



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

Issue 31

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC),
Government Whip

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 61

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members and guests, let us pray. Dear Lord, let us all be mindful of the high principles that unite us in this Assembly and in the communities we serve. May we always strive to fulfill our duties and to be role models for others who look upon us for leadership, good stewardship, and effective representation. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's indeed a rare privilege to introduce a group of individuals who are connected to an event that has made world history and put Edmonton into the Guinness world book of records. Today is one such privilege. Therefore, I'd like to introduce a number of people who have contributed significantly to Quikcard Edmonton Minor Hockey Week's success of 50 years. I'll ask each of them to rise and wave as I read their names and to remain standing, please, until all have been introduced, and then we can thank them all together. I will go through these quickly, so the quickness that you show on the ice: show it here.

Chair Terry Brown; Vice-chair Rod McMahon and his wife, Dina; Mr. Central, Bill Ross, and his wife, Bev; Hockey Edmonton rep Dean Hengel; Minor Hockey Week rinks manager, Shaun Mitchell, his wife, Dawn, and their hockey son from the KC Sabres, Liam; executive director from Hockey Alberta, Rob Litwinski; president of Hockey Edmonton, Betty Chmilar; referee-in-chief for the Edmonton region, Curtis Nichols; zone referees Duncan MacDougall, Allan Bracuk, Sam Crocker, Joshua Read, and Trais Preston and an AA Edmonton official, Jon Kikuchi; one of the original helpers and builders of Minor Hockey Week, Orest Zaozirny, and his wife, Joanne; and finally, three young folks who represent to us what this is truly all about, from the Whitemud West Warriors Nikhil Reynolds and Reece Antler and from the Laurier Lightning Miss Taylor Young.

Please, let's welcome all of these guests. Thank you.

Minister of Human Services, you have a school group?

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You've introduced two young Whitemud Warriors, but I want to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 90 enthusiastic, bright, and inquisitive students from St. Mary elementary school in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. Accompanying the students today are teachers Therese Coates, Tracee Laba, Bev Terletski, Sandie Melnychuk, Greg Chin and parent helpers Laura Dust, Nikki Crook, Maureen Douglas, Cindy Law, Connie McAndrews, John Young, Lisa Dobson, and Dave Rumbold. I didn't have an opportunity to have a chat with the students today because it was so busy down on the steps this afternoon, but I hope to get out to the schools and answer their questions because I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that their questions are among the best we get in this Legislature. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods to introduce his school group, please.

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my honour and privilege to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the very fine students of Edmonton-Mill Woods' Minchau school. They are accompanied by their teacher, Jayne Schroffel, and teacher helpers Mila Gordon and Tim Southernwood. Now I would request them to rise, please, and receive our traditional warm welcome.

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

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Lee Cutforth, Alberta's Property Rights Advocate. Mr. Cutforth is a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan law school, a good law school, is a respected lawyer from southern Alberta, and is proud of his farming background. He enjoys the confidence of members of both sides of the House. I'd ask that he please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Miss Carlene Siu, presently a student taking international relations in her third year at the University of Calgary. She's doing her co-op semester in my office from January to April this year. Carlene is seated in the public gallery, and I would like to ask her to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the House.

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

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of Albertans known simply as the Sociables. These friends have been a staple at the Brier over the past five years, travelling the country and bringing their unique flair to the game of curling. Every day they dress in a different theme, and I think a few others have joined them. Perhaps in honour of your role here in the Assembly today they are CFL referees. They add excitement to the crowd and dedicate their time to engaging with the fans, hanging out in the Brier Patch, and have stopped in at the Legislature today to spend what I'm sure will be about the only time this week they will not be seen with a beverage in their hands. Another tradition of the Brier is the trading of pins, and I am proud to wear their pin on my lapel today. I would ask Nathan Woynarski, Tyson Woynarski, Richard Yacyshen, Charles Pullan, Mike Verdonck, Michael Chez, Kim Mazyn, and Jamie Yakimishyn to please rise, and I would also ask all members to embrace their fun-loving spirit, raise their glasses in a ceremonial sociable, and provide them with the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so honoured to introduce to you and through you some extra special visitors from my constituency of Edmonton-Glenora who are seated in the members' gallery. They, too, are part of the Quikcard Edmonton Minor Hockey Week celebration. Please remaining standing as I call your names so that we can thank you all at the end. First of

all, from the Marshmallows team Sydney Kendall; from the Hurricanes team Avery Kendall, Melissa Flemming, Kalei Nguyen, Miri Licis, Kyle Licis, Madeline McCarthy; and from their fan club we have proud parents and grandparents Grant Kendall, Andrew Flemming, Justine Dien, Lisa Licis, Glen McCarthy, and coach Jason Kendall. Welcome, and thank you all for coming. Join me in welcoming them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my delight to introduce to you some of the guests from my area of Edmonton-Mill Woods who are seated in the public gallery and are also part of the Quikcard Edmonton Minor Hockey Week. I would request that when I call your names, please rise and keep standing until I finish the entire list. I have from the Raiders team Brayden Ruzycski, from the Griffins team Hunter Boychuk, from the Bruins team Matthew Brown and Gavin Borg, and parent helpers Lisa Ruzycski, Tatiana Niemeier, and Patti Brown. Thank you all for coming and celebrating this week.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the New Democrat opposition.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First of all, I know that he was referred to by you earlier but I'd like to introduce him officially since he's one of my constituents and someone I've known for over 20 years, Mr. Orest Zaozirny. He's been involved with Minor Hockey Week going back to the beginning. I've known him in that association and in association with the Northeast Zone Sports Council, which has been a very active organization for many years in northeast Edmonton. He's a pillar of minor hockey, a community leader, and someone I'm very proud to call my constituent. Would you please help me recognize Mr. Orest Zaozirny and his wife.

1:40

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker, is Ian Young. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Mr. Young. He's a local advocate for the disabled population and a recent recipient of the Glenrose award of courage. Over the years he has served on numerous boards, including the city of Edmonton Advisory Board on Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Alberta Brain Injury Association. Ian is also a motivational speaker who has shared his story across Canada and the United States and has addressed the House of Commons in Ottawa in support of an injury prevention strategy. I'm quite proud to say that he's a constituent of mine as well. I would now ask Ian to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly six wonderful Albertans and, amongst them, two heroes. I will ask them to rise as I mention their names: Vera and Julius Lazarenko and their daughter, Sharen Van Fossen; Amber Torvalson and her husband, Shawn Sagert; and Donna Parker. This is a wonderful Alberta story. It all started with them taking their Nissan to the shop for a regular checkup. Julius' heart suddenly stopped, and he collapsed. Immediately Donna and Amber jumped to action by giving Julius CPR and saving his life. Not only did Donna save Julius' life; she herself had a heart attack a year earlier and was advised to avoid strenuous activity. Amber gave resuscitation. They are here today, living examples of good Albertans knowing CPR. They're asking every high school, every

high school student, and all of us to give the importance of CPR to all Albertans. I'd ask them to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my guests, who are representatives of Alberta's postsecondary students: Amanda Nielsen, from the Alberta Graduate Council; Miranda Holman, from the Alberta Students' Executive Council; and Duncan Wojtaszek, from the Council of Alberta University Students. Amanda, Miranda, and Duncan are concerned about the possibility of cuts to postsecondary education in the upcoming budget, cuts that would have a negative impact on the quality, access, and accessibility of education in Alberta's postsecondary institutions. I would now ask that Duncan, Amanda, and Miranda stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

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

Provincial Fiscal Position

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, in advance of tomorrow's budget, that will plunge Alberta back into debt for the first time in a decade, the Premier repeatedly said that we live in challenging times. No doubt she is attempting to somehow justify her government's complete mismanagement of Alberta's books, but let's do a little bit of mythbusting.

In Alberta are we really facing challenging times as she alleges? Well, here are the facts. Alberta currently leads the nation in economic growth, unemployment rates, employment growth, resource revenues, housing starts, and private investment. [interjections] Challenging times, guys. Challenging times. Per capita investment in Alberta is more than double the national average and is far higher than anywhere else in the country. Our provincial GDP is growing at twice the national rate. Last session the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar gave a very detailed breakdown about how Alberta leads the pack in virtually every single economic indicator out there.

Funny that the Premier is now saying that Alberta is in challenging times. I think that what she secretly means, Mr. Speaker, is that her government is in challenging times because with everything going our way, with growth steady and prosperity abounding, this government has gone from riches to rags. Year after year of unrestrained spending growth, mostly on pet projects, pay hikes, lavish expenses, too many managers, and wasteful nonpriorities, have put Alberta's fiscal books on the brink. Deficits have gone from temporary to structural, our savings have evaporated, and we will soon return to debt. Soon enough we will be spending hundreds of millions in finance charges just to keep the creditors off our backs. None of this is because of challenging times, as the Premier would have us believe. It is simply because the PCs have failed to manage our finances responsibly.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Alberta New Democrat opposition.

New Democrat Budget Consultation

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta New Democrat opposition spent the weeks before session

travelling the province to speak with Albertans about tomorrow's budget. With the Premier and the Finance minister giving bleak warnings to Albertans about a difficult budget tomorrow, we wanted to talk to Albertans about their perspective on the services that are important to them, promises like building 50 new schools and refurbishing 70 older ones with stable and predictable funding. They promised to end child poverty in five years. They promised 140 new family care clinics at a cost of \$3.4 billion. They promised to build a thousand new long-term care beds every year until 2017. They promised a new oil sands technology and research centre. They promised \$650 million of increased funding to our colleges and universities. This is about \$6 billion worth of election promises that the PCs never costed because they never intended delivering on them.

We warned Albertans that the growth revenue outlook was deliberately optimistic and that their promises could not be paid for. Sure enough, the Premier is now blaming a fictitious bitumen bubble for her broken promises and her betrayal of Alberta families. The services that ordinary Albertans rely on, including health care and education, are threatened by cuts. This PC government cannot be trusted to stand up against the Wildrose Party's race to the bottom, to protect schools, teachers, nurses, long-term care facilities, or the most vulnerable Albertans.

Only the New Democrats will stand up in the Legislature to fight on behalf of ordinary Alberta families to ensure that they can get the public services that they need and that they are delivered effectively. The New Democrats believe in putting families first in this budget. It's time to ensure that the wealthiest corporations and Albertans in this province pay their fair share instead of cutting services that kids, seniors, and vulnerable Albertans depend on. We listened to Albertans on our prebudget tour of the province, and Albertans can depend on the New Democrats to work for them every day in the Legislature, defending the services they need and standing up for improvements to health care and education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Quikcard Edmonton Minor Hockey Week

Mr. Young: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to an amazing event that has stood the test of time for 50 years. This event is the Quikcard Edmonton Minor Hockey Week, which was recently recognized by the Guinness book of world records as the largest hockey tournament in the world. It still happens every year right here in our capital, the city of Edmonton.

Credit for this incredible tournament goes to thousands of volunteers: the parents, coaches, officials, organizers, sponsors, and, most importantly, the young players themselves. My daughter Taylor, who plays for the Laurier Lightning team, is one of those players, and she is seated in your gallery here today. I'm so happy she is here today to be part of this tribute. I'm also delighted that so many other volunteers are here today that can personally receive our thanks and admiration for their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, 2013 marked the 50th anniversary of this amazing tournament, which involved more than 500 teams, 3,000 volunteer organizers, well over 3,000 coaches and managers, almost 9,000 players, and about 200 referees who donated about \$35,000 worth of their time to referee over 700 games in 14 ice arenas throughout Edmonton.

Thank you to all for helping our youth be active, learn about team play and fairness, and become good citizens of tomorrow. Congratulations to everybody involved with Quikcard Edmonton Minor Hockey Week. Thank you as well, Mr. Speaker, for

organizing the tribute today, and also thank you for the 50th anniversary souvenir pucks, which everybody should have gotten.

Thank you.

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

Toupee for a Day

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I proudly wear this toupee today in support of Wellspring Calgary. Toupee for a Day was conceptualized as a means of providing visible support for those who are living with cancer and those who love them. Each multicoloured toupee represents a different type of cancer, and today's participants will wear this toupee to raise money and awareness for Wellspring Calgary.

This is a cause that is close to my heart as my own mother passed away from cancer, and I wish she had the opportunity to experience the support that Wellspring Calgary provides.

1:50

Wellspring was founded in 2007 and provides support, resources, and programs for anyone living with cancer as well as added support for their loved ones. It's the only charitable organization of its kind in western Canada, and the programs offered are free of charge and do not require referral.

It's the volunteers that work tirelessly to support the needs of those suffering from cancer that make Wellspring the successful organization that it is today, led by executive director Patti Morris, Kevin Kaminski from Wellspring Calgary, and doctors Glenn and Marilyn Hundleby from Wellspring Edmonton, who are with us in the public gallery today. A special thank you goes out to cancer survivor and Calgary-South East constituent Heather Dougall, who planned and organized this event.

