would engage in a campaign which, I believe, was over a million dollars. It happened, unfortunately, to be a campaign that was not supportive of the governing party.

That's what happened. Then after the election – who would have thunk it? – almost immediately there were at least two pieces of legislation that were passed in this Assembly. I would suggest, Madam Chair, that both of those pieces of legislation were in direct and complete reaction to the lawful exercise of the freedom of expression by a group of unions. One was that they were sort of publicly spanked, and there was legislation brought in to significantly limit and restrain their ability to organize.

I was surprised, actually, because I really didn't know it was possible to further limit and restrict union organizing in Alberta. I thought that we had really written the book on that and that pretty much there was nothing left to do to limit union rights in Alberta. But, no, these guys found a new way to do it. They passed a piece of legislation that limited the organizing ability of certain types of unions, which happened to be the certain types of unions which had funded this campaign that was not in support of the government. Then, of course, the other thing they did was that they immediately passed legislation to make sure that third parties could not engage in the political process by running political campaigns.

You know, Madam Chair, it's just another one of these hypocritical picking-and-choosing-the-rules-that-help-us sorts of processes. If a dollar equals a vote, equals your right to freedom of speech and your freedom of expression, then presumably it means that if you give it to the Tory party or if you put it into a fund to run a campaign against the Tory party or if you give it to another political party, none of that should matter. But these guys decided, "Hmm, it wasn't given to us, so we're going to write a law to ban that and limit it," and they did.

To suggest, then, that our laws are not related to campaign financing in this province is to deny history. In fact, we see very overt examples of political financing impacting and influencing government decisions. Now, it may well be that there are many other examples, too. I don't know. We've said many times – and I

will use this opportunity to say again – that this is one of the most secretive governments in the country. So how could I know?

But what I do know is what Albertans perceive. Albertans know that we have the most Wild West election financing laws in the country. We know that we have the no-spending limits, we have very limited donation limits, and we let anybody and their dog and their uncle and their bird and their cat and their nanny and whoever else donate. That's what we do. It's not keeping the process honest, and it's not keeping the process one that could ever be characterized as having a tremendous amount of integrity. So this is a way to fix it.

4:30

An interesting thing. Even though this particular motion does not ban union donations because, as I've said, it's not possible to do it because of the way the government has constructed the bill, it is interesting to note that if this motion is defeated, which I'm pretty much prepared to bet it will be, we'll be back in the position that we were in before. I remember having a conversation with one of the members on the other side and pointing out that the way they have the legislation right now treats unions differently than it treats corporations.

For instance, if you have a union that has a separate collective agreement, who is recognized under the Labour Relations Board as a separate bargaining agent, whose members never talk to anybody else in another union, who share the same name, but other than that there is no financial relationship between the two, nor is there any kind of democratic relationship between the two, those unions nonetheless are treated as the same and are subject to the relatively generous limit that we have right now: \$15,000 in a year and \$30,000 in an election year.

So you can have four or five unions who never talk to each other, who have nothing to do with each other – they don't bargain together, they have no financial relationship, they have no democratic relationship – and the Labour Relations Board has deemed them to be separate entities, yet their money is all put together. But with a corporation you can have a director, you can have a subsidiary, and you can have all these cute and fun ways to arrange your corporate dealings so that a corporation can – wait for it – donate \$450,000. So as it sits right now, we don't actually have unrestricted corporate and union financing. What we have is unrestricted corporate financing and restricted union financing. Just to be clear, that's what exists right now in the province of Alberta. It's not fair, and one way to make it fair is to accept this particular motion.

Madam Chair, at the end of the day, as many of us have heard it and many of us have said it, votes should decide elections, not dollars, and ideas should impact votes, not advertising budgets. That's what should happen, but that is not what happens in this province.

Many of you will recall that a year and a half ago on the federal level our party, the NDP, made history by becoming for the first time ever the Official Opposition of the country. Of course, many people congratulated us at the time. It was all wonderful; look at where we might be going forward. Obviously, much of the responsibility for that success goes to the late Jack Layton, who was one of the greatest political leaders of our time, I believe. But one of the things that I always used to say to people when they would raise that issue with me was that there was something else that happened in that election, too.

The other thing that happened in that election was that for the first time in the history of our country all three major parties spent the same amount of money on the campaign. Because of the legislation that was in place, it was an equal playing field in terms

of how much money could be spent on the campaign in terms of the advertising, in terms of the ground campaigns, in terms of all that stuff. The legislation was designed to ensure that Canadians voted on the basis of the ideas that appealed to them rather than the money that was thrown at them. It was an interesting thing because the first time that happened, the NDP made history and became the Official Opposition.

It's important that in Alberta we try to provide that same kind of framework and lay that same kind of groundwork. I'm not suggesting that should that happen suddenly, the NDP is going to get 60 per cent of the vote. What I am saying is that Albertans will get to weigh our ideas on the basis of their value, on the basis of the quality of what we're saying and the ideas that we're putting forward, not on how much ad time we buy before and after the Stanley Cup finals and/or before and after, you know, *Survivor*, or whatever the biggest TV shows are on whatever the most popular TV stations are. That shouldn't be how elections are decided.

Elections should be decided on the basis of what it is we're asking Albertans to embrace as far as our policies and our vision for the future go. That's not what happens in Alberta. The failure for that to happen happens more in Alberta than anywhere else, and that should change. If that wasn't blatantly obvious to this government before the discussion around the Katz donation, it is mind-numbingly surprising to me that it is not obvious to them now.

I suspect that their political – I don't know. It's that they're numb from power. You know all the various things that people say about power and what it does absolutely and yada, yada, yada. Really, I think that at a certain point you just get numb. You're in power for so long, you're so overwhelmed with your own sense of entitlement that you just stop thinking about what people are thinking about you. To not realize that your credibility has been significantly hurt by this spectre of a \$450,000 cheque, which amounted to one-third of your campaign financing, being written two days before an election, to not see that people are nervous about that and that they are uncomfortable with the representational qualities that may be brought to the table is, in my mind, politically naive at its very best.

I would suggest, then, that this is an excellent amendment. It goes to the very heart of our electoral system. It is an amendment that would fundamentally lay the groundwork for a proper, fair system in this province. In choosing to reject this amendment, you are choosing to fundamentally reject the opportunity to lay the groundwork for a fair and open electoral process in this province. I'm sure it doesn't matter to you because you've just assumed that you'll just keep winning anyway, but I do think that it matters to Albertans, and I do think it will matter to Albertans in the future. I think that you reject this amendment at your political peril.

So I urge all members to consider adopting it and all that great stuff called democracy and fairness and all those other things. You like to have your ad agencies right at the bottom of your press releases. Maybe in the name of all that you might consider accepting this amendment and moving forward for the benefit of all Albertans rather than the corporate sector, which I believe has amounted to about 75 per cent of your election funding at this point in the game.

Thank you very much.

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

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, for all your comments. It's hard to believe that I'm actually standing here and we're siding

with the NDs, but I'm proud to have seen the light along with the hon. Member for Airdrie.

I agree that, you know, it's interesting that the Justice minister said that he couldn't figure out why we would ever put an amendment like this forward because we got a million dollars in donations from corporations. We strongly believe as a party and as a caucus and as grassroots members that it's time to put Albertans first, and Albertans should be the ones who make the decisions about who comes into office, not corporate entities.