Our government caucus put on the toupees and took a group photo in support of this important cause, and this photo is being released today to gain awareness for Toupee for a Day.

Organizations such as Wellspring are crucial to building a stronger and healthier Alberta. Wellspring is a prime example of the charitable spirit that many Albertans share and demonstrate with their willingness to give of their time and of their talents.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to raise awareness today for Toupee for a Day. Thank you very much.

Oral Question Period

Health Services Preferential Access Inquiry

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder Albertans don't trust this Premier. Her government is being investigated for all kinds of issues, from illegal contributions to dodgy contracts to privacy breaches and, the big one, the judicial inquiry into health care queue-jumping. Of course, the Premier broke her promise to hold a full and complete probe, yet despite that, Justice Vertes exposed evidence that deserves further examination. Will the Premier agree to raise the bar on accountability and transparency and grant Justice Vertes all the time he needs not only to prepare his report but also to call new witnesses?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I am proud of the fact that this government and our party decided to hold this inquiry because what we heard from the opposition for a long time is that there were all of these allegations with respect to challenges in the system, that political interference was involved, that

politicians were involved. From what I see on the outside, there's a lot of evidence that's been called, and we're looking forward to the result of that. We're quite happy, as the chair of the inquiry has asked for, for an extension to continue writing his report. In fact, the chair understood and said to us publicly that he had finished calling evidence, wanted time to write, and we're happy to give him that.

Ms Smith: I understand he asked for an extension until the end of August, and I don't believe that that's what the Premier has offered.

Mr. Speaker, given that Justice Vertes heard testimony from medical personnel under oath that individuals referred by the Helios clinic had wait times shortened from years to weeks, will the Premier agree with me that if this indeed did occur, it is not private medicine; it is simply corruption?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, the reason that we have a judicial inquiry is exactly so that we do not have this debate in this House on these very important issues that we have asked a judge to oversee and make inquiries into. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition, first of all, to respect the independence of the inquiry, which she has not demonstrated she has been able to do so far, and on top of that to check her facts and to see that, in fact, the extension that we have agreed to is until the end of August.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. member, this is a very serious inquiry, so let's be careful when we use words like corruption in the context in which they're raised.

Proceed with your next question.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear that. Unfortunately, the justice has also said that he doesn't have the power to act on any of the allegations that come forward before this inquiry. Given that the Official Opposition has written a letter to the College of Physicians & Surgeons, which I'll table today, to investigate the Helios clinic and given that charging patients to get preferential access to public services is a violation of the Health Act, will the Premier join us in asking the college to suspend Helios's licence while they investigate whether or not any laws have been broken?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I think this is awfully rich coming from a party that ran on private health care in the last election.

Nonetheless, the reason that we have an independent inquiry, Mr. Speaker, is because we want to make sure that an independently appointed judge can assess the evidence and provide a final report. Having the opposition stand up in the House three-quarters of the way through that process and make allegations interferes with that process. It is not respectful, and we will wait for the final report.

Some Hon. Members: Time.

Speaker's Ruling Oral Question Period Time Limits

The Speaker: Hon. members, I am well aware of the time. I do not appreciate or need your reminders, and I don't want to hear any more of them. Okay? I think it's fairly even on both sides. I'll decide what the time is based on the signals I get from the Clerk's table, if you don't mind. Thank you very much.

Hon. leader, please proceed.

Access to Budget Lock-up

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no wonder that Albertans don't trust this government. They expect and deserve a complete analysis of tomorrow's budget so that they can understand the implications of the government's plans to send us back into debt. Yet the Minister of Finance refuses to allow legitimate advocacy, stakeholder, and policy groups to participate in the briefing process known as the lock-up. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, the Fraser Institute, and Public Interest Alberta as well as others have been barred. Now, the Premier backtracked this morning and is going to allow the Taxpayers Federation in, but why does she always have to wait to be arm-twisted to do the right thing?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, I had a very good conversation today with Scott Hennig from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. We reviewed the fact, as I said yesterday, that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has had the opportunity to meet independently with the minister, participated in the Alberta economic summit. But I will say one thing. We received some very constructive and helpful advice from the Member for Little Bow yesterday. He sent me a note and said: you might want to reconsider this. I thought that was good advice, and we're prepared to take good advice from the opposition.

Ms Smith: Too bad your Finance minister didn't get the memo because he was still sending out letters last night explaining why they weren't going to be allowed in.

Given that what actually happened is that we needed to resort to complex workarounds to be able to get different voices into the budget lock-up process and given that the Finance minister says that he wants only those groups impacted – and that's his word – by the budget to participate and given that the AUPE and Public Interest Alberta are still excluded from the lock-up, does this mean that provincial employees won't be impacted by this budget?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the lock-up started out with us providing the media with a little bit of a heads-up to the documents that are in there, which are quite lengthy, as you'll see tomorrow. Then we added the members of the opposition for an opportunity to be ready for the debate and then stakeholders to understand the impact on them. This year we added members of our results-based budgeting challenge panels. So special-interest groups like the CTF, like Friends of Medicare have never really had any right to be in the lock-up.

I note that the wild alliance has signed up Derek Fildebrandt as an employee.

Mr. Anderson: Point of order.

Mr. Horner: I knew he was working for them, but I thought he wanted the job that was vacated by their campaign manager.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Ms Smith: I can see the Finance minister still didn't get the memo because it sounds like the CTF is going to be allowed in.

The Premier said in a year-end interview in 2011, and I'm quoting here: "Alberta does not have debt, and we will not incur debt. That's fundamental to what Albertans are proud of, and we're committed to make sure that continues." Given that the actual debt will probably approach \$5 billion to \$6 billion, is that why

she is trying to block stakeholders from being able to do a full analysis on budget day?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. leader.

Hon. minister, before you proceed, a point of order by the Member for Airdrie has been noted at 1:58. If you wish to address that in the last five seconds, I'll give you an additional five seconds.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's keep this in perspective. We are providing a secure lock-up area for special-interest groups, to which the CTF will be invited. They will be in lock-up from 1:30 to 3:15. All Albertans have a right to see what's in this budget, and we allow a privileged few to get a head start on all of the others because it's been something that we've always done. I will undertake a review of this process this summer, of the whole budget process, and I commit to Albertans that we will ensure that it's reasonable and it's fair and it's not to be used by any party or their employees to politically grandstand over it.

And I apologize. I think I said wild alliance. That's an opinion. The name is Wildrose Alliance.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I assume you're satisfied with that, Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: Whatever.

The Speaker: Let me recognize you, then, for your set of questions.

2:00

Provincial Tax Policy

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, being Premier must be a very tough job. Trying to share your plans, with all the noise of the media and the opposition is getting in the way: it's no easy task. I want to give the Premier the opportunity to clearly reiterate her long-standing commitment that she will not introduce or increase taxes of any kind prior to the next election. Madam Premier, here's your chance, your moment to show everyone how paranoid this opposition is. Premier, will you recommit to not introduce nor raise any taxes prior to the 2016 election?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I don't think this side of the House has to spend very much time proving how paranoid the opposition is. They do a good enough job themselves.

However, I want to reflect on some comments that were made a little bit earlier with respect to Alberta, and then we'll actually have a real conversation about this. The Leader of the Opposition stood up and said that Alberta is the economic engine of the country, and she's absolutely right. You know why? Because Progressive Conservative governments built that economy. Today this is the best place to live because we built it, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow's budget will set that direction, and we'll keep building further.

Mr. Anderson: So close to an answer, Mr. Speaker, yet so far away.

Given, Premier, that we all know there will be no tax increases in Budget 2013, as you've said many times, and we take your word on that, and given that we in the Wildrose profoundly thank you for the courage to stand up to all those Albertans that want higher taxes – yes, they are out there – will you please answer my question this time? Will you keep your commitment to not

introduce new taxes or increase existing ones, not just in Budget 2013 but prior to the 2016 election? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Redford: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you that one of the reasons we've made that commitment is because we know that Alberta's tax advantage is one of the reasons that we have the strongest economy in the country and perhaps in the world.

I'll tell you something else, Mr. Speaker. I was reflecting on the Leader of the Official Opposition's comments with respect to challenging times and where we are right now. The reason that we are bold and brave and strong is because we are able to understand that in order to make the decisions that need to be made for continued economic success, that allow us to continue to invest in families and to be prudent and to open markets, you can't be short sighted. You have to be long term. That's why we won on April 23.

Mr. Anderson: Given my understanding that this is question period and given that I was always under the impression that after a question is asked, a Premier would be capable of answering the question, and given that sometimes there are questions that can be confusing and disorienting, I will repeat the question one last time for clarity. Will your government be raising taxes or introducing any new taxes prior to the next election, at any time prior to the year on our Canadian calendar known as 2016? Yes or no?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we're tabling a budget that's going to set the direction for the future of this province. As a government we will not do what the opposition does, which is to take extreme and ideological positions with respect to the long-term planning of this province. The opposition is very happy to stand up and say that times changed and everyone should have understood. What the opposition needs to understand is that in a complicated world we build our budget one year at a time. What you're going to see tomorrow is a long-term plan that puts in place Albertans as our first priority, not the ideological approach of the opposition.

Labour Negotiations with Teachers

Mr. Hehr: In November the minister and Alberta teachers had essentially agreed to financial terms, wage freezes for the first two years and a modest 1 and 3 per cent increase in the final two years. Two weeks ago the minister made a lower offer. Now the minister directed school boards that any terms reached cannot include money previously offered. That means less money for teachers. If I was trying to get my neighbour's kid to mow my lawn and he rejected my offer of \$20, I don't know why I'd go back two weeks later and offer \$15. To the minister: maybe the minister can enlighten me on this unique technique to try to reach a negotiated settlement.

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the negotiations with the ATA and the ASBA have been going on a lot longer than since November. These negotiations have been going on for two and a half years, and there have been a multitude of proposals shared back and forth. Obviously, the economic climate and other things have changed over the last two and a half years. There are many things that we had on the table in the last proposal, two weeks ago, that we did not have on the table in November. We pushed ourselves, and we pushed the Alberta school boards as far as we possibly could go. We were very uncomfortable, as a matter of fact, with

that proposal, and I was very shocked and disappointed that the ATA turned it down.

Mr. Hehr: Well, given that you have threatened legislative settlements, sent e-mails directly to teachers, an affront to the collective bargaining practice that actually may be offside of Alberta's privacy laws, and that you've brought up the divisive concept of merit pay, do you think these tactics have been helpful in reaching an agreement?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I think it's been really important for us as the government to be able to communicate with teachers, who are professionals in our province and entitled to be communicated with by the government, in a way that allows us not only to communicate through the union. I think it's really important that we recognize the fact that if we want to have a real discussion about how important teachers are to our families and our kids, we have the ability to include teachers in the dialogue. From my perspective as we're able to talk through what long-term planning looks like for education for schools and curriculum, to implement Inspiring Education, this is the way forward for negotiations, and I'm very optimistic that we're going to reach a settlement.

Mr. Hehr: My final question is to the minister or the Premier if she wants. Given your government has walked away from the promise of three years' predictable and sustainable funding, has walked away from the promise of full-day kindergarten, has walked away from the promise of reducing class sizes, is it any wonder that teachers cannot trust your government to sign any agreement where teacher workload is not included in the finalized agreement?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, this government is delivering on a number of the promises from the Premier. As a matter of fact, the Premier promised to reinstate the \$107 million in funding. She did that. She promised to pass the Education Act. She did that. She promised 50 new schools and 70 modernizations. We will do that. She's promised to put kids first. We are doing that.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the New Democrat opposition, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Long-term Care for Seniors

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This PC government cannot be trusted to protect our Alberta seniors. Yesterday the government finally reversed their one-bath-a-week policy for seniors, ignoring the fact that seniors' homes are already seriously understaffed. At the same time, the new patient-care-based funding model will result in the loss of 180 new jobs from Capital Care and the Good Samaritan Society alone. My question is to the Premier. What's the point of announcing a policy of two baths a week for seniors when there's not enough staff to guarantee them even one?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's fundamentally important that we respect the dignity not only of seniors but of individuals that are living in long-term care. Some of them aren't seniors; they're younger people. These are very important issues to their personal dignity. Personal care plans are exactly that. They allow us to put in place an approach that is client centred and that ensures everyone who's in long-term care is getting the support that they need.

I want to congratulate our minister responsible for seniors and also for the programs with respect to long-term care for taking the

time, which was important, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that when this policy was introduced, it could be implemented so that they weren't hollow words. This is a minister who cares about the people, the programs he's supporting, and that's fundamental to our commitment.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This regressive preservative government can't be trusted to protect our seniors. Given that in the last Legislature the NDP tabled thousands of working-short forms showing the inability of the underresourced staff in these facilities to meet even the most minimum of standards, can the Premier tell us how laying off 180 front-line staff will cause anything but a deterioration in the already inadequate care of our seniors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you'll see tomorrow, the budget is a thoughtful budget that cares about the needs of our seniors, that cares about the needs of vulnerable Albertans. We will see. The proof will be tomorrow, sir.