I can honestly say that I want to say thank you to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills because to actually make this amendment be able to come forward took a great amount of work with Parliamentary Counsel because the way the act was written certainly prevents any amendments to this portion that would have dealt with corporate donations. We would have liked to have gone further and even dealt with the union side of donations. Unfortunately, the way the act is written, the definition of a trade union is written in a way that we weren't able to do that, which is really unfortunate for Albertans because I do think that there is a great amount of room there for some review and a way to ensure that Albertans' needs are put forward and that no stakeholder has more say than any one other person. We've had recent examples of excessive corporate donations that have really shaken the public's confidence in this electoral process, and we need to make the changes to limit the influence of big business and big labour. Now, clearly, we can't make the changes to the union donations, but we certainly can start with the corporate donations.

4:40

While my hon. friend from Airdrie didn't want to cast any aspersions, I guess we're going to play good cop/bad cop now. Quite honestly, if this amendment was in place, the current government would not have the Katz donation question out there at all. It would literally be an absolute nonissue. There would have been no ability for that to happen. There would be no question of whether or not it was one cheque or 10 cheques, whether the cheques were written by one person or receipted for one person. There would be no question about: "Who should I make the receipt out to? Who should that go to?" None of that would have happened. You literally wouldn't have to worry about any misconceptions. You also wouldn't have to answer any questions in question period, not that you do anyway, but you wouldn't have those questions come in question period because the legislation would have protected Albertans from even the remotest possibility of receiving a \$430,000 donation from any corporation or from huge donors, not to mention the fact that it would have been more transparent.

If we're wanting to ensure a fair and transparent process, then this amendment clearly makes sense. Albertans have said loud and clear that they want our government to be free of influence. They want our elected officials to be free of that influence from distinct groups, including corporations, and they want to know that elections and governments aren't for sale to corporate interests. In our party as well we have taken around a million dollars in corporate donations, and we're saying that that's not the right thing to be doing. If you can't sustain it with the people, then we should really be reviewing this.

The other part of this is that other jurisdictions have already adopted this ban. Corporate and union donations are illegal in federal elections, in provincial elections in Manitoba, and in provincial and municipal elections in Quebec. Literally, Alberta could be a leader along with other jurisdictions across Canada and show that leadership and take this one step further and ensure to all Albertans what some other Canadians already receive on the

federal level and what some other residents already receive on the provincial level. That shouldn't be scary. Clearly, in those provinces I don't believe that anybody is crying foul that they're not getting the influence they need. I don't see that the residents of Manitoba are up in arms that corporations can't make their donations anymore.

It seems that it's healthy. Not only that, but healthy democratic elections should be citizen centred and citizen driven. Corporations and unions are not citizens. They do not have the right to vote or hold office and should not be financing candidates' campaigns. It is important that we ensure that the people that are being put here in this elected office and the people that are going forward and representing Albertans are actually representing Albertans and not the view of one corporation that might be in direct conflict.

The hon. Member for Airdrie and, I know, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre have brought this up many, many times. We have seen what the direct link of corporate donations may sometimes do to bills that are proposed. There is an insinuation out there that bills 19, 24, 36, and 50 were and have been influenced by certain corporations to certain parties. That is what we need to eliminate across Alberta. If we literally want to assure the citizens of Alberta that they have elected officials that represent Albertans' interests, then by eliminating corporate donations, going forward they don't have to worry about an insinuation or an accusation or a perception.

There is a perception that sometimes often turns to reality, and that perception is that politicians can be bought. The hon. Member for Airdrie stood up and talked about a member in this House that used to say: I can't be bought, but you can try. Well, it should be: I can't be bought. Period. Those people who want to make donations to electoral campaigns are certainly free to do so, but there shouldn't be a given that any one candidate is more in favour than the other just because they're backed by a huge donation.

Elections belong to voters, not corporations with deep pockets. This is why we're putting forward these amendments. This puts elections back in the hands of hard-working Albertans, and this is fundamentally why we're here. Candidates should be financed by the constituents that they represent. If you're doing a good job, if the citizens of your riding or the citizens of Alberta believe that you as a candidate or you as a party are the one that they're supporting, they don't mind stepping up to the plate.

We're seeing it federally. They don't mind putting their money where their mouth is and supporting whom they need to support. If you've done a poor job, they'll pull back their money. This is basically saying to Albertans that you have a right to support whom you want with your dollars and that that won't be influenced by a corporation or a union that has more dollars than you.

By lowering – that, unfortunately, did get voted down – the high donor amounts from \$30,000 in an election year to \$10,000 and from \$15,000 down to \$5,000 in a nonelection year, you allow for average Albertans to have the same playing field all across this province. That's important because in this process we talk about a fair and transparent system that wants to make sure that this bill has the best interests of Albertans at heart. The best interests of Albertans are literally to ensure that we have integrity, balance, and fairness in the system, but we also want to make sure that every candidate across this province in all 87 ridings has an equal opportunity to run.

Now, in this province, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona mentioned, we don't have spending limits. We don't have donation limits. That may be something we have to discuss further at some point in time, have a bigger discussion on lowering the limits that we currently have and on having spending limits

in place. Right now we don't even have a fair playing field. In some areas the incumbent may be the favourite, and that incumbent might be backed by large corporations who, in turn, donate large dollars, and the best candidate might not have been picked. Now, they might have been picked, absolutely, and that candidate might have just had the benefit of having large corporations in their riding, and that's fine. But a level playing field ensures that all 87 candidates regardless of party lines have the same access to running for office.

The other part of that is that we need to ensure that average Albertans can run for elected office. We don't want to create a system similar to what we have in the U.S., where only the rich can run, where we have President Obama, who is literally, you know, raising \$3 million, \$5 million, \$10 million a day and having to spend that because that's what it takes to be a good President. It doesn't stop there. Senators are spending millions. Even when you get down to governors, the average American cannot run for governor because the stakes are so high, and if you're not locked in with that – we don't want to head there in Alberta. We want to make sure that everybody who feels that they would like to run for political office has the opportunity to do so.

I can tell you that when I was 10 years old, I never thought I'd be sitting in this Legislature. It never crossed my mind to run for political office. It never crossed my mind when I was 20. It didn't cross my mind when I was 28. It didn't cross my mind when I was 32 and owned my own business. I can tell you that in 2008, when my brother was put into a long-term care facility, it didn't even cross my mind then because I was fighting for him. But in 2010, when he died – I was 36 years old – yes, it crossed my mind.

At that point in time I was able to enter into the political scene, and I ran a campaign on \$16,000. That's not a lot of money. My opponent spent \$76,000. He got corporate donations. I really didn't. I got some minor farms that run as corporations, but they were not huge corporations. I was given the opportunity to go out and put my best foot forward, and the best person wins. That's the way it goes. I know members on the other side maybe don't like that the Wildrose has 17 seats, and maybe they don't like that I'm here, and that's fine, but that's democracy. It's not always about money, and it's not always about the amount of donations that you receive.

But I have to be able to tell my 10-year-old child and I have to be able to tell my grandchildren that they won't be limited in running for public office because they don't have the backing of corporations and unions. That has to be a fundamental right of all Albertans because not every Albertan has access to huge dollars. Many, many Albertans have come forward – and I know that even on the government side there are many of you that ran a campaign that was actually quite reasonable in dollars. Not everybody ran a \$130,000 or \$200,000 or even \$90,000 campaign. There were many, I believe, on the government side that ran very cost-effective campaigns. That's what I'm saying. The same goes on the other side. I'm sure that, you know, you would have felt a little bit differently if the person you were running against won solely because they were backed by a major corporation who had influence and money. So it goes both ways. It's not limited to us or to them. It goes both ways.