2:10

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, Albertans can't trust this government to keep their promises. Will this government reverse its inhumane policies towards seniors and ensure that the people who built this province get the care they need in their later years? When will this government stop simply warehousing seniors?

Mr. VanderBurg: Mr. Speaker, I really take offence to the word "warehousing." You know, we have licensed facilities all over the province. We have people that serve with care and compassion. These are Albertans that live in a home. They don't live in a facility. This is their home, and I really take exception to those words that were used.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I would like to remind the hon. member, too. The point is a serious one. I thought you were doing so well in trying to make it. But terms like that tend to lead to disorder at some point, so let's reconsider them.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by St. Albert.

Medevac Services

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier accused the opposition of fearmongering for identifying the reckless and dangerous decision of relocating medevac services, but in a letter signed now by over 65 doctors in the north with over 20 alone just in Grande Prairie, they state that the government's "relocation plan is flawed" and conclude that "moving the medevacs on March 15th is unnecessary, costly, and will have fatal consequences." To the Minister of Infrastructure: with no expected building of a tertiary hospital in the north any time soon, are you going to negligently ignore the warnings of the 20 doctors in your area?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've consulted with my constituents and these doctors I've met with. It's not Infrastructure's job to build hospitals. We build them but in consultation with my colleagues. We are building hospitals in the

north. We're building three hospitals at this present time, I will add, including one in Grande Prairie that's going to help replace the services that we're doing in Edmonton.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these 65 northern doctors have stated that "for the critically ill and injured people of the north, the extra transport time will result in needless deaths and disability," Minister, are you honestly asking northern Albertans to trust this government over the doctors? Really?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I observed yesterday when similar questions were asked by the opposition, people's perception of the move of the medevac facility is going to be a direct function of the quality and accuracy of the information that they're given. We know – we know – that there have been several meetings in northern Alberta where inaccurate, misleading information has been presented about this change.

The fact of the matter is that the government is not going to wait for the city of Edmonton to functionally close the airport. To do anything less would be irresponsible. We started our planning over a year and a half ago. We are delivering a state-of-the-art medevac facility for the residents of northern Alberta, and 67 patients . . .

Mr. Saskiw: Given that four Fort McMurray doctors have now signed the same letter and concluded that moving medevac on March 15 is unnecessary, costly, and will have fatal consequences, will the Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation confirm that no northern doctor will be bullied, intimidated, or called a fearmongerer just for standing up for their patients and standing up for northern Albertans?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, it's arrogant and ignorant, quite frankly, of the opposition to ignore the request of the city of Edmonton and their plan to go forward with the closing of the municipal airport.

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

Mr. Griffiths: Health care has worked very hard, Alberta Health Services, to make sure that medevac services are not compromised and are in fact enhanced in many cases. The building of three hospitals in northern Alberta means that we're moving services to Albertans, not simply expecting them to always medevac in. We're building the north and building Alberta for the future of this province, not just for today.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Airdrie, you rose on a point of order at 2:15. Your point of order has been noted.

Let's move on now to the hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Chestermere-Rocky View.

Pipeline Development

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] We'll try this again.

The Speaker: You have the floor, St. Albert.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recent months the government has spoken often about western Canadian select crude discounts as a result of the bitumen bubble. The government has invested an awful lot of time explaining this problem to Albertans. My question is to the Premier. Now that most of my constituents

in St. Albert understand the issues around the bitumen bubble, what are we doing as a government to offer them solutions? [interjections]

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, regardless of what the opposition might think, I think this is a pretty relevant question to how we move forward as Albertans, so I might just answer that question.

I had an opportunity this morning to have a very productive conversation with our Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Baird, who was just in Washington on Sunday and Monday building on the work that the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development and I were able to do last week. Mr. Speaker, the work that we're doing right now in Washington with respect to Keystone is fundamental in terms of Canada-U.S. relations and ensuring that decision-makers understand our commitment to environmental sustainability. The work that we're doing with the federal Minister of the Environment is fundamental to that because opening our markets is what's going to allow us to ensure that Albertans are getting the fair price that they deserve for the resources that they own.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Market access for Alberta's energy has been acknowledged by government as a crucial issue. Given that we can't get a pipeline through one province, how does the Premier realistically expect that we can get our energy to the east coast of Canada?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting, when we talk to Premiers across this country, how different Premiers understand the priorities of the economy differently. Of course, you'll know that Premier Marois and Premier Alward, from Quebec and New Brunswick, fully understand what the economic benefit to their provinces will be if we're able to put an eastern pipeline through. I think there are interesting conversations going on in British Columbia right now as well. Fundamentally the Canadian energy strategy is what's allowing us to pull this together. We're making very productive progress through eastern Canada to work with New Brunswick and with Quebec. Being able to get to tidewater, whether it's on the east coast or the west coast, will make a difference to Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is again to the Premier. Given that the main roadblocks to pipeline access appear to be environmentally motivated and given the acknowledged challenges in meeting our province's climate change targets, can the Premier tell this Assembly whether the government will or will not meet our climate change targets?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to the other side of the House, we actually believe that it's important to talk about global warming, and we're prepared to acknowledge that the science is settled. I'll tell you the reason that we need to do that. Go to the CBC debate during the election and take a look at what that debate was about. I'll tell you that being able to talk about the reduction of emissions, which the federal government is doing, which we're doing, which the government of Saskatchewan is doing, is exactly the conversation that we need to have with customers in the United States and in other parts of the world. This is actually the way of the future, not the past.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, you rose on a point of order at 2:18 during the final answer just given.

We'll move on now to Chestermere-Rocky View, followed by Edmonton-South West.

Labour Negotiations with Teachers (continued)

Mr. McAllister: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Might we first congratulate the Member for St. Albert on asking his first question in this House.

My questions are for the Minister of Education. He's not very popular, nor is his government right now, with teachers in Alberta. The reason is pretty simple. Alberta teachers feel like they have been deceived. They were promised one thing before the election only to have another delivered after the government got their vote. Everybody in this province, regardless of their political stripes, ought to keep our kids top of mind in these negotiations. If teachers are not respected, it does not bode well for the classrooms. To the Minister of Education: why aren't you listening to teachers?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, it's a great question, and I've got to say that I am listening to teachers. As a matter of fact, we're reaching out to teachers every possible chance we get. I've been attending teachers' conventions, visiting schools, even sending e-mails. I've got a binder full of e-mails from teachers telling me how happy they were that we reached out to them. It's very interesting that that comment would come from a party whose leader said to CBC not so long ago, "So our very best and most skilled teachers no longer are in the classroom."

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty sure my hon. leader would have been referencing the fact that this government loves to put a lot of teachers in boardrooms instead of classrooms.

Given that teachers have been pretty clear that this is not about money, Mr. Speaker – this is about working conditions – and given that all we really want to do and all everybody should want to do is what's best for teachers so they can do what's best for our kids in return, why won't the minister commit to working with teachers in trying to resolve this?

2:20

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I'd encourage the member to read the proposals that were made to the ATA. That's exactly what we're trying to do. I completely agree with him. If he's suggesting that we actually want to impose hard caps across rural Alberta for assignable time, I'd welcome that input, maybe even in this House. I don't believe that's the right way to go, and it's been proven not to work in Edmonton and Calgary. Taking that kind of flexibility out of the system has been the big key rub in these negotiations, one thing that we couldn't bend on. There are many other ways that we want to look at workload, invest in workload studies, decrease instructional time for teachers. We're still willing to do those things.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to say that you're going to listen to teachers about workload and another to actually do it. That's the problem that we're having. Given that the minister sent a letter to boards outlining what they can do and what they can't do, what they'd like to see them do in terms of negotiations, given that the minister reached out and sent a personalized letter, which he probably shouldn't have, to every teacher in this province, it seems like he has a predetermined

outcome in mind when it comes to negotiations. Does the minister recognize that boards and teachers are finding it tough to negotiate when you appear to have already dictated a settlement to them?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's inappropriate for the Education minister to take an interest in the education system. The sustainability and the quality of this education system is a great responsibility that I take very seriously and why we've been working closely with the Alberta School Boards Association and the ATA on a whole number of issues. I think it's entirely appropriate that the chair responsible for regulating the teaching profession would reach out to those professionals to talk about that profession.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Little Warriors Program Funding

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to bring to light a situation I've personally been made aware of in the last few weeks. For almost 10 years Edmonton's Little Warriors society has been working to create awareness of the tragedy that is child sexual abuse. I've spoken to many of my friends and constituents who are concerned that the government has reneged on a commitment to provide funding to the society for the construction of the Be Brave Ranch, a one-of-a-kind treatment centre in Canada offering treatment to victims of child sexual abuse. My question is to the Minister of Culture. Can the minister please explain why her department and the Department of Human Services have rescinded support and financial commitment to Little Warriors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I first want to say that Little Warriors has done a great job of promoting the awareness of child sexual abuse. This department through the community initiatives program has provided support of over \$130,000 over the last couple of years. What's really important to note with respect to the application is that there is information that's missing. We've not received it yet. It's about the viability of the program, and it's about the treatment plan as well. So I look forward to receiving that information.

Mr. Jeneroux: This time to the Minister of Human Services and asking as a father. Supporting victims of child sexual assault is extremely important. Like me, Albertans want to know that their government sees this as a priority. Why aren't we providing these services?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government and this minister think that this is the ultimate priority. The prevention of child abuse and helping abused victims recover is absolutely one of the most important things we can do. We spend over \$18 million a year on prevention and treatment in this area. We support the Zebra Child Protection Centre in Edmonton, the new Child Advocacy Centre in Calgary. Nine sexual assault centres receive \$1.8 million annually. The child sexual exploitation program receives \$6.7 million. Ten million dollars is spent regionally on counselling services and placement for victims of child sexual abuse and their families.

I personally have been a very strong supporter of the work that Little Warriors has done in terms of raising awareness. They do great work raising awareness. What we need to find out is if they do great work in the ranch.

Mr. Jeneroux: That's all fine and good, Mr. Speaker. Lots of that is just numbers.

To the Minister of Human Services again. This request is only for \$650,000. Why can't this government find just this small amount to fund work by the Little Warriors society to protect and heal our children?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is really a crucial question. It isn't just \$650,000. The capital request for \$650,000 to buy the ranch is just the start. Then you have to look at the business case for how the ranch will operate and the medical case with respect to how the treatment plan will work. That's the information that we've requested before we approve it. That's what we would ask of anybody who comes to government for public money: what is the efficacy of the program? What results will be obtained? Is it the best investment to achieve the result in this area? All of us support children who have been sexually exploited. It's the worst thing one can do to a child. All of us want the child to recover. We want to make the best investment possible to ensure that that happens.

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

Combined Low-expenditure Tax Assessment

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's pretty obvious that Alberta is an urban province; 83 per cent of us live in cities or towns. Well, it's obvious to everyone but this government, which allows for one kind of tax to come out to \$28 for every person in a city or town but almost \$2,000 per person for folks in rural districts and counties. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why does this government discriminate against urban areas by restricting their access to the nonresidential linear property tax component under CLEA?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, this is a great question. I've had many discussions with the AUMA, the AAMD and C, and municipalities both rural and urban about this. Most municipalities work very hard to attract businesses, to attract industries, and to build new subdivisions so they can grow their tax base. I know that there is some tension between municipalities on this particular type of revenue, but I encourage municipalities to make sure that they work it out amongst themselves because there isn't a single solitary individual, whether they live in a county or they live in a town, who isn't a member of a community. Every single bit of those resources, whether they come from rural or urban communities, needs to go into supporting that community. The solutions are best reached at the local level.

Ms Blakeman: To the same minister. I heard that minister at the AUMA conference tell councillors that there was no point to making changes to CLEA because then Calgary and Edmonton would get two-thirds of the money. Well, since those cities have two-thirds of the population, what would be wrong with that?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, rural Alberta has very tough challenges when investing in building and infrastructure. My point

was that most of the communities in this province, in fact 328 of them, are not Edmonton and Calgary. They're the rest of the province and are just as desperate for resources as anybody. When those small municipalities were asking for money from the linear assessment from rural municipalities, they had to be aware that if it was a provincial solution that came up, it would wind up in Edmonton and Calgary and we would pull resources from rural Alberta which were generated in rural Alberta. That's why I encouraged them to find a local solution.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Back to the same minister: how is it fair to have MDs, counties, and specialized municipalities receive \$1.4 billion for 17 per cent of the people in this province while the other 83 per cent of Albertans get to share \$81.5 million?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, this is the problem where sometimes the opposition puts this us-versus-them mentality into this discussion. I've always said that there is no us versus them. There's only us. It could be asked by rural Albertans why 17 per cent of the population that lives in rural Alberta, that has all the oil and gas revenue, does all the work, all the farms, all the agriculture and everything associated with it, supports urban Albertans, who sit in high-rise condos and don't necessarily contribute to the grassroots of this economy. [interjections]

I will not do us versus them. I will support every single municipality to work together to build strong communities for the future of this province.*

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

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I sense an emergency press conference over that one.

Postsecondary Education Funding

Ms Notley: Albertans are learning that they cannot trust this government to keep promises. When it comes to postsecondary education, Albertans were promised a stable and predictable 2 per cent increase in funding, a minimal requirement to address among other things the growing thousands of qualified students being turned away from our overcrowded institutions every year. To the minister of advanced education: will you acknowledge that breaking the promise on funding to universities will hurt Alberta's students, their families, and our economic future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that question. I can say that our minister is taking very seriously advanced education and the funding for all our postsecondary education institutions in this province and that we will put a system in place to make sure all of our students have a first-class education.

2:30

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this government also promised to help aboriginal and rural students access postsecondary education with a new bursary program and given that the failure to keep that promise will mean more struggles for aboriginal and rural students, will the minister of advanced education and the Deputy Premier tell Albertans if the new bursary program is on or if these students should start looking for a second, third, or fourth summer job to pay for another broken Tory promise?

* See page 1400, left column, paragraph 5

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, the budget will come forward tomorrow, and I'd ask the opposition to sit tight and hear what the minister has to say when the budget is released.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the president of the U of A recently raised the spectre of tuition increases in her state of the university address and given that this government's broken promise on funding will see students and their parents digging deeper and deeper into their own pockets, will the minister of advanced education admit that Alberta's students and their families will be the ones paying for your broken promises on postsecondary funding?

Mr. Campbell: Again, Mr. Speaker, the budget comes out tomorrow, and I ask the opposition to listen closely to that, and they'll get the answers they've asked for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Calgary-Currie.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 26 the ERCB imposed a high-risk enforcement action against Plains Midstream for an illegal oil spill. The investigation found Plains guilty of spilling 28,000 barrels of oil due to inadequate backfill operations, inadequate maintenance, inadequate leak detection measures, inadequate response procedures, and inadequate emergency plans. To the minister: how do the ERCB enforcement actions prevent or reduce the likelihood of another catastrophic oil spill?

Mr. Hughes: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to have a question. This enforcement action by the ERCB is an important enforcement action, and in fact, as we move to the new regulator, fines that the regulatory authority could impose for infractions like this will be even higher. You know, in this province we have over 400,000 kilometres of pipelines. That's enough to go around the world 10 times. We have a lot of important materials moving through pipelines throughout the province, and we're all dedicated to ensuring that it is done safely and in an appropriate manner.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the only consequence of this high-risk enforcement action imposed upon Plains Midstream was to hire a public relations firm, how does forcing a company to hire a public relations firm qualify as a consequence or an incentive to reduce or prevent the likelihood of another catastrophic oil spill?

Mr. Hughes: Well, if that was true, that would be unfortunate, wouldn't it, Mr. Speaker? But it's not the only consequence to the operator. The operator also was prevented from actually shipping, which had the consequence of a very substantial financial implication for the company, and in addition to that, they have been required to step up the game as well. So this is part of what we're doing in this province. We are working hard with the pipeline industry. The ERCB has been working closely with them as well. I expect to receive soon the report that I requested last summer, that helps ensure that we perform at the highest possible level.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government is marketing its environmental protection record to support building international pipelines like the Keystone, given that Syncrude's penalty for killing ducks is \$3 million and Plains' penalty for spilling 28,000 barrels of oil is the cost of hiring a public relations firm, how can anyone trust this government to protect the environment when the penalties are inconsistent and just don't make sense?

Mr. Hughes: Well, Mr. Speaker, under the new Alberta energy regulator the fines could be half a million dollars, but more importantly the financial implications for the company are millions of dollars in impact because they cannot use those pipelines if they have had an issue like this, and the industry knows that well.

Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities

Ms Cusanelli: Mr. Speaker, it's with great honour that I rise to ask my first question in this House on behalf of my constituency, Calgary-Currie. Our constituency has many notable facilities offering supports and services to Alberta's most vulnerable. My constituents are worried for the future of their adult children with developmental disabilities. Families don't know how to go for assistance with planning when they're no longer able to continue in the role as a caregiver for aging developmentally disabled children. All my questions are to the associate minister of persons with developmental disabilities. My constituents want to know: how are we being responsive to families who are looking for this type of assistance?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we age, it's incumbent on all of us to arrange our financial and legal affairs, to ensure that they're in order, to plan for own future and that of our family, and that's particularly important when we have a disabled person in our family. I would certainly advise Albertans to seek the advice of accountants and legal advice, but with respect to planning I can advise that the offices of the Public Trustee and the public guardian are always available for assisting in planning, and with respect to actual service delivery I can assure you that the government stands ready to assist.

Ms Cusanelli: Given that by 2015 the number of seniors with developmental disabilities is expected to grow by 74 per cent and by 2020 will have increased by 169 per cent, how does this government ensure that the offices of the Public Trustee and the public guardian are prepared to meet the demands of a growing and vulnerable population here in Alberta?

Mr. Oberle: Well, Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of studies. This is no surprise, this coming change in demographic. In fact, there's a good one by PDD Calgary, done in 2010, that's posted on our website. That was one of the reasons for the amalgamation of the Human Services department and breaking down the lines between traditional service arms and involving all of those service arms in more of a continuum of care delivery. The office of the Public Trustee and the public guardian are involved in that continuum and in the planning for the future of our clients, and they will be there when they're needed.

Ms Cusanelli: Well, given that older adults with developmental disabilities are living longer and, more significantly, are showing signs of aging far sooner than the general population, how are you

going to help them with accessing provincial help when eligibility is based on the chronological age of 65 years?

Mr. Oberle: Actually, it's not, Mr. Speaker, and I want to assure Albertans that the services are there and are delivered independent of age or legal status. We are there to serve when people are in need. We will provide services in accordance with need so that people may lead rich, rewarding lives in our province and contribute as they're able to do.

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

Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Health. After nearly five years of transitioning ambulances from municipalities to AHS, the Health Quality Council report acknowledges a loss of local community knowledge, a culture of mistrust, and a perceived lack of adequate EMS resources to meet the needs of Albertans. Municipalities are left filling service gaps that this government created. They are expecting local fire departments to backstop these gaps in service. Why is this government going back on its word and downloading the costs onto the backs of our municipalities?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question does a very good job of acknowledging the great number of stakeholders that the Health Quality Council of Alberta conferred with in developing this report, among them mayors and elected officials across this province, EMS workers, and others.

With respect to questions around fire and municipal services I'll ask the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to supplement.

The Speaker: The hon. minister?
The hon. member.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that local ambulances are being sent to cities to pick up patients and may not be available to our rural communities when needed, how does this minister plan to remedy this government's mismanagement, that is causing ambulances to be taken away from our rural communities?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, the report provides a very clear road map to answer that question, and that is that the report recommends the completion as quickly as possible of the consolidation of dispatch services around the province. I observed this issue first-hand when I visited the Edmonton dispatch centre last week. We saw that municipalities that are not yet part of the provincial consolidated system are not visible to central dispatchers in Edmonton. The same would be true in the other two provincial centres. The answer lies, as the report recommends, in completing dispatch consolidation as quickly as possible.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Albertans just don't trust this government. Given that in the news article that I will table later, dispatch times in Lacombe since the government established AHS are reported as woefully not meeting the previous standard under the municipality of two minutes, what will this government do to make sure that residents in my

constituency and all Albertans are receiving timely emergency ambulance service when they need it?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want the hon. member's question to leave Albertans with the impression that we have fewer resources in our ambulance service today. We, in fact, have the same or more resources across the province. The issue is the consolidation of dispatch services. One of the things that the report points out as a consequence of this in the past, prior to the creation of Alberta Health Services, is the lack of available data to make accurate, valid comparisons about then and now with respect to response times.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Home Education

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While opposition members are busy looking for government bogeymen under every rock, their constituents have some real-life questions. Cardston-Taber-Warner constituents are concerned that when new Albertans choose home education, they are unfortunately choosing no education at all. I am familiar with some excellent home-schooling. To the Minister of Education: what is being done to ensure that all Alberta's children who are home-schooled receive the education that they deserve?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, one of the great things about the Alberta education system is its diversity and the choice for parents. I can tell you that home-educated children are visited at least twice a year by a certificated teacher to make sure that we know how they're doing, and there are a variety of tools available to help the parents as well. I can tell you that I have been to Taber. I have met with that community, that school division, the municipal leaders. I do have some concerns there, but my department is working with those local folks to make sure we understand what the requirements are, and we can help make sure these kids reach their full potential.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what options do you have if a child is not making progress in a home education situation?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, we do have the ability to go in and do extra monitoring, but it's important to know that people choose home education for all sorts of different reasons. We do monitor those children to make sure that their progress is as expected. For the kids, in particular, down in that Taber area in the Low German-speaking Mennonite community, we are doing some extra monitoring in that area, and we are working with the community. I just want to assure Albertans that we continue to monitor all the approximately 8,000 kids that are home-schooled, and many of them are receiving an excellent education.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the minister of human resources. I'm told that some parents are choosing home-schooling so that their children can work on the family farm instead of spending time in the classroom. Is that of concern to you?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, the employment standards regulation does have a provision that says that one cannot take a child out of school to work, that schooling has to come first. That's not precisely the way it's written, but that's the import of it. I think it would be quite inappropriate for one to use home-schooling unless they could actually meet both the spirit and the wording of that particular regulation. That being said, I could tell this House that the federal government is very interested in at some point in time over the next two years adhering to the ILO standards with respect to child labour regulations, and we are looking at our child labour regulations very closely to make sure that we adhere to those standards.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, that concludes the formal part of question period. However, the Minister of Municipal Affairs has indicated that he may wish to offer a clarification, which would allow the original questioner to ask another question. Pay attention to how this works, please.

Combined Low-expenditure Tax Assessment (continued)

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my 11 years as an MLA I've been to 328 communities around Alberta, and I get very frustrated when I hear people talk about how we need more because they have too much. In rural Alberta – and I argued the point – they're just as vehement that they feel like they contribute to the province's economy but don't get as much in return. All that serves, whenever somebody says, "They have more, and we want to take it," is to pit the city versus rural or urban versus rural or town versus country, and that does not serve to do anything for the focus that we're supposed to have on making sure that every single one of the 422 communities in this province is well served.*

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, I believe you were the original questioner.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, clearly not a fan of urban Albertans is our minister. I'm wondering if that's the reason behind why the government's election promise of a big city charter for Edmonton and Calgary has now been whittled down to a civic something or other vague thing. Would that be why?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, I'm a big fan. I have a property here in the city of Edmonton, like most rural MLAs do. I'm a big fan of the cities. I'm just not a big fan – of course, those members don't have a single rural member and don't have to give a hoot about rural Alberta, which is evidenced by their question.

We're working on a civic charter, and I call it a civic charter because there are five other cities that would also like to have some service. A civic charter is designed to make sure that we can adequately provide for our citizens no matter what municipality we live in. We're months ahead of schedule for signing it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: A point of order from Edmonton-Centre was noted at almost 2:47.

In 30 seconds we'll move on with members' statements from Lesser Slave Lake and Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Lake with her member's statement, followed by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Rural Education Symposium

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Monday I attended the second annual Rural Education Symposium in Canmore, where more than 200 education stakeholders from across Alberta came together to address the fact that rural educators face unique challenges such as declining enrolments, school closures, and issues around transportation. This symposium provided a venue to discuss these important challenges and solutions and to share best practices, dialogue, and create partnerships with each other so that rural education remains viable and supported in this province.

The theme of this year's three-day conference was innovation and collaboration, and examples of that in rural education are many. Some of the best examples of engaged thinkers, ethical citizens, and the entrepreneurial spirit live in rural Alberta. I applaud all rural educators for ensuring rural students are being provided equity of opportunity.

I believe that all Albertan kids from Gift Lake to Grimshaw to Canmore deserve a quality educational experience, and that was exemplified by the Minister of Education's keynote address on how his continued vision for Inspiring Education is being brought to life in rural Alberta, not only by this government's support of funding rural education but through SuperNet, our Wi-Fi on buses pilot project, the eMerge one-to-one laptop project, and literacy projects, to name a few supportive examples. Some of the impressive projects I heard about are examples of the collaboration happening in rural education through partnerships and the unique ways to provide educational opportunities, and this forum was key.

Anyone who's rural knows that rural communities and school boards do an amazing job at leveraging local resources to overcome the challenges that occur in rural Alberta. It certainly speaks to the passion, commitment, and dedication for putting students first. Mr. Speaker, all Albertans should be proud of the work that's being done in rural Alberta to support students and inspire education. As a rural MLA, I know I am.