4:50

Large donations from businesses and other organizations with significant financial resources can have undue influence on those who decide to run and those who get elected. There can be the opportunity for a corporation to put on undue influence to discourage someone from running or to encourage someone to run, but that's not always in the best interests of Albertans. That's why

we need to have major reforms of this electoral system. These amendments go a long way to restoring Alberta's confidence in the integrity of the democratic process.

When we allow corporations and unions to make campaign donations, the individuals who control these organizations are granted more rights than other citizens because they can make donations as individuals and in the names of the corporations and/or the unions. We saw this. We see it all the time. You know, the donator makes the max donation under the corporation. Then they make the max donation under them personally and the max donation under their wife and multiple opportunities through that. Personally, that's fine, but they're also doubling down with corporate donations. It's the same person still making the donation. It just literally is coming from the corporation. Federally they've seen the error of their ways, and they've decided to make that change and make sure that it's fair for all Canadians. I think that there is room for Alberta to take a lead role and put Albertans first and show leadership on this issue.

Elections have to be transparent, they have to be fair, and they have to support the electorate. As long as corporate donations are allowed, it gives the impression that candidates can be bought by wealthy interests. Elections must not only be fair, but they must be fair in the eyes of the public. This goes back to the perception. Every time we take a look at who has donated to whom – clearly, everyone has done this. We've done it. I know that the hon. Deputy Premier has looked at our donations, and he's attacked us about whom we took our donations from. We've attacked the other side for whom they took their donations from, especially in corporate views.

Well, this would eliminate that. It would very clearly state that only people with personal interest could have a say or an influence on those that are elected. Then you get into: why would there be any reason to attack any individual Albertan on what their choice is for donation? Very simple. It makes it fair, makes it open, makes it transparent, and it ensures that there's equal access for all Albertans.

One of the bigger problems that we're seeing in Alberta is voter turnout. Repeatedly, year after election year after by-election year, voter turnout is dropping, and public cynicism about politics is growing. A big part of why that is growing is the way that the process is. Bills like Bill 7 don't go far enough to reassure Albertans that there's a reason to get out and vote, that the ideas that come to this table will be heard, that we're going to work together, that we're going to ensure that what's in the best interests of all Albertans is what we're putting forward. We see voter turnout dropping at such significant rates, and we wonder why. We need to reverse this damaging trend. We need to see that our elected officials are leading rather than impeding democratic reform, and Bill 7 could go a long way to do this, but it doesn't right now.

We've already seen, you know, that many amendments have been denied, many amendments that offered full disclosure, many amendments going back seven years instead of three years. All of those things have been denied by this government, yet each one of those strengthens the democratic process and allows for Albertans to regain trust in the system that they're losing trust in. It also allows Albertans to start thinking about politicians in a manner that is different than they do right now. They don't need to be cynical. They can literally believe: hey, what we're doing is important.

If this ban was adopted by Alberta, we would show that we are leaders, putting it in line with federal election regulations. It would help create momentum for similar changes in all other jurisdictions of this country and all other provinces.

We consistently hear in this House how we are a leader, how Bill 7 is one of the toughest and most democratic and most open and transparent and best disclosures all across this country, but it isn't. The province of Manitoba already bans corporate donation. The province of Quebec already bans corporate donations, and they've taken it one step further to ban it municipally. To say that we're a leader in this legislation, clearly we're not because other provinces are ahead of us. Other provinces put in more disclosure rules. Other provinces ban corporate donations, and we need to show that we're in line with that.

We need to make this a national standard, and substantive reform of this nature will create the momentum that provides for broader electoral reform. We don't need to be scared of broad electoral reform. If it's done properly, if it's done in consultation, and it's done in conversations with Albertans, with opposition, with MLAs, with stakeholders, it can be done right.

It was interesting before, when a member of the House on the other side said that they had had five or so meetings about Bill 7. I have no doubt that you had five or so meetings. Unfortunately for the opposition, we didn't receive the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations until three months later. Now, had we received them when you received them, we might have been able to go to stakeholders. We might have been able to have discussions with Albertans. We might have been able to have conversations amongst our caucus. But, no, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona stated, everybody is left scrambling to fit through a significant bill that is very important to Alberta, and we're not able to do that. Why? Because we weren't given the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations. We didn't have time to do that research. We didn't have time to take that forward.

The other part of this that I would suggest is that if you are banning corporate donations – and the Justice minister should be able to support the amendment on this issue alone – it would sure as heck make disclosing all of our donations quarterly much, much easier for both sides of the House. [interjections] I'm speaking to the choir here. You know, you get a significant amount of corporate donations. We get some corporate donations. If we all ban corporate donations, then perhaps that would make the job for our CAs much easier when they have to declare and disclose quarterly, which is ultimately the goal if we're going to go with this.

Now, we said at the beginning that we are directly affected by this amendment because we've received around a million dollars in corporate donations, and the government side has received significant donations as well. But we don't need to be scared of banning those donations. Those same people will donate if given the opportunity.

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

The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I thank the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for her comments on this issue. There is one thing that she mentioned, though, that is factually incorrect on the act. She made a suggestion about corporations contributing through their employees. I'm not sure if she meant funds not belonging to that individual. I do want to mention that there is an existing section in the act. I refer to section 34 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, which states that

no person, corporation, trade union, or employee organization shall contribute to any registered party, registered constituency association or registered candidate . . .

And this is the key.

. . . funds not actually belonging to that person, corporation, trade union or employee organization, or any funds that have been given or furnished to the person, corporation, trade union or employee organization by any persons or groups of persons or by a corporation, trade union or employee organization for the purpose of making a contribution of those funds to that registered party, registered constituency association or registered candidate.

I realize that that's a lot of legalese, but essentially that says that if a corporation has money, you can't give money to your employees for the purposes just of circumventing the act. That already is in the act, and of course it indicates as well in subsection (2) that

no registered party, registered constituency association or registered candidate and no person on its or the candidate's behalf shall [even] solicit or knowingly accept any contribution contrary to that further subsection. In subsection (3) it also indicates that that is an offence. So that's already covered off by the existing act.

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

5:00

**Dr. Swann:** Madam Chair, I'll be very brief. Alberta is known as the best democracy money can buy. It's high time we moved in this direction. It's clear that this government didn't get it when they first drafted the bill. It's contributed to disengagement, cynicism, and widespread concern about influence peddling in this province. Why was it not initially part of the bill? Why wasn't money the primary issue for raising this bill? Why were not the rest of the parties involved when we could have had this discussion and made sure that it was a complete bill?

This is clearly one of the areas of conflict of interest that this government deals with every day in this province when it's getting so much money from big corporations, and it's still not willing to commit itself to limiting corporate donations and union donations. They've ignored the public and the opposition for decades on this issue, and their reputation has been damaged as a result of more recent revelations about the lack of control on these kinds of donations and the revelations that have occurred with illegal donations because it's become so commonplace in this province, Madam Chair.

This can only serve all of us in this Legislature to improve reputation of parties about financing and improve reputation of politicians that we're not on the take, that we're not solely concerned with our own power and our own advancement and future relationships with these corporations, whatever they may be.