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

Personal Care Standards in Seniors' Facilities

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday for the first time in a long time Alberta's seniors and people in care heard great news. After months of relentless questioning and pressure from opposition members as well as a single brave member from the other side of the House, the government finally recognized that offering only one bath per week to seniors is not only insufficient and unhealthy, but it's frankly degrading to those in care. I commend and I thank the ministry for doing the right thing.

2:50

What's troubling to me, Mr. Speaker, is the initial reaction that we in opposition received from this government. Every time we speak up for Albertans regarding policy failures affecting people in care, we are dismissed. We saw it last spring with the food quality issue in seniors' care facilities. It was pretty obvious from the pictures, the reviews, the stories from seniors that that food

* See page 1397, right column, paragraph 4

was disgusting and changes had to be made, but instead of trying to protect Albertans in all levels of care, the government instead moved to protect themselves, saying that the food was good enough. So my colleagues in opposition and the AUPE went to battle for Alberta seniors, and a couple of months later the Minister of Health changed his tune. He even went so far as to acknowledge that he wouldn't feed this food to his mother.

Again, I'm thankful changes will be made. But why is it so difficult to get the government to do the right thing? Alberta seniors built this province. They spent their lives sacrificing for future generations so that we can have the best opportunity to live in the best province in the best country in the world. When these people enter care, it's not just our job to care for them; as legislators it is our duty to put them first. I sincerely hope that going forward, when opposition brings forward concerns from Albertans, the government's response won't be to simply brush it off, to shuffle their feet, or claim we're fearmongering. In this case we should all be reminded that we're not just offering seniors another weekly bath; we're offering them their dignity.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Hughes: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in my capacity as a member of the House, and I'm pleased to table some reports. This came to my attention just yesterday, when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, who is generally a fair-minded person, made the statement that public education has been a train wreck in this province. I daresay I find that offensive to many people, probably. I'm pleased to report today, because I recalled this as a result of those comments, the results of the most recent program for international student assessments from the OECD. In these reports – the requisite numbers are there – Alberta students placed second in the world in reading and first in Canada, second in the world in scientific literacy and first in Canada, and eighth in mathematical literacy. As parents, with my spouse, Denise, of three teenage children in public schools in this province, we know this is a very good system.

The Speaker: Hon. minister and others who have tablings coming forward, please remember to just state what the tabling is about as briefly as possible. I know that some have more experience than others in that regard, but let's all be reminded to be mindful of the clock.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got the requisite five copies of a letter that was sent by our Health critic and MLA for Calgary-Fish Creek to the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta asking for an investigation into whether or not Helios has broken the Health Act or any other legislation.

I also have five copies of an e-mail that was sent out from the office of the Finance minister and Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert regarding the exclusion of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation from the stakeholder consultations.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the FOIPed Alberta Health Services document referred to yesterday in question period by the hon. Member for Calgary-

Fish Creek. These documents show that in 2009 Edmonton had critically few dispatch units for an average of three hours a month, a number that's increased 10 times to 30 hours as of last month.

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

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is one by Ms Jennifer Marcotte, making its rounds on the Internet, with 2,000 shares and 1,000 likes, describing the good work that Alberta teachers do in our classrooms.

The second one is a tabling of a report done by the Parkland Institute called Stabilizing Alberta's Revenues. You'll remember that yesterday I tabled an article from the Canada West Foundation. Dr. Roger Gibbins said that we have to have different revenue streams, i.e. taxes. This report by the Parkland Institute summarizes the same thing if we're ever going to have predictable, sustainable funding or ever save any of this one-time resource that we have.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of postcard submissions that Albertans made to our prebudget tour, visiting seven cities in the last few weeks. I have some comments here from Paul, Carolee, Cecily, and S.M. Demers talking about the need for more long-term care facilities.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague for Lacombe-Ponoka I have the five requisite copies here for the Assembly of, I believe, a quote that he made in a newspaper.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have three points of order. I think we can probably deal with them quite quickly. Nonetheless, let's hear what they are.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, I believe you're first. You have the first two. I assume you'll be doing them separately.

Point of Order Insulting Language

Mr. Anderson: I can do them all together just in the interests of time. It's from the book of standing orders, as I reference it, chapter 23, verses (h), (i), and (j), Mr. Speaker. It was funny. Yesterday, I think, we were very happy to see that the government had taken a new approach to how they were going to change the tone in the building here. I thought it was impressive, and we were excited about it over here, so we came ready to engage in a good conversation, scale back the tone of our questions as per your suggestions, and so forth. Well, we weren't reprimanded once. That's an improvement. We certainly were trying our best.

Then what did we hear? Well, we heard the Deputy Premier, the Finance minister and Treasury Board president, refer to us as the wild alliance, which, of course, Mr. Speaker, you have on multiple occasions told us and him, that member as well as all of us, not to do. Then when you asked him to correct it, he took the time to take the shot again before misquoting our name again as Wildrose alliance, which it is not. We are the Wildrose Party or the Wildrose caucus for the purposes of this Legislature. I know it's a hard couple of words for the minister to memorize, Wildrose

caucus, but if he could perhaps do that, that would be very much appreciated.

He also attempted to tie, I think in a very disturbing way, our party to the comments of a former campaign manager on a recent issue that has, I would say, disgusted a lot of people in this House if not all. I would hope all. I think that that should be below the Finance Minister and Deputy Premier of this province.

The Premier called us extreme. The Minister of Municipal Affairs, before he got himself into some hot water later on – that was a good one – called us arrogant and ignorant, and there were many other such examples of that.

Now, I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker. I would hope and challenge the government to do what I would like to do and, I think, what they would like to do – certainly, I know what that House leader over there would like to do – and that is try to have a good debate in here, a good, sharp, strong debate but without hurling insults and creating disorder by saying things that are patently untrue about other parties and, certainly, the name-calling, at the very least the name-calling.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that that Deputy Premier should absolutely memorize the name of our party because we are the party that went from zero to 17 seats in less than four years, and we're the party that went from 5 per cent to 34 per cent in just four years. We are the government in waiting that is waiting patiently for our opportunity in four years to replace that government and show you all what good government looks like.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a wonderful speech but not a point of order. It did clarify some things for us. Of course, while admonishing the Minister of Finance for using incorrect names, he called him the Deputy Premier, which, of course, as we all know, is the Minister of Municipal Affairs at the moment, not the Minister of Finance.

An Hon. Member: What?

3:00

The Speaker: Excuse me. I don't know who just yelled out, "What?" but that is extremely inappropriate, and if I catch you doing it again, you will pay a penalty, whoever it was. Be reminded, please, that there's decorum to be followed here.

You have the floor, hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In any event, the Minister of Municipal Affairs is currently the Acting Deputy Premier. When we get into this issue of whether you're using the right names, you know, it's very clear that sometimes you can get the name wrong, particularly if you're referring to people who are still searching for their identity and have changed names over and over again, unlike others who have had the same name for some 40 or 50 years.

There is a difference of viewpoint sometimes, and it's not wrong to have a difference of viewpoint. I do actually agree entirely with the hon. member when he says that we should stay away from things that are patently untrue. I would appreciate it if in the future we can stay away from allegations of corruption because that is not the Alberta that we know and love and live in. The Alberta that we know and love and live in has parliamentarians who respect this province and who do their best for this province even when we disagree with each other as to what the best is. So if we want to stay away from things that are patently untrue, I would think that would be a good thing to do.

I do actually appreciate the idea that we should have decorum in the House, but sometimes it's not inappropriate to refer to an individual's position as extreme or to a party's position as extreme when it is extreme. There are nuances that must be adhered to, obviously. Obviously, we should not be using language which diminishes or denigrates members or parties, for that matter. We should stick to things that are true. We should stay away from the hyperbole. I can assure that hon. member that if he will work with his caucus to make that happen in the House, my caucus will respond with alacrity.

The Speaker: Thank you. I don't assume there's anyone else who wishes to chime in on this. Clearly, this is a point of clarification to a degree. However, let me remind both sides of the House. In this case, I'll start with the government side. You know, you've got to be extremely careful when you toss around words like arrogant and ignorant. Take a look at the context within which you're using them. They're not helpful. They're not particularly polite.

We've heard other comments here in the last two days, comments such as corruption, which I commented on, comments like warehousing of people, comments that so-and-so or such-and-such organization or whatever it was is deceitful or is purposely deceiving or whatever, terms like that, and train wreck from yesterday and so on. You know, surely we are all above those kinds of comments in the context in which they were delivered. Surely we're there. Quite appropriately, citation 23(j) says that members should not use "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." I would agree. So let the reprimand stand equally to government members and ministers as it does to opposition on that point. That clarifies that.

I assume we can move on now to the point of order. Edmonton-Centre, I believe you had one.

Point of Order Allegations against Members

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I raised the point of order toward the end of the exchange between the Minister of Municipal Affairs and myself. In fact, it was, I believe, during the additional offering he made. I was a bit surprised because I was expecting a bit of a retraction or an explanation of why he would say such things against people who live in rural Alberta, putting out that they somehow didn't carry their share of the workload and didn't deserve to have any share of the money. But, no, in fact he got up and kept swinging or kept digging; I'm not sure which.

Under 23(h), making allegations against another member, he did go on at a certain point – again, you have the benefit of the Blues; I don't – to say that I and members of my caucus didn't give a hoot about rural Alberta and didn't understand them, et cetera, et cetera. Well, this is clearly a comment that is meant to inflame. It is meant to create debate in this House. It was meant to demean. I think it was quite pointed. I mean, I've made no secret of the fact of how proud I am of my constituents living in the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre, most of whom do live in high-rise buildings and condominiums and apartments. It wasn't hard to understand that this was a direct insult to me and to the people that I represent. Not acceptable to me, Mr. Speaker. You know, sticks and stones will break my bones, and I've taken a heck of a lot of that from the other side, but don't you go dissing my constituents, and that's what went on here.

A point of order is raised against an individual member in this House, and I understand that. I would not be quite so exercised

about this if it was just another shot at me because, as I said, I've had a lot of them, and I'm still standing. It must annoy the heck out of you guys. But the minister did utter words that were meant to create a disturbance. They were meant to inflame a discussion. They were meant to demean. They were meant as an allegation that we didn't care about people who reside in rural Alberta, and that's simply not true.

Now, if the Speaker would like and would give me a bit of time, I can go back and start pulling the debates, because I talk a lot in this Assembly, where I have brought forward issues of concern to people in rural Alberta, where I've received letters from them, where I've raised issues that they wanted me to raise in this House. I believe that what the minister has said is both untrue and was intended to be insulting.

I know that the Speaker is very fond of quoting *Beauchesne* 494 and saying: well, you know, both of you can say something true at the same time. With respect, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that that fits the bill in this case. It was meant to be insulting to me and my constituents, it was meant to demean, and it was meant to put me in a position where I and my caucus members were being put out to Albertans as that somehow we didn't care about those that reside in rural Alberta, and that's simply not true. There's no compelling argument coming from him that would make me believe that it was or make anyone else believe that it was, so I would like that member to retract that statement, please.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before that – and I specifically wrote it down because it stuck in my head when the question came, before I responded and made those comments – the quote was: not a fan of the cities. I was accused of not being a fan of the cities. I've lived part-time in the city since I've been an MLA. As a rural MLA you yourself live – not yourself, but the previous Speaker did – half the time in the country and half the time in the city because we work here. I'm more acutely aware of, I think, as many of my rural colleagues . . . [interjection] I did not interrupt you.

I more acutely know the challenges that go on in rural Alberta and in urban Alberta because we spend half of our time in both places. I have worked very hard with every single municipality from Fort Macleod to Fort McMurray, from Edmonton to Edgerton, and from Calgary to Cold Lake, Mr. Speaker. I've been to 328 different municipalities in this province and met with the councils and talked to them over the 11 years as MLA.

All I meant to point out – and I know that the hon. member said: don't go dissing my constituents. Well, rural Albertans are my constituents, too, and I get very frustrated when anyone suggests: "Oh, rural Alberta has money. We need to pull it out and put it into the cities." As I explained, a rural Albertan will stand up and say: "We're the ones that drive the economy. You guys get all the breaks, and you get fantastic schools, and you get all sorts of facilities while we sit out in rural Alberta and drive the economy." They're just as frustrated sometimes, Mr. Speaker, by the discrepancy that goes on, and they feel they overcontribute and get less back.

Just as the member pointed out, right now she feels that urban Albertans get less back than what they contribute. Mr. Speaker, every single jurisdiction – if I go to Fort McMurray, they say that they drive the economy. If I go to an agricultural district like Brooks, they say: well, we employ a lot of people and drive the economy. Every single place in this province contributes to the economy and probably feels like they don't get as much back. We have limited resources. Any time we start off with a question that

says, "They have more; let's take it," it creates an us-versus-them atmosphere, and I have no patience for us versus them.

Edmonton and Edgerton and Calgary and Cold Lake are just as entitled to resources as anybody else. It's not about who has more because, as many colleagues will attest, you don't make yourself richer by stealing from somebody else. We're all in this together. We're all Albertans. Every single community deserves the resources available to try and build itself up, to make itself stronger so that we have a stronger Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

I know the member got emotional and said: don't you go dissing my constituency. She also said that I'm not a fan of the cities, which I take exception to. I also took exception to the fact that it sounded like she was trying to steal resources from rural Alberta. I'm not a fan of that either, so I got defensive, but I didn't say anything different than this member did on any plane.

3:10

The Speaker: Okay. I've heard enough. Thank you.

You know, it just illustrates the point here that clarifications are sometimes absolutely necessary. We've heard from Edmonton-Centre where she stands on this issue. We've heard from the Minister of Municipal Affairs where he stands. I'm grateful for the clarification.

Just for the record I lived in four different locations in rural Alberta over almost 15 years, so I get a pretty good feel for what urban and rural life is like, and I, like every single member here, appreciate both because that's what's made this province so strong. Let's keep it at that high level. Thank you.

Let's move on.

Orders of the Day

Committee of Supply

[Mr. Rogers in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Supplementary Supply Estimates 2012-13 General Revenue Fund

The Chair: Before we commence this afternoon's consideration of supplementary supply, I'd like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As you know, the Assembly approved amendments to the standing orders that impact supplementary supply consideration. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the third party, if any, and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (d) for the next 20 minutes, the member of the fourth party, if any, and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private Members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, and

(f) any Member may speak thereafter.

During the above rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the above rotation is complete, speaking times are reduced to five minutes. Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 23, approved by the Assembly yesterday, the time allotted for consideration is three hours.

The Committee of Supply has under consideration the estimates of five ministries. They are Education, Enterprise and Advanced Education, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Municipal Affairs, and the Ministry of Transportation.

We will start with the Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm rising on behalf of the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. I would like to move the 2012-13 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund. These estimates are consistent with the amended 2012-13 fiscal plan presented in these estimates and will provide additional spending authority to five government departments. When passed, the estimates will authorize increases of about \$401 million in voted expense, \$55 million in voted capital investment, and \$77.5 million in voted nonbudgetary disbursements of the government.

The estimates will authorize increases for the Department of Education, the Department of Enterprise and Advanced Education, the Department of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, the Department of Municipal Affairs, and the Department of Transportation. The ministers responsible for these departments will be happy to answer any questions from the members of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll recognize the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Smith: All right.

Mr. Anderson: Just a second. I just wanted to clarify something, Mr. Chair, if I could. Do we now get an hour, with ten minutes back and forth? Is that how this works?

The Chair: That's correct.

Mr. Anderson: So the government is done with their comments, and now we get the full hour?

The Chair: That's correct. Back and forth in ten-minute blocks.

Mr. Anderson: Okay. I just wanted to clarify that. Thank you.

The Chair: I recognize the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, this is the first time that I've participated in the supplementary estimates process, so you do have to forgive me if I am shuffling through papers and getting myself organized here as I go through. I have noticed as we're going through and looking at the specific ministries that I'm not quite certain how these questions are going to be answered. Is it the minister who introduced that I should be directing my questions to on all of this?

The Chair: Through the chair, please.

Ms Smith: Through the chair? All right. That sounds good.

I guess let me just start out by saying that when I got the supplementary estimates document yesterday, I thought it told a pretty disturbing story. We had a government that began the year saying that we were going to end up with a deficit of somewhere

around \$900 million. Now, of course, we look at these estimates and we see that the government hopes that that number is going to come in at \$3.9 billion, but that isn't the total cash deficit as we know. We know that the government is also adding more in debt financing, and we suspect that total cash deficit is going to add at least another \$2 billion and that it will be closer to \$6 billion. So we recognize that this document still doesn't tell the whole story.

There are a couple of things that I do want to go through as I'm talking about the areas where we are seeing the requests for additional dollars, but I do want to provide a little bit of context first. It was interesting to be quizzed in the press scrum coming in. Apparently the government is quite proud of the fact that it has net assets that are exceeding other provinces. Of course, I think it's important to remember the context for where these dollars are coming from to be able to cover the cost. There are only two places. One of them is our sustainability fund, and the other is our debt. We'll get a better idea, hopefully, of what the debt is when we see the budget tomorrow, but I do want to point out for the record that the sustainability fund once hit a high-water mark of \$17 billion. These estimates say that it will end the fiscal year at \$2.7 billion, assuming that the news for the rest of this month doesn't get even worse. So the government has vaporized over \$14 billion in savings. That is pretty much the size and the equivalent of the heritage savings trust fund.

When you look at the level of spending that was approved in budget last year, I'm also reminded of the argument that was made and the commitment that was made by the previous Premier, who had talked about how there was going to be more discipline in managing in-year spending. I had anticipated that what that would mean is that we would never have one of these kinds of debates again, where getting to the end of the year, we're running out of money, and we have to make sure that we vote so that the government can continue to pay its bills, especially when we look at how much spending was already approved in the last budget.

The Premier often likes to say that we don't have a spending problem, that we have a revenue problem, but I think we need to point out some of the issues around revenue as we're talking about the government's need to have additional dollars for spending. This year revenues are still estimated to be \$37.9 billion. That is the fourth-best revenue year ever in the history of the government of Alberta.

Now, just to give some other interesting statistics, just so that we can see how badly out of whack the government spending is this year as they're seeking our approval to give them even more dollars to spend, this number falls just short of the boom years. In 2006-07 we had revenues that were only \$128 million higher than are being proposed today. In that year we weren't running a deficit. It was an \$8.3 billion surplus that was able to go into the sustainability fund and other savings accounts.

3:20

There's another year as a benchmark, 2007-08. Revenues were \$288 million more than this year, again, just marginally more than this year. In that year \$4 billion was set aside in the sustainability fund and other savings accounts. In previous years the predecessor of our current Premier was not only able to have an equivalent amount of revenues and not run deficits in those two years, to actually run significant surpluses, but a total, if you want me to do the math there, of almost \$13 billion was able to go into the sustainability fund, that has been wiped out in the subsequent years.

Here we are in the year that we had record revenues, 2011-12. There was \$1.368 billion more than is being brought in this year, and that year is when we started seeing this turning point. In a

year when we had record revenues, the government consumed \$3 billion out of the sustainability fund. Where are we today? We are only \$1.368 billion off an all-time record revenue in this province, and we're headed to a \$4 billion to \$6 billion deficit. If you look at it this way, even if we had the very best revenue ever, if we had managed to match the year that we had the all-time best revenue ever, we would still have at least a \$2.6 billion deficit year. This is not a revenue problem that this government faces.

The question is: why is it that here we are at the end of the year seeing the kind of spending that we approved in the last budget, having a commitment from the government to say that they are going to find in-year savings, saying that they're going to have more discipline in managing the spending in year, and we're now here debating adding an additional \$659 million above what was approved? The amount being requested for the vote today: \$535 million.

It is quite obvious to me and, I think, quite obvious to Albertans that this government has absolutely lost complete control over its spending. I think they're asking whether there is a single fiscal conservative over on the other side. We talk about this issue of results-based budgeting. The Premier trumpeted it, saying that this was going to make all the difference in the world, that we would be finding all kinds of – and I seem to recall the Finance minister again and again and again saying how throughout the year he was finding all this evidence of in-year savings that could be reallocated. Yet here we are at the end of the year having to vote over half a billion dollars in additional spending for a government whose spending is already completely out of control.

How will this end up? We were supposed to spend a staggering \$41.15 billion. Now we find out it is actually going to be \$41.8 billion. How does this break down? Well, I want to go through each of these because I do find it quite interesting the ways in which the budgeting has been badly managed. You look at the issue of Education, for instance. This is a \$4.4 billion spending envelope. They are asking for us to find an additional \$24 million, which is going to a good cause. They underestimated what the number of students would be and they have to flow that through to the school boards is what it looks like. I guess the question is: with the Premier's and the Finance minister's results-based, zero-based budgeting process, which they claim to have started months and months and months ago, why couldn't they find .5 per cent of the total budget of in-year spending to be able to reallocate to this higher priority item?

That's what this exercise is all supposed to be about, moving money from lower priority areas to higher priority areas. In fact, this whole exercise reminds me a little bit of an episode of *Yes Minister* that I once saw. In that episode of *Yes Minister* Jim Hacker goes and talks to his senior civil servant, Sir Humphrey, and is trying to get a 5 per cent reduction overall on government spending. The entire episode goes through all of the ways in which it is impossible for them to be able to find a 5 per cent reduction. We hear this often from the civil service. Not only are they cutting to the bone; they're cutting to the marrow. There's no possible way that they could find in-year savings. What happens at the end of this episode? Well, of course, the senior civil servant, Sir Humphrey, discovers there's something he wants, so he manages to get all of his people to find that 5 per cent in every single department that it was asked for in the first place.

I think this is what we're seeing here. This is the thing that I find very frustrating about the government saying one thing publicly, and then we see the numbers that appear when it comes down to these supplementary estimates. I find it impossible to believe that the Education department, that spends \$4.4 billion, 10

per cent of government's overall spending, cannot manage to find in-year savings of \$24 million to direct to this high-priority item.

On the issue of advanced education we have a situation which is kind of the opposite, which is a bit strange, and I look forward to hearing some response as to why this would be the case. In advanced education if you look at the amount of the student loans, support for adult learning was initially supposed to be \$272 million. Now it looks like they need another \$77 million to be able to make that support work. Well, that means that they're off on that budget line item by 28 per cent.

The Chair: Hon. leader, I'll just interrupt you for a minute. The first 10 minutes have expired. I would offer a member of Executive Council a chance to respond if they so choose. If not, then you or another member could continue.

Mr. Campbell: I listened quite interestedly to the Leader of the Official Opposition's comment about savings. I am looking forward tomorrow to our budget deliberations, when Albertans will see the work that we have done as a government to bring our spending in line and make sure that we're investing in the Premier's key priorities. Education is one of them.

I think that when you look at what the minister is asking for, the fact of the matter is that while we are seeing, you know, increases in revenue, we'll actually see a decrease because we'll have about \$6 billion less revenue than we forecasted. But we're also seeing dramatic increases in population in this province. This year alone 97,000 people into the province of Alberta, which is the size of Red Deer. If you look at Red Deer and you look at the infrastructure that Red Deer has as far as housing, as far as schools, as far as roads, hospitals, we are having to play catch-up to get that built for all Albertans.

When we look at all of our priorities, Mr. Chair, I can tell you that through results-based budgeting our departments have done a very good job of sitting down and looking at what's important to the priorities of this province, to all Albertans. Our Premier has made it very clear to all Albertans that we are going to look after our most vulnerable. We've taken that into consideration.

I think that when we look at the different departments and the estimates that they're asking for, some of them are things that you can't budget for such as disasters. While we have an emergency fund, the fact of the matter is that you can't budget for the number of disasters we're going to have in this province. I look at what the minister of SRD is asking for in the area of wildfires. Again, we've already this year decided that we're getting into the wildfire season a month early. We already had a fire down in Lethbridge a couple of weeks ago. I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that out in my area, you know, the snowfall is not what it was last year. The forest industry plays a very key part in this province to a number of rural communities, and we have to make sure that we have top-notch firefighters and programs in place to deal with those disasters when they happen.

I look at the mountain pine beetle, Mr. Chair. Again, living on the eastern slopes of the Rockies in West Yellowhead and looking at forest-based communities, it's important that we get control of the mountain pine beetle. I can tell you that with the work we do with industry and with the federal government, again, we are just maintaining our status in the sense that the pine beetle is not progressing as rapidly as it could. I'll say to you that when I look at the warm winter we've had this year, I wouldn't be surprised if we're going to see another infestation of the mountain pine beetle, so that's going to have an effect on our forest industries right up and down the eastern slopes, from down in Rocky Mountain House and up to my area and up to Grande Prairie and Peace

River. Those are rural communities that depend on forestry for a living, so we have to do a very good job of maintaining the mountain pine beetle program. I think it's money well spent.

Again, going back to firefighting, you'll see in SRD's estimates they're looking to fix a bomber. We have a very good program for water bombing. I think it's also important, Mr. Chair, to say that we share our firefighting programs with other provinces and with the northern states and even Mexico. They come up into my riding and actually do their training at the Hinton Training Centre. They reciprocate when we have incredible fires and we need manpower. So it's important that we keep that fleet up because not only are we helping Albertans; we're actually helping people in B.C., Saskatchewan, Ontario, the northern states, and, as I say, even as far south as Mexico.