I'm surprised that we are in 2012 still debating this. We've been proposing this for many years. Both corporate and union donations need to be dropped completely, and hopefully this House will support this amendment. It's a progressive, thoughtful, and important initiative to regain some sense of integrity and some sense that democracy matters, that individual voters matter far more than corporate and union influence, and that we can have some real sense that the people are welcome, that they're going to be involved meaningfully in discussions and decisions. They're not going to be marginalized because they don't have the kind of money that the corporations or unions have.

This is a tremendous part of what I think would set a new tone for Alberta and follow in the federal footsteps initiated by the Liberal Party of Canada and universally respected in this country since they were enacted.

Hopefully, this would also, as the minister has indicated, prohibit and clearly limit any attempts by corporations or unions to funnel money through members of their organizations such that the whole purpose and intent of the bill would not be lost.



So I adjure everyone in the House: let's stand up together on this and give Alberta a reputation all Canadians can be proud of.

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

**Mr. Fraser:** Madam Chair, for the record I'm an average Albertan. I spent very little money on the campaign. I had corporate donations. I had union donations. I like to think that I can't be bought, but we always need to remain vigilant in this House, in our constituencies to make sure we're doing the right things that Albertans ask us to do.

I'd like any member in this House, if they choose, to put their hand up if they believe that this isn't the best place in the world to live, if this isn't the best place in the world to raise a family. If this isn't the best place in the world to talk about policy and how we move this province forward, put your hand up. No hands. We got here based on the fundamentals and the policies that we've had in the past, and that doesn't mean we don't work hard to make them better, but it's up to us to make sure that we're doing the right things.

I'm here. I'm going to do the right things. I'm an average Albertan. The election laws that we had in this last election – I think most of us are pretty average, come from a very diverse background. We have a very diverse caucus on this side and the other and all caucuses. I think that's important. I think that speaks volumes more than any Election Act could ever speak. We're here to serve Albertans. We'll go through this. If there is ever a time that somebody feels that this government or any government has been bought, prove it.

Second of all, I'll make sure that I always stand for my constituents and for the right thing.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Just because I haven't said it for a while, I will remind everyone that we are speaking on amendment A14, Bill 7.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I like to think I can't be bought, but I like the fact that people will try sometimes.

**Mr. Denis:** I've got 32 bucks.

**Mr. Anglin:** Keep trying. Up that more.

It's interesting. I once met with AltaLink and sat down with them, and they said: you cost us \$50 million. I said: that's ridiculous; you could have bought me for \$25 million. That was before I was a politician, so I'm not saying that I can be bought as a politician.

I want to talk about this amendment because it is important. I don't believe this is about – I mean, we're not naive. Money runs an election. Money has a lot of influence in our society. It was Lincoln – and I want to go see the movie real soon if I can get out of this House – who said in 1865 that there was a greater threat than the civil war that was just ending. He said: I fear the rise of the corporate power; I fear the rise of the corporate wealth. That's not a direct quote; that's paraphrasing. It's one of my favourite paraphrases. It was something that he foresaw in 1865. It was Eisenhower who warned about the rise of the military-industrial complex, which were corporations.

What we do know about corporations today is simply this: they are absolutely incapable of empathy or compassion, and they are absolutely incapable of voting in the public interest. They are by law restricted to only working in the interest of its owners, the stockholders. If a psychiatrist or a psychologist were to actually

diagnose a corporate entity as they would diagnose an individual, they'd refer to a corporation as a sociopath with dysfunctional psychopathic tendencies, which is actually kind of fascinating when you think about that.

Why do we want this psychopath involved in our democratic process? It's the money. It's the corruption of money that can be put into this process. I would like to think that other jurisdictions have seen this and have dealt with this. Our federal government has seen this and dealt with this issue.

I see the value in corporations as business entities. I see what they can do to help the economy to grow. I do not see the value of a corporate entity in the democratic process. That, I say, is reserved for people and human beings and citizens, not for a corporate entity. Then the race is on. In whose interest are they actually donating? Those interests may vary, but they could be totally against the public interest. I would argue that a lot of times our environmental corporate donations are in direct conflict with the public interest.

In dealing with this issue, should we allow corporations to be in this process? I want to cite an example. One of the members brought it up earlier. It was a valid argument. He spoke about AltaLink or the power line companies and how they were involved in the donation to the party in power. But that's not it. I mean, you can make that argument, and you can show that on paper, and you can disclose at end of the year, and people can argue that, oh, they donated so much and they influenced the decision-makers. You will always get that allegation.

Our Election Act is so full of holes that a company like AltaLink can sponsor a political event, and they can actually expense that money and earn 9.2, 9.4 per cent interest on that. That's really interesting. How can that be? We as individuals donate to a party. We would get the deduction that is allowed by law. But there's a lot more funding that goes on with political parties and the political process to influence that political process that corporations have worked a nice way around.

I'm going to give you an example. The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region just held their meeting down in Idaho, I think, over our constituency break. The major sponsor of that event was AltaLink. Ironically, AltaLink testified in Calgary, I believe, and when they testified, they said: we had nothing to do with anything outside the jurisdiction of Alberta. So the fact that they would be down there is absolutely fascinating.

5:10

That's not the issue. The issue is that they get to take the money that they expense to run these types of events, like the donation that they gave to a political party for their AGM, like the donations they give for these conferences that political parties can attend, and then they can turn right around and take that expense, capitalize it, and earn a rate of return because the law says that they get a rate of return. That is a matter of record in the testimony given by AltaLink executives right up here in Edmonton on that heartland line. That's available for anyone to look up.

That is an accounting problem, in my view, but it's also a hole in our electoral process in dealing with corporations and how they can manipulate the system and get around the system. That's why I support this amendment to eliminate corporate entities and just deal with the people who have the most interest in the preservation and defence of the democratic process.

The idea that corporations or their money are absolutely necessary to the process has been refuted by the jurisdictions that don't allow it. They've already proven that it's not necessary. We can conduct an electoral process without them. The idea that it is somehow their right as a corporate entity, I would disagree with

that. It's the right of the individual. Our democracy is for us as human beings and as citizens. The corporate entity is nothing more than a business entity, a contract, something that you cannot touch or see. A corporation is a creation of legislation and legislation only. Without the legislation corporations don't exist. The idea that we would let that entity or those entities influence the process or to think that they wouldn't try is I think being naive.

We can see it south of the border in the outrageous ways it has affected that process. If we think that we're immune to that, I would disagree. It's very difficult to deal with this issue when corporations want to influence the process.

Again, I will draw upon an example of how one corporate entity actually does influence the process. In December 2006 I brought a motion against AltaLink and the Energy and Utilities Board that they did not have jurisdiction over an export line. It only directly affected one company, AltaLink. Within three weeks that company had an order in council from the government of that time to give the board jurisdiction over an export line. Fascinating considering that everyone said that this wasn't an export line in the first place. But the idea that they could get an order in council that fast – and I challenge any member that's sitting in the back benches of the party in power to try to get an order in council that fast. I doubt you could do that. Maybe I'm wrong. I'd like to see that happen.

That shows the power and influence of a corporate entity. That's what we're talking about, Madam Chair, corporate entities in the political process and why we should pass this amendment and get them out of the political process. Given examples of how corporate entities can abuse it and can influence it, in my mind, speaks directly to this amendment. This is a serious issue.

I like to think that as candidates when we run, we actually run on the grassroots level. We deal with people. We shake hands. Some people are lucky enough to kiss a lot of babies. I have to travel too far a distance between babies.

The public at large is what we're here to represent. It is about the people that we represent. These corporate entities that have the ability to come in and influence the process, to me, are a virus in this democratic system. The small corporate entities like those family farms, those small businesses, that's just a business aspect to corporate legislation. To me, if they were going to give money through their local businesses, they would readily give money also personally, stepping outside that.

It is the very large corporate entities that are the biggest threat to democracy when it comes down to adversely affecting the democratic process, and that is a serious issue that we should never marginalize or minimize. That is a serious enough issue that we should always be on the defence against it.

The democratic process works. I don't just believe that; I've participated in it. I've watched in the defence of it, and I've seen it work time and time and time again. It does not need a corporate entity or the donations of corporate participation to make it work. As a matter of fact, in my view, it works better without it. It is better left up to the people who are involved in the process with the right frame of mind, what I would call the idealistic view of all politicians, which is that we can't be bought, we are here with integrity, and we are here in good faith. I believe that when hon. members stand up and say this, they believe with all their heart or they come here with the best of intentions.

I say this, and I say this sincerely: corporations do not. Corporations come with one intention and one intention only, and they can only have one intention because that is by law. They must advance the capital wealth of their owners, which are their stockholders. That is first and foremost at all costs in many ways, and we've seen that. We've seen where corporate entities – and

there are lots of examples out there; Ford is a prime example – look at the penalty of violating a rule or regulation versus the profit, and if the penalty is nothing but a cost of business, decisions will be made accordingly on: "Well, the penalty is so small. Let's commit the infraction." Ford was an extreme example, but this example happens all the time.

We deal with this issue of: how do we control the influence of corporations? This right here, in my view, is the mechanism for that control. The only way corporations influence society in any kind of adverse way is really that when it gets into the political process, it upsets the political process. If we're all here in good faith, acting in the best interests of the public that we represent, for the most honourable purposes, then we do not have that corporate influence that can even be alleged if we accept this amendment. I think that doesn't just enhance this election process or the political process; passing this amendment is in many ways a defence of the democratic process. It keeps the corporate entities doing what they're supposed to be doing, which is what they're designed to do, which is to go out there in the business world and conduct business. The political process is not where these entities should be.

That may sound idealistic, but it's that issue that has bridged the gap between a left-wing party and a right-wing party because it's not a left-wing issue or a right-wing issue. It's an issue of fundamental values, of principle. I know that some of the members on the other side may agree, or maybe they all disagree. I don't know, and I'm happy to hear from them. But the negativity of many of the processes that we deal with in our election processes is not necessarily about the individuals as it is about the money that has come in that has upset the process.

One of the correlations that has been visible down in the U.S. is the negative ads. You hear a lot of people up here talk about that. They talk about the personal attacks that have taken place down in the U.S. We like to think we're above that fray up here, and in many ways we are, but if you look at what finances those personal attacks, that's corporate money. That's lots and lots of money. In my campaign and in many other campaigns I don't have time to go after it and go out and do negativity. I've got to get out the message about what we want to do, what that message is on how we would take on these various issues. To have excess money is where a lot of that stuff goes on down south.

5:20

So I would say that these election laws that would prohibit a corporate entity from participating would add significant value, not just to this process, but it would add significant value to the confidence and the trust the public needs in the process.

One of the cynicisms that represents itself out there in the public is that it doesn't matter anyways; whoever has the most money makes the decisions. I always like to disagree with people like that. I always say that the people who can get the most votes out are the ones that are going to influence the decisions. The cynicism is out there no less. Passing this amendment helps to reduce that cynicism. We want a public that is engaged in the democratic process. We want a public that's informed. It takes a lot of work to keep that going.

If you look at how corporate entities actually influence a lot of the political processes, they're able to not just outspend the public, but they're actually able to keep the public away from the process in many regards just by overinfluencing rules and regulations on how the process actually takes place. This, I say, is fundamentally wrong, and it's counter to what we want as a good operating society.

So to the hon. member that stood up and basically praised how great Alberta is and no one raised a hand: this is not what this is about. This amendment is about making sure that we don't degrade what we have. This is about an amendment that will improve what we have because we'll make sure that only Albertans are involved in this process, and the corporate entities can go do the things that they do best, which is the business that they've been designed and created to do. Let them take care of their stockholders, but let the individual participate in the democratic process. Let the individuals elect their elected officials.

With that, I encourage the members to support this amendment. I think this is an important amendment that we take forward.

Thank you very much.

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

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Dorward:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I wrote the following words on this sheet of paper: bogeyman, big, bad business. I guess I wrote that down because there's a lot of chit-chat here about great big business influencing great big decisions that are made, and somebody needs to stand here and talk about the small businessperson, so I'd like to do that just for a couple of seconds.

I'd like to thank the MLA for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for confirming a \$16,000 – I apologize if I have these numbers wrong – campaign versus an \$80,000 campaign, and she won. I think that confirms that, you know, a lot of money – and I imagine that a lot of the \$80,000 was corporate donations – doesn't influence the results that happened as a result of the election coming out.

The person that donates oftentimes is a person who wants to show thankfulness for the democratic process and to help to cover the office costs and the costs of advertising and the costs of signage and all the things that all of us incurred. I don't think that they in any stretch of the imagination think that they're going to influence any decision that anybody makes. I think we have amazing checks and balances in our democratic system such that I don't think it's possible for anybody, quite frankly, to be able to gain a lot from simply making a political donation.

More so than that, the small businessperson is the engine of our economy. Those are the people who are making things happen. Whether it's a feedlot down in Lethbridge or whether it's a person that's running a fishing operation in northern Alberta or a logger or an accountant or anybody, they're simply running their business, and they want to contribute to that process and make a donation.

I'll even make one more statement, Madam Chair, and that is that the difference between a corporation and an individual is not very thick. What I mean by that is that this motion, were it to be accepted, would chop the legs off anybody who wanted to simply make a donation through their corporation. They could very simply make the same donation individually, which is being accepted. All they have to do is write themselves a cheque for \$500 and put it in their own bank account and then write the darn cheque, and when they hand out the business card, if there was something nefarious going on, it would probably say the name of the business. So I guess that we should say that any individual that has a corporation shouldn't donate because you could make the same inference that they're going to gain the same benefit.

So I don't understand this motion. I don't understand the logic of it. I don't think it works. I don't think it supports the small businessperson who simply wants to make a donation in Alberta.

I will now sit down. Thank you very much.

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

The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Why do we have corporate donations? Individuals vote, not companies. Companies lobby. Companies supply. Companies have the opportunity to benefit financially by receiving untendered cost-plus contracts with guaranteed rates of return not just on their own investment but on taxpayers' money. The value of these contracts can be so large, the amount of money involved is not just thousands or hundreds of thousands or millions or hundreds of millions but billions of dollars. They can get contracts awarded by cabinet without proper objective needs assessments.

Now, is this theoretical? Or are we talking about Bill 50 and the gigantic overbuild on the order of about eight times the power lines that we're seeing at great, great expense to Alberta and to Albertan taxpayers? I've even heard of a corporate donor who wrote a cheque for around \$430,000 when a political party was running short of money in the last election because they'd been abandoned by small individual donors who were diverting their personal donations to parties more in touch with their values.