So it's easy to sit here and say that it's easy to find 5 per cent here and it's easy to find 5 per cent there, but, Mr. Chair, I sat through the budget deliberations with my cabinet colleagues, and when I look at the priorities of our Premier and at the number of programs that are under fire by Albertans and the number of people that are coming into this province and who are using these programs, I think that what we're asking for here is very reasonable under the circumstances. I think that all Albertans will be happy to see that we have taken a very reasonable and a very measured approach when we bring our budget forward tomorrow, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

3:30

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. leader.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that what the supplementary estimates show is that the results-based budgeting process, that they continue to talk about, actually has been a failure this year because you should be able to have covered the amount that is being requested here by moving from low-priority items to high-priority items if you're doing that process right. If you're not doing it right, then I suppose the government needs to take a closer look at how they might modify that process so that we can find some of these savings as we go forward, when it's going to become even more important.

I do have a number of questions that I want to ask. I'm not sure; can we go back and forth? That's fantastic. But I do want to just point out a couple of other things before I go back to the question and answer. When I look at, for instance, ESRD – and I'll return to that one – the government had budgeted in one area \$484 million for disaster relief. They blew the budget by \$286 million, a 59 per cent increase over what they had budgeted. Again, I will return to that in greater detail.

In Municipal Affairs, again, it's a \$39 million increase, which is 4.5 per cent. It goes back to the point I was raising. If you're truly serious about results-based budgeting, why couldn't they have found \$39 million within the budget envelope to be able to move from lower priority items to higher priority items? Transportation: same thing. The \$39 million represents 3 per cent more than what was budgeted. It's mystifying to me, if this results-based budgeting process is working, why \$39 million could not be found within the budget.

I want to go back to the issue of disaster relief because this is the area where the government consistently year after year after year continues to budget in the same way when we know that what we're doing is not working. Let me go through and read you some history of SRD requests for disasters and fires. The 2003 supplementary estimate was for \$113 million; 2004, a

supplementary estimate for \$125 million; 2005, a supplementary estimate for \$80 million; in the 2006-07 budget year a supplementary estimate for another \$251 million. What was happening in 2006-07? Well, there was a large fire in the Edmonton neighbourhood of MacEwan. That was one of the major issues that happened, with \$25 million in damage.

In 2007-08 another supplementary estimate, \$152 million. What happened that year? Well, there was flooding in Calgary. In 2008-09 another supplementary estimate, \$134 million. What was happening that year? Well, there was a wildfire in Grimshaw. In 2009-10, a supplementary estimate for \$150 million. What happened there? Drought in northern Alberta. In 2010-11, a supplementary estimate of \$156 million. What happened that year? Well, we had flooding in Irvine, down near Medicine Hat. In 2011-12, a supplementary estimate of \$280 million. What happened that year? Wildfires in central and northern Alberta, in Slave Lake. Now, of course, we're looking at 2012-13, disasters in Mackenzie county in northwest Alberta and, additionally, wildfires.

Here's the point I'm making, Mr. Chair. We do not know where a disaster will be in the province, but this record demonstrates year after year after year that we will have a disaster somewhere, and it will be significant, in the order of \$100 million to \$200 million more each and every single year than the government budgets. So if you have this record of getting it wrong every single year you try to do it, why wouldn't you actually change the way you do your budgeting? That's what most people would do. They'd look and say: "Gee, you know what? We consistently are off budget. Why don't we budget more so that if by some miracle things don't go wrong, we'll have leftover, we'll have a surplus at the end of the year? Then we can talk about what to do with that surplus rather than talking about how we're going to have to go back to the Legislature to ask for a supplementary estimate."

I would ask the minister to comment on why it is that we now see this pattern year after year after year of them continuing to budget in the same way, which has demonstrated that it doesn't work.

The Chair: Hon. minister, do you care to respond?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Chair, I think all I will say to that is that basically what the member is asking us to do is maybe overbudget, and she's saying that we'll have a surplus at the end of the year. The fact of the matter is that we know we're going to have disasters. What we don't know is the extent of those disasters. Again, we can't predict the weather.

I don't think anybody would have predicted the fire in Slave Lake and the devastation that occurred up there, but we were able to have the money through the Alberta emergency fund to look after that. Nobody could predict the flooding that we had down in the Medicine Hat area, and again we had the money available to look after that. The fact of the matter is that we do have the funds available through our disaster funds and our emergency fund to look after those disasters. I think that the fact that we're asking for this money at the end of the year is saying, you know, that we do know that we have disasters happening, we do fund for some of it, but we know that we can't fund for all of it all of the time, and we just continue to do what we do, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

The hon. leader.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to make a prediction. I made a prediction with my very first question in the Legislature that we would end up the year with \$5 billion. I'm

going to make a prediction that if the government continues to budget for disasters this way, we will be talking a year from now about how they're going to need an extra \$150 million or \$200 million for some disaster that no one could foresee because year after year after year after year after year after year we have demonstrated that they are not budgeting for it properly. But I'll leave that point right now. Just do note that that is my prediction of what we're going to be facing next year.

What I do want to know, though, is why it is that with an all-time record in tax take and with income and other taxes exceeding the budget by almost \$800 million – we don't talk about that a lot. The Premier likes to talk about the bitumen bubble and bitumen spread, but what we don't end up talking about is how many additional dollars we're getting because of the booming economy from income tax revenue, corporate income tax revenue, and other revenue. Why is it that with getting an additional \$800 million that they did not expect from all of those other areas, they are also on top of that now asking for an additional \$600 million in spending? Why is it that they talk about having a revenue problem when it's quite clear that we don't?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Chair, that's out of my pay grade. I'll take the question under advisement and have the Minister of Finance respond to the Leader of the Opposition.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. leader.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Also, out of curiosity, I was wondering why it is that our transfers from the government of Canada came in under budget. I would have anticipated that we would have a pretty good fix on what those revenues would be. Why is it that they came in under budget?

Mr. Campbell: Again, I will take the question under advisement for the Minister of Finance and get an answer back to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Ms Smith: Well, I gather that none of my questions are going to be answered, but I'm just going to ask them all the same. There are going to be a couple of questions that I'd like to ask on Transportation, and hopefully we'll be able to get some answers for that, or maybe the minister can talk to his colleague and we'll be able to get an answer then, or we can bring it up in question period.

The supplementary estimates presented for capital investment, totalling \$1.282 billion, are \$35 million higher than the estimates presented with Budget 2012. That pegged capital investment at \$1.247 billion. Now they are asking for an additional \$39 million on top of that \$1.282 billion. I'm just curious. The difference between the initial Budget 2012 estimate and the \$1.282 billion is \$35 million. Where did that \$35 million come from to bridge that gap? Was that through previous supplementary estimates – again, I don't recall us going through this process before – was it a carry-forward from Budget 2011, or was it through a special warrant?

Mr. Campbell: Well, the supplementary estimate approval is comprised of the following, Mr. Chair: \$100 million for the construction of the northeast Anthony Henday ring road in Edmonton, and this was added to fully fund the project after final approval was received for this P3; \$28.6 million for twinning passing lane projects along highway 63 as part of the funding approved to twin the highway from House River north to Fort

McMurray. This is partly offset by \$89.6 million being lapsed due to the lower than budgeted spending on other capital investment projects, which included the interchange at Queen Elizabeth II highway and 41st Avenue S.W., the twinning of highway 43 west of the Sturgeon Lake Indian reserve, the paving of highway 88, the twinning of highway 2A, and the work on the Little Bow reservoir.

What we've been able to do, Mr. Chair, is basically offset a large amount of that money on the fact that we've had other budgeted spending come in lower than expected, so we're asking for the approval of the \$39 million.

Ms Smith: Well, I don't think I was all that clear, so maybe I can help the minister by walking through a couple of pages here. If you go to page 5, it says on the Transportation line item that the original estimate was \$1.246 billion, and now it says that our current estimate is \$1.282 billion. That's where the \$35 million difference is that I'm curious about. How did that gap get bridged? I know that he's now asking for an additional \$39 million on top of that, but these numbers don't seem to match.

3:40

What I'm concerned about is that there was an original estimate that was approved in Budget 2012 of \$1.246 billion, and now we're being told that the current estimate is \$1.282 billion. I'm just wondering how we actually got \$35 million of additional spending to get us to that before you're asking for this additional \$39 million. Is this borrowing? Is this a special warrant? Were there some supplementary estimates that I missed? There does seem to be a mismatch in the numbers in this document that I'm just having a hard time figuring out.

Mr. Campbell: I'll make sure that the Minister of Transportation gets the answer back to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Smith: How much more time do I have, Mr. Chair? I must be getting close to the end of my time.

The Chair: You have another 34 minutes. Other members of your caucus can speak as well, hon. leader, if you so desire, no more than 10 minutes at a time.

Ms Smith: Am I at the end of my second 10 minutes?

The Chair: You can continue, or you can have someone else start.

Mr. Anderson: You have 26 minutes left.

Ms Smith: Twenty-six minutes left. Got it.

Well, let me just ask one more question – again, it goes back to the issue of the disaster relief – and then I will hand it off to my colleagues to ask a few questions as well, the critics in different areas. I know my Finance critic has some questions that he wanted to ask as well.

The question I had on the issue of the nine disasters declared in 2012: which one in particular resulted in the need for \$59.4 million more for disaster recovery?

Mr. Campbell: I can get more information for the hon. member, but there were 15 disaster recovery programs announced this fiscal year, with the majority of the disasters being overland flooding. To support the recoveries from those 15 disasters is where the \$59.3 million is required. I'll get the detailed breakdown for the Leader of the Opposition.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms Smith: Just so I'm clear and he knows which area I'm looking at, this is, again, under the Municipal Affairs estimate. It's gone from, again, a \$1.3 billion current estimate with a supplementary estimate of \$59 million. It looks like that amount is under the Alberta Emergency Management Agency disaster recovery. That is different than the disaster recovery amount that we've been talking about under Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

I guess I'm not all that sure about why certain disaster recovery dollars get allocated to one department and why disaster recovery dollars get allocated to a different department. Once again, going back to the point that I had raised earlier – and I haven't looked at this to see if this one is consistently year after year after year after year over budget as well – it is pretty remarkable to budget \$44.7 million for disaster recovery and then turn around and have to ask for that essentially to be doubled, over \$59 million, so you end up with a total of \$104 million. There seems to be something going on there that we either need to see corrected in an upcoming budget or to have some better understanding about how those costs got allocated to that department to make the numbers so out of whack with what was initially approved.

The Chair: Hon. minister, will you get some other information for us?

Mr. Campbell: I'll make sure that both the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of ESRD get back and show the differentiation between the two of them.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Smith: Well, let me just finish by saying that because I'm new to this process, as are my colleagues, I guess I just kind of figured that the whole reason we're going through this is so that we could actually get answers to some of the questions that we've prepared for. I don't know if perhaps we needed to see additional help for the minister so that he would be able to answer some of these questions, but it does seem to me that this is a bit disappointing for me as well as my colleagues. We're doing our work to prepare for the estimates, to be able to ask questions, to go through the numbers. I guess I would just comment that it is unfortunate that we haven't seen the same amount of preparation and work on the other side.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. leader.

Are there other members of your caucus? The Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. First bill of the third phase of this first session, I guess you could say. These are frustrating bills for many reasons because why on earth would we – the first idea that comes to my mind with regard to this is: why are we here? Once again, I've been here five years now. This is the fifth time that one of these has been plopped on my desk, and this document is just as useless in year 5 as it was in year 1. It has huge amounts of money being approved: Education, \$24 million; Enterprise and Advanced Education, over a hundred million dollars; over \$300 million in Environment and SRD; \$60 million in Municipal Affairs; and almost \$40 million for Transportation. So over \$500 million in total if you take the entire amount.

It's frustrating because, again, like I think the Leader of the Official Opposition made very clear, we know that every year we're going to have emergencies. We know it's going to happen. So if we're going to have emergencies every year – and we know we're going to have them – why don't we budget a reasonable amount of money? We're not going to be dead on every time because, obviously, you can't predict where the fire will be or how bad it will be and so forth.

You know, it's kind of like a family budgeting in their household. What you do – I mean, what I do anyway; maybe others don't do this – is you put a little bit aside for maintenance of the vehicle, home repair, things that you're not planning on spending, that you don't want to spend, but if you look back on your previous budgets, you know there's a real good chance you're going to have to spend around a certain amount of money. You put that money aside – maybe it's \$1,000 or \$2,000; maybe it's a little bit more; maybe it's a little bit less – so that when the car needs a new fuel pump or whatever, you've got that money. You don't have to borrow the money. You don't have to take it out of your grocery money. You don't have to do that sort of thing. It's just basic, prudent planning that all households do, I would think, or most households do.

We know from what the Leader of the Official Opposition pointed out very clearly that it averages over the last 10 years or so about \$100 million to \$200 million in emergency funding that we need. Some years it's a little higher than that; some years it's a little lower. But, mostly, it's in that \$100 million to \$200 million range. So why does the government not budget for that?

The great thing is that it's just like with the household budget. If the money is still there at the end, that's great. You can put it into savings. You can take that money and you can go on a nice vacation, you know. You can buy a dog. You can do all kinds of really cool things with that extra money that you have that you were hoping not to spend and it turned out you didn't have to spend.