This amendment will affect all parties but especially the governing party, so it's no surprise that all of you over there are all against it. Large corporate donors can tempt even the most ethical among us and appear to have succeeded on several occasions to the detriment of hundreds of thousands of everyday Albertans and the industries and companies that employ them.

Perception is a reality, folks. People think governments are being persuaded to do things not in the best interests of average Albertans. Are they right? I don't know, but nature abhors a vacuum. In the absence of information they fill in the blanks, and when they see an eight-times overbuild of power lines, you understand their concerns. I've heard Alberta voters say: you know, Gary, somebody is getting paid off.

You know what? You can ignore our amendments. You can keep ignoring average Albertans, the common men and women who vote. In 2016 we're going to be sitting over there. We will fix these bills because that's what Albertans want. You know, we can talk all night if we thought that would make a difference. The fact remains that these bills need these amendments. These are well-thought-out bills. These are bills that are responsive to the needs of Albertans as expressed to us, and they're based on sound philosophy. They're based on sound politics. They're based on sound principles that address issues of greed and issues of contempt and issues of temptations that would persuade almost anyone to cross over to the dark side, Luke, because there's just so much money there. We've seen it, and we're seeing it.

Anyway, thanks for giving me this opportunity to speak up on behalf of the people that you've abandoned because you're going to help us move over there.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this amendment. This is one of those amendments that we've seen come through here that when I look at it, it just simply makes sense. The Minister of Justice has stood up and questioned our intent as to: why – why – would the Wildrose Party want to do something so silly as to eliminate corporate donations? They received close to a million dollars in corporate donations in the last campaign, and he's right. You know, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar suggests that small businesses are the economic engine of our province, and to a certain extent he's right.

Eliminating corporate donations from the political process just makes sense. There are so many other jurisdictions that have caught on to this that I cannot understand for the life of me why this party opposite suggests otherwise. It doesn't add up to me.

5:30

You know, maybe I'll explore it a little bit later, but I think it's interesting to mention as well that – and I'm happy to see that he's back – the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar when running for mayor in this fine city raised over half a million dollars. I would venture to suggest that a large portion of that probably came from corporate donations as well. I think we can understand where motivation comes in for people to want to maintain that source of revenue.

But the reality is that if we want to return politics to the grassroots in this province and we want to do what's right for Albertans, which is what I hear so many people on the floor opposite say all the time – we're here to do what's best for Albertans; we're here to put the government back in Albertans' hands – well, passing amendments would allow you to actually follow through on what you're saying as opposed to just standing up and saying it. I think that it has an element of being a fair and transparent process if we eliminate the ability for someone to walk in with a large cheque.

Again, I stated this earlier in second reading, Madam Chair, that I don't believe there is anyone on the other side that would intentionally be bought in the sense of being bought. I don't agree with the Member for Calgary-Mountain View who stands up and suggests that it is happening and that it has happened. I think that that is a bit of a strong statement. That said, perception is reality. Perception will always be reality. Politics in this province is taking a hit, and the perception of politics in this province is taking a hit. [interjections] I'm sure that those members right now are interrupting me because they feel that the reason politics is taking a hit is because there's an effective opposition on this side of the floor that is raising issues that make the governing party uncomfortable; therefore, it's all our fault. I'm sure that's exactly what's being said.

The reality is that if we're actually going to be putting Albertans first and we're making legislation that makes sense in this province, we need to consider amendments like this. I would argue that, you know, part of the problem is that there is a lack of clarity in our legislation regarding corporate donations. That's what allows a loophole like what we saw with the alleged Katz cheque of \$430,000 being dropped off. Again, when the hon. Government House Leader spoke about this issue in second reading, he emphatically and passionately stated: you can't buy this party; you can't buy me. Again, I think everyone here wants to believe that. I believe that most Albertans want to believe that.

But at the end of the day if the perception remains true that it can happen and that it can happen at any given time and some people believe that that's true and some people become disengaged from the process because of that perception, that's where we have a problem. That's where disengagement happens. It doesn't matter what anybody says on the other side, whether or not you can or cannot be bought, if the perception is there and if people believe it, it has a negative impact on the entire process. Taking corporate donations out of election financing and party financing is a great start, and it is something that other jurisdictions have already done.

The federal government did it many years ago. Now, they replaced some of that with a per vote subsidy, and I would never advocate for that. I don't think that's the right thing to do either. I don't think taxpayers should be funding political parties in that

sense either. But they have limited it to \$1,200, I believe, per person. Maybe it's even \$1,100.

I think that there's some validity to the numbers that we've put forward in the limits. There's validity to eliminating corporate donations. If small businesses want to be involved in this process, they can as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar suggested simply write a personal cheque. What difference does it make? It just is a different way of them writing off the tax. [interjection] I'm sure the Deputy Premier is often that confused.

**The Deputy Chair:** Through the chair, please.

**Mr. Wilson:** Sorry, Madam Chair. I apologize. Through the chair, I'm sure the Deputy Premier is often that confused.

It's time to fix this, and the opportunity is now. The legislation is in front of us. This government has had questions asked of it today about all the great things it did for Albertans in this session and all the great pieces of legislation that it passed. Madam Chair, I believe that question came from you. You know, if the opportunity arose for the government to actually accept an amendment outside of the two that it did, this is one of those where I believe you could proudly stand up to your constituents, to Albertans, and say: "Listen. We have done positive things here in this session. We have listened to the opposition. We have moved legislation forward together." Unfortunately, at this point that doesn't really seem to be the way things are going.

We're at well over a hundred amendments now from the opposition, two of which have been accepted, none on this bill, none on Bill 4, none on Bill 2. The list goes on.

**An Hon. Member:** We've been listening to our constituents.

**The Deputy Chair:** Through the chair.

**An Hon. Member:** We've already made lots of changes.

**Mr. Wilson:** I really wish I could hear what is being said on the other side, and I look forward to having discussions outside of this House, Madam Chair, with those members opposite who feel so passionately that they need to interrupt at this point.

The reality is that I started this asking why we want to get rid of corporate donations and perhaps why the side opposite does not and will not. They will defeat this amendment; there's no question in my mind. The reality is that our party got 28 per cent of its funding from corporate donations in the last election. The party opposite got 78 per cent. So you want the hard, cold numbers. The reason why the government will not vote for this amendment is because it would cut them off at the knees. They don't want to accept it. Perhaps they don't want to stand up and say that that's the case, but it is the case pure and simple. You know, a cheque like what Daryl Katz allegedly dropped off would fit into this, and it wouldn't have been accepted either. If 78 per cent of the funding to a political entity disappears overnight based on one amendment, that's going to be pretty damaging. It's understandable why you want to stand up and defend the rights of corporations to donate money. So be it.

If Wildrose forms government in 2016, I'm confident that we will go back and change that legislation to suggest the same.

**Mr. Donovan:** When we do, not if.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah, absolutely.

We have succeeded in having grassroots participate in this process, and a strong majority of the money that was raised on this

side of the House came directly from grassroots. It was not represented on the other side.

I would suggest that you can stand up and say that you wouldn't be bought all you want, but at the end of the day without corporate donations that side would not be able to run a campaign, many of you would not be able to be elected, and that is why you will vote down this amendment.

Thank you.

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

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Casey:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I didn't speak up in the House when we trashed the Ethics Commissioner in here, I didn't speak up in the House when we trashed prosecutors in here, and I didn't speak up in the House when we trashed the Chief Electoral Officer in here. Maybe I should have, and that was likely a mistake on my part. But to hear that the opposition feels, as their member so clearly stated, that all businesses in Alberta are psychopathic by nature, completely . . .

**Mr. Anderson:** A point of order.

**Mr. Casey:** His words.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, we have a point of order. We'll deal with the point of order now.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, your point of order.

#### Point of Order

##### Allegations against a Member

**Mr. Anderson:** Could the member please cite the place where the member on this side called businesses in this province psychopathic by nature?

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I don't have the Blues with me at this point in time.

The hon. minister.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would refer the member to the commentary from the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre where he clearly indicated that verbiage.

**The Deputy Chair:** So you're saying that will be in the Blues, then?

**Mr. Denis:** That was my recollection, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you very much.

We will reserve judgment until we can see the Blues, but I did hear the statement as well.

We'll carry on. The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Casey:** Thank you. So the point is that I happen to believe that Alberta is built on businesses, reputable businesses. I don't think that they are corrupt by nature. I don't think that they have one purpose and one purpose only in mind. For anyone that has lived in a municipal governance role or even worked for a large charity in Alberta: tell me that you do not depend on business to step forward and help you with your programming. There wouldn't be a charity in Alberta operating today if it was not for corporate entities.

#### 5:40

There was also some question of whether they were all important in Alberta. Well, anybody that walks and talks understands that business is the foundation of this province and that small business is also the foundation of this province. I've been in business since 1978 and – I'm sorry – I don't consider myself corrupt. I don't know anyone else that does. So to paint all businesses in Alberta somehow with this brush offends me. It totally offends me. This is a partnership in Alberta between residents, business, government, resources to make this the greatest place in the world to live, but business is an absolutely integral part of that.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I'd just remind you to make sure that you refer to amendment A14.

**Mr. Casey:** Okay. Thank you. So business participating in the electoral process is not out of the question, and there is nothing inherently wrong with that. Nothing. It is up to each one of us individually in this House if we have the moral and the ethical background to stand up for what is right. Then there is nothing wrong ever in accepting those donations, and there is nothing wrong with those donations being offered because they have an interest over all the province.

So, Madam Chair, I will not support this under any form. Thank you.

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

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I am going to stand and speak in support of this amendment again, and I want to be very clear that – I mean, I didn't ever think I'd have to defend the Wildrose caucus against allegations that we were antibusiness, but apparently I do. Apparently the Kool-Aid is so thick and powerful that some of these members who've only been members of that party for less than a year now have drunk so thoroughly from it that they actually think the Wildrose is an antibusiness party. That's understandable. I know how thick the Kool-Aid can be on that side of the House after you've been drinking it for a while.

Madam Chair, what I would say is that obviously our party, which has been advocating for small business, including the leader of our party, who was the director of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business for the province, understands full well the importance of small business in our system, in our province. We know that small business is, in fact, the lifeblood of our province and that they create more jobs than the public sector, obviously, and also large businesses. They are the job creators of our province, and clearly they are being suffocated in a lot of ways. If you read the surveys that they fill out, these small businesses, on regulatory burden and so forth, they're being greatly hurt by those things. We, of course, over here want to try to decrease the burden that they have on them. It's very difficult for these small businesses to compete with larger businesses who have armies of lawyers and so forth . . .

**Mr. Denis:** Lawyers.

**Mr. Anderson:** Yeah, lawyers. That's right.

. . . to deal with regulatory burden that they simply do not have. Certainly, we're very cognizant of that.

However, the problem is not small-business donations. I think that's pretty clear. The problem is big-business donations. The problem is donations of \$30,000, \$15,000, advertising at PC events around the province, advertising fees sometimes in the area

of \$50,000 or more, promises of plum positions in government relations and so forth. There are all kinds of issues. You know, most of us can see just from the pattern of patronage that occurs from the governing party with regard to who they appoint, when they appoint them, how they're appointed, I think, that it's very clear that the relationship is too cozy.

There needs to be a healthy respect both back and forth. We need to respect as members the role and the good that corporations, their actions and the profits that they make, bring to this province, which is astronomical and large. But at the same time we need to balance that with the realization that corporations much like politicians are not infallible, that they make errors, that oftentimes they do act in their own self-interest, which is part of being a business, and that's okay. Nothing wrong with that. Oftentimes they do things to help charities and do things that are very good. I know there are a lot of businesses that do good in my constituency on various levels.

However, there is no doubt that a corporation is there to make profit, and sometimes that means that they will lobby the government nonstop with donations and government relations people and gifts and parties and all kinds of fun stuff, tickets to hockey games, you name it. They will do that in order to get the ear of government, to ask that they make decisions that are in the best interest of their companies. Now, that's just a fact. We all know that, so let's not pretend that we don't know that. It happens, and it happens a lot.

I don't think Albertans want that type of influence out there when decisions are being made. I think Albertans want to know that decisions are being made in their best interest, not necessarily one particular company's best interest. Obviously, that means that if we're going to be serving all Albertans, we need to make sure that our business regulations and taxation and so forth are low, are competitive and so forth because that creates jobs, which helps all Albertans. We all agree with that. But that doesn't mean that we need to favour one business over another – that's not in the interests of Albertans – and that's what we have seen.

We saw this with North West Upgrading. I don't think I've ever been lobbied more by a company in my time over on that side than I was from North West Upgrading, for about a period of two years, with regard to getting this bitumen upgrader project going. Now, whether that project is a good project or not – I haven't seen the contract or the details in full yet because the government won't release it. It could be a good idea, using the bitumen royalty in kind, but I don't know. I don't know if North West Upgrading was the best company to do it. I know that they certainly lobbied more than anyone else. They certainly lobbied more than anybody else to get that contract. They were relentless, and they did a heck of a lobbying job. Are they the best company? I don't know. That's the point.

This government picks winners and losers. They give grants to certain small businesses for research and innovation and so forth, and then they don't give it to others who apply. They give \$800 million to Shell Canada for carbon capture and storage, but they don't give it to other people. They give millions and millions of dollars, billions of dollars through people's electricity bills to AltaLink, ATCO, and so forth, and they don't give it to others. They don't even tender that to an open, competitive bidding process. They pick winners and losers.

That's the problem with corporate donations that I found. I didn't feel this way when I was first elected because, frankly, I was naive to it. But there's absolutely no doubt after five years in this building that the efforts, the lobbying, the money spent on politicians does bear fruit in this province for specific companies over other companies. Saying that that should be banned and

saying that there should be an even playing field and saying that we shouldn't be in a position where they are trying to buy their way into the winner's circle of government grants and so forth, granting applications and so forth, is not antibusiness. It is pro Albertan. It is pro taxpayer. It makes sure that we take big money out of the equation.

Then when an RFP comes out and a construction company bids on it, we know that there's nothing going on, that the decision is not being made based on favouritism. The decision is not being made based on who showed up at a Tory fundraiser and who did not show up at a Tory fundraiser. The decision is being made based solely on what is in the best interest of Albertans, which means probably the lowest price for the best product. That's how all RFPs should be done.

5:50

That's why we're making such a fuss in this House right now with regard to the litigation RFP that went out because we're not sure. Tens of thousands in donations from this law firm going to this Premier's leadership campaign and so forth: do we know if that had an effect? You know, the circumstantial evidence is certainly through the roof, but I guess we'll never know whether in the Premier's mind that ever came into the equation. No one can prove that, I guess. But it sure looks bad, and that's the point.

Take this potential influence off the table. Take the bad look that this gives off, the apprehension of bias that corporate donations make in our society. Take it off the table so that everybody in this Legislature and outside the Legislature can be completely confident that the taxpayer is not being hosed, that when the government is making choices, when they are forced to make a decision about who gets a contract and who doesn't get a contract, they are doing so only on the criteria of what is best for Albertans. That's all they should care about. That's all anybody should care about when deciding an RFP or doing anything for the people of Alberta.

We shouldn't be giving out corporate grants to Alberta companies. We should not be doing that. That is not our business. The fact is that it has tainted the politicians of this Assembly and it has tainted this House, and we need to stop it. We need to move into this century on this issue. There are some things where Alberta goes it alone, which are good. We should be proud of going it alone on some things, even when it's unpopular, possibly federally or otherwise. But in some cases we should not go it alone. In some cases the rest of society has passed us, and on corporate donations this is one of those things. There's no reason for it.

I mean, I know for a fact there are members over there that feel the same way because I remember having discussions with them on it in previous times. We know that's the case. We know that corporate donations – many of you know that they should be banned, yet I wonder how many people will vote to ban them when the chips are down. I would ask that they think about that, think about it in their own experience. Have they ever seen the effects of corporate money on decisions of government? Be honest with yourselves. I think we can honestly say that they have.

That is not an antibusiness argument, and to try to make it into an antibusiness argument is, well, silly because (a) no one will buy that the Wildrose is an antibusiness party, and (b) it's just intellectually dishonest. It's silly. It's an intellectually dishonest argument – intellectually dishonest argument – because it says that if you are against allowing corporations to donate that somehow you are against corporations. It's a silly argument. But, you know, some of the hypocrisy of certain members over there, of course, knows no bounds. That's right on the amendment.

**Point of Order  
Parliamentary Language**

**Mr. Denis:** Point of order, Madam Chair, under *Beauchesne's* 489. The member has used the words “hypocrisy” as well as “dishonesty,” which are prohibited terms.

**Mr. Anderson:** I'll speak to that. They're only prohibited terms if you refer to another member of the Assembly individually. You can use the word “dishonesty” in this House. There's nothing in *Beauchesne's* or anywhere else that says you cannot use it, except when you're talking about another member. That is what the rule says. I would not refer to another member as dishonest, clearly. I said that there's a perception of it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.  
On the point of order?

**Mr. Anderson:** That was the point.

**Debate Continued**

**The Deputy Chair:** Yes. All right. Are you completed now in your presentation?

**Mr. Anderson:** No. I've got a few more things to say.

**The Deputy Chair:** All right. You may continue.

**Mr. Anderson:** All right. Now that we've got that off. It's good to know that my talk is having such a maddening effect on the Justice minister.

**Mr. Donovan:** You're supposed to roll over.

**Mr. Anderson:** That's right. Just roll over. That's right. That's what we do.

I think that it's really key, too, Madam Chair, that this government and this Justice minister continue to refuse to pass any of the amendments like this one, refuse to do it, saying that the amendments aren't any good or they don't make sense or whatever. A hundred and seven amendments. They continue to bring that up and arrogantly say that somehow the folks on this side, who represent 56 per cent of the people who voted in the last election, don't have any idea of what the people of Alberta want to see enacted. It's just beyond belief. It's that type of arrogance that is going to cost them dearly going forward. I thought that they would have learned their lesson by now.

**The Deputy Chair:** On the amendment, please, hon. member.

**Mr. Anderson:** But they haven't, which is why we need to ban corporate donations, Madam Chair, because corporate donations can lead to such arrogance, and we need to make sure that we do everything in our power to avoid that as an Assembly and as political parties. When we don't think that we're accountable to the people, when we're accountable to corporations, when that's who we're accountable to through the donations that they make to us, that means that Albertans lose, and it's not something that we should be a part of.

I certainly look forward to hearing other wonderful comments on why we should ban corporate donations and why this govern-

ment continues to kick the can down the road and be the only major jurisdiction in Canada to not ban corporate donations when it is so silly.

I will continue a little bit because there are a few minutes and I have a few more things to say. One of the things that I have noticed about this amendment in particular and the hon. members' opposite response to it is that they've talked about: oh, why don't you give the money back that you've received during the election period from corporations? Well, clearly, that's silly. As I said earlier, you don't bring a knife to a gunfight. You don't go into a battle with one arm tied around your back saying: “You know what? We're going to let them raise \$4 million, but we're only going to raise \$200,000, and we'll see how that goes.” Clearly, that's not the case.

We've just had our first competitive election in a very long time in this province, and part of that was because the money spending was relatively equal. The governing party did spend more. They used their savings account to supplement their internal deficit budget, which is . . .

**Mr. Donovan:** Is that deficit financing?

**Mr. Anderson:** Yeah.

. . . deficit financing their campaign, which is somewhat applicable to the way they run government. It's the same way they run their party in that regard.

We did not. We spent \$3 million, and that's what we raised. But they did still spend more because they raided their savings account.

**Mr. Saskiw:** That sounds so familiar.

**An Hon. Member:** It's like a P3.

**Mr. Anderson:** That's right.

But it was competitive: 4 and a half million dollars they spent, \$3 million we spent. It was a competitive playing field, and we were able to hold our own. I think the final result was 44 per cent for them, 34 per cent for us, and 10 per cent for each of the other parties.

I think it's very important that we realize that it's very unreasonable to ask the parties on principle – our folks over here aren't going to accept corporate donations while they do because, of course, that would lead to the absurd issue where they would be able to spend 4 and a half million dollars and we would only have, say, a million dollars, and they could outspend us 2 to 1 or 3 to 1. That, of course, doesn't do any good in a democracy, to have that kind of a disproportionate advantage for the governing party.

You know, I hope that some of these comments have impressed upon the government the need and the desire to accept this amendment and to ban corporate donations. I think it would be very much in their interests and in the interests of Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(4), we are recessed until 7:30 p.m.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]









## Table of Contents

Prayers .....	1245
Introduction of Guests .....	1245, 1255
Members' Statements	
Curtis Hargrove .....	1247
Tobacco Recovery Lawsuit .....	1247
Government Accountability .....	1256
World Diabetes Day .....	1256
Letter from a Senior .....	1257
Alternative Health Practices .....	1258
Oral Question Period	
Tobacco Recovery Lawsuit .....	1247, 1249, 1250
Ethics Commissioner Referral .....	1248
Physician Services Agreement .....	1249
Openness and Transparency in Government .....	1251
Justice System Review .....	1251
Anthony Henday Drive .....	1252
Collective Bargaining with Teachers .....	1252
Castle-Crown Wilderness Area .....	1253
Personal Care Standards in Seniors' Facilities .....	1253, 1254
CRISP Report on Cold Lake Oil Sands Area .....	1254
Family Care Clinics .....	1254
Firefighting Services in Crowsnest Pass .....	1255
Tabling Returns and Reports .....	1257
Tablings to the Clerk .....	1258
Statement by the Speaker	
Questions about the Subject of a Privilege Motion .....	1258
Orders of the Day .....	1260
Page Recognition .....	1260
Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 7, Election Accountability Amendment Act, 2012 .....	1260

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