This is the point here. Budget for the disaster. Put about \$150 million to \$200 million there. Make it a budget item, approve it, and then if you don't use it, fantastic. Then in really bad years, only when you have years where you've got an extremely bad emergency, kind of a 1 in 10 years emergency, where it costs \$300 million to \$400 million to deal with it or whatever it is, you can come in with one of these bills and pass a supplementary supply bill. That's fantastic. That's a good thing to have the ability to do, and we could do it once every 10 years or once every five or six years or whatever. But to do it every single year: it just doesn't make any sense to budget in this way.

So I think that's a critical reform that we need to make in order to make sure that when we present a budget, it's a budget that is reflective of what we will actually be spending. Anybody that has to come in the last month and ask for more money every single budget year clearly doesn't have their act together, Mr. Chair. I would hope that as we go forward, this government would change that practice. Anyway, we'll see what happens.

3:50

Now, I am a little puzzled because we did have, as the Official Opposition leader noted, the former Deputy Premier, the now Finance minister, say many times during the year that they had found hundreds of millions of dollars in in-year savings, \$500 million here, \$400 million here, \$300 million, \$700 million, I mean, just numbers everywhere, you know, from this – what is it called? – zero-based, value-based budgeting.

Ms Smith: Results-based.

Mr. Anderson: Results-based budgeting. That's right.

If that's the case, if there are all these in-year savings in there, then why on earth are we back here asking for \$500 million? Is it because, perhaps, the government is addicted to in-year spending and they just have to go over the budget or that they just can't stick to a budget? Could it have something to do with that? It probably does. Despite them saving all this money in year, we're still back here asking for half a billion dollars.

Again, very poor budgeting. And it does make one wonder if we're getting the straight goods from the Finance minister with regard to this in-year savings program that they're talking about because we're not seeing the in-year savings or else we wouldn't be here asking for half a billion dollars more. The money that was passed already would have been sufficient because they would have been spending \$500 million less in other areas that they could have applied towards what they need here for emergency relief and so forth. I don't buy it, and I think that we need some truthfulness from this minister when it comes to the results-based budgeting process.

I would like some clarifying comments from the minister on that, and then I'll have a few other questions after.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Campbell: Well, I want to thank the member for his comments. I'm sure that the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance will be more than happy to answer the questions that the hon. member has brought forward.

Again, I think that when you look at the budget that comes out tomorrow, you'll see that results-based budgeting is working. Our minister is a very honourable individual, and he has set forward a program that is going to make sure that we are well looked after into the future in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Anderson: Well, Member for Edmonton-Centre, I am just so happy that we are here to spend these three hours as a group so that we can get answers from the government on this supplementary supply.

Ms Blakeman: In the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Anderson: In the fabulous urban, condo-rich constituency of Edmonton-Centre. It is a fantastic place.

I would note that it is a little frustrating. Actually, I don't want to be too hard on the current minister doing his best to fill in. The fill-in is doing his best. There's no way anybody could possibly know what's going on in all these different ministries, especially the ones at issue here: Education, Enterprise and Advanced Education, Environment and SRD, Municipal Affairs, and Transportation. It is too much to ask somebody who holds none of those portfolios to be here answering questions about the spending in those portfolios.

Again, one would ask: what is the point of this exercise? But here we are, and we will make the best of it in the short time that we have. This is how we do business in Alberta. This is how we approve \$500 million. Is it any wonder that we are going to be introducing our sixth straight deficit in this richest-in-the-nation province that we have?

My next round of questioning goes to that point. I have a hard time understanding how a province who has literally one of the greatest deposits of natural riches on Earth in a First World country, with the ability of First World technology, with a world-

class educated workforce not just from Alberta but from all over the world – they come to work here in order to take advantage of this treasure trove that we have. How on earth are we sitting here on the eve of an election talking about a supplementary supply bill? Eve of an election; sorry. Eve of a budget. No, no. No more elections, please. Three more years. Actually, it wouldn't be a bad idea to have one right now, but we can wait three more years.

It's difficult for me to understand how we can be talking about adding onto – essentially, what this does is add onto the current deficit that we have. We have a \$5.25 billion cash shortfall. People often wonder: why do the Wildrose and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Taxpayers Federation use a different number than what the government uses? The government says the budget deficit is going to be about \$4 billion; we say \$5.25 billion. The reason is because the government doesn't count capital spending on provincially owned assets as an expense when they calculate the deficit numbers offset as an asset on the balance sheet.

We add that into the total amount that we're spending. The best way to look at it, really, is that you take the amount the sustainability fund decreases in a year, and then you add in any debt taken out that year, and that will be essentially what the government's shortfall is because, obviously, if they didn't have a shortfall, they wouldn't be draining savings or going into debt. That's kind of an easy way, a quick one-minute way to look up what the real cash deficit is, for those folks who are riveted at home right now listening to this. That's the reason for the difference.

What I don't understand is how we could be here talking about a \$5.25 billion deficit for last year – and this, of course, will only add to that deficit – when we had in the last year some of the largest revenues in our province's history, not the largest but top three. Was it the second?

Ms Smith: It's the fourth.

Mr. Anderson: Sorry. It was the fourth-largest ever. The second-highest tax revenue haul, right? Anyway, the point is that that's lots of money coming in, tons of money coming in.

How can we have all this money, Minister, have the fourth-largest amount of money we've ever had on record, yet we're running – we'll take your number – a \$4 billion or \$5 billion deficit, a cash shortfall? How does that work? What got us here? Does your government recognize what got us here? Are you admitting that, in fact, there has been mismanagement in the past and now we're going to start things new and do things differently? Or is it just kind of: we've always done things right, and there is no blame to go here; we're just onward and upward, the same thing we've always done?

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Chair, I think that as a government we've met the needs of Albertans over the years understanding that, yes, we're very lucky as a province and that we are a leader in this country. But, you know, I can remember when I came into office in 2008 the Finance minister saying that, you know, we're looking at about an \$8 billion surplus. I can remember in September or October of that same year that all of a sudden we were going to run a deficit because of natural resources, just because of the price differentiation.

I mean, I follow the paper quite closely. I follow the stock market. I follow, you know, the predictions on what the price of oil is going to be. I can say that in the five years that I've been here watching it, nobody has ever correctly identified it yet. I think that as a government we've been very responsible in taking a

very conservative approach of what we saw as our revenue resources, what that figure was going to be.

Again, Mr. Chair, I look at 2008 when the recession hit. This province didn't miss a beat. It didn't miss a beat because of the fiscal responsibility of this government. It didn't miss a beat because of the money that we spent on infrastructure from the sustainability fund. It didn't miss a beat because this government had the foresight to put that money aside so that we had it to be able to spend it on infrastructure.

I remember talking to the construction contractors, especially the small construction contractors, that were so pleased that we were able to take that money and invest it into infrastructure so that those people could keep working. The number that comes to mind with me, Mr. Chair, is that about 70,000 people worked in the construction industry during the recession in this province because of the foresight of this government.

Mr. Chair, again, the world has not turned around. We see what's going on in Greece. We see what's going on in Europe. We see what's going on with our biggest trading partner to the south, the United States. Again, I think that the foresight of this Premier and the foresight of our Finance minister and the vision that they have of what we're going to do going forward is going to serve Albertans very well. I think that people are going to realize that in this budget we as a government made some very tough decisions. We wanted to continue to invest in health care because Albertans said to us that that's important. We wanted to continue to invest in education because Albertans said to us that that's important. Albertans want us to continue to invest in infrastructure, so building new schools, new hospitals. I've already said that we have to look after our most vulnerable.

4:00

Mr. Chair, I can tell you that we're going to do all those things, but that comes with a cost. I can tell you that when I look at the budget and I look at what's going to come forward from our Finance minister tomorrow, I'm proud to have him as our Finance minister. I'm proud of the vision that he's going to bring forward as Finance minister because it meets the priorities of our Premier, and that's looking after families and communities, making sure that we have economic outcomes in this province, and making sure that we're real stewards of our resources.

It's easy to sit on the other side and say: well, I would have done this; I would have done that. The fact of the matter is that on this side of the House we did things. We've done things to make sure that this province is going to be successful not only today but in the years to come. We've done things to make sure that we have a first-class education system, we have a first-class health care system, and we are going to look after our most vulnerable.

I'm looking forward to the budget tomorrow. I understand that this is an exercise that frustrates people – unfortunately, it's an exercise that has to happen – but I suggest to you that when the Finance minister tables his budget tomorrow, we'll have a lot different discussion in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Just for the information of the opposition, you have 13 minutes and 51 seconds left for this portion.

Mr. Anderson: Absolutely. Okay. Well, let's talk for a second about how the minister brought up the allegedly great job that this government has done managing this economy. I guess I would beg to differ. You know, first off, there are the confusing mixed messages. I thought that this was not our fathers' PC Party, first of

all, so I didn't know that they were still claiming the good that had been done by Premier Klein and others before him, mainly Premier Lougheed, as some of the things that they have done. I thought this was an entirely new party, that the good old boys weren't involved in it anymore, but I guess you're still celebrating their accomplishments as your own. I don't really understand that. You can't have it both ways. Nonetheless, it is what it is.

Now, let's talk about the fiscal management that has got us to this \$500 million ask and \$5 billion deficit. I just confirmed it with our researcher – actually, I thought this was the case – that this year, 2012, had the most tax revenue we've ever taken in as a province. It is a huge year. We had a pretty good year resourcewise; about \$8 billion, it's going to be. It's going to be a pretty good year, not the best ever but good. We move forward.

People need to understand how grossly mismanaged the public's finances have been over the last long while. Between the Don Getty, Ed Stelmach, and this current Premier's administrations we have taken a \$17 billion fund, a sustainability, rainy-day fund, that was meant to deal with what the minister just talked about – it was meant to deal with one year, two years of dips in revenues where we just weren't ready, and we had a little extra money to tide things over so we didn't have to go into debt and didn't have to interrupt our capital building and so forth. One or two years. We had a recession three quarters long in this province, let's say a year-long recession, okay? Since that year-long recession we have spent almost \$17 billion in five years. It will be \$17 billion by the end of year 6. It's \$14 billion by now. We have spent \$14 billion in five years to fund the operations and the capital spending of government despite record-high tax revenues and overall revenues, historically high. We've maybe had one or two years where it's been higher than the last four years. It has been a bonanza.

I mean, the other side loves to claim all the great things that they've done policywise. Sorry, guys. There were some good decisions made to lower taxes and to open up the oil sands with low tax regimes – and those were made a long time ago – and we are blessed with incredible resources. It is not you that have done this. It is the people of Alberta and the entrepreneurs of Alberta that have done this. They are the reason why we are doing well. They are the reason why we have 4 and a half per cent unemployment and the reason why we're bringing in such record revenues. It's not the Alberta government that has been responsible for that.

Now, could you have been more of a hindrance? Yeah, and you have been, with things like the royalty review, which was a complete disaster, and other regulatory issues that you brought forward. Don't talk about good fiscal prudence when you somehow drain a fund from \$17 billion to \$3 billion in five years despite record revenues. It's insane.

But you know what? As bad as that is, with the sustainability fund being essentially gone because of this mismanagement, there's one thing that is so inexcusable, so outrageous that I honestly think it is intergenerational theft of unprecedented proportions, and that is what this government has done, or not done, I would say, with Alberta's heritage fund.

Alberta's heritage fund was started in 1976 by a very visionary Premier and a very good Premier, Premier Lougheed. He put money into the heritage fund, and they put a certain percentage of resource revenues into the heritage fund until about 1986. They had grown the fund to a pretty good level. Since 1986 \$150 billion have been collected by this government in resource royalties.

An Hon. Member: Three hundred and fifty.

Mr. Anderson: Since 1986. Since 1986 it's been \$150 billion, unadjusted, in royalty revenues.

Less than 2 per cent of that \$150 billion – that's \$3 billion – was deposited into the fund during that time. So since 1986 you've put in a whole \$3 billion, but remarkably, unbelievably, during this time \$30 billion in interest generated by the heritage fund has been removed from the fund, placed in general revenues, and spent. The result: Alberta's heritage fund is worth less now when adjusted for inflation than it was when Premier Lougheed made the first deposit back in 1976. That is despicable. There is no other word to describe it.

I'm telling you that 20 years from now our kids and grandkids will look back at this and say: "You did what? You took that much money and you squandered it? You threw it away? You spent it on yourselves? You couldn't control yourselves? You left nothing? And now the oil and gas isn't worth near what it was. We can't get it out of the ground, so it's not worth anything to us now because of all the new technologies, and oil is plentiful, and there's no reason for it." What are they going to say at that time to us? We spent every dime. It's pure plundering. Everyone over there should agree with it and do something about it going forward, especially the new folks. You're not to blame for any of this. Do something about it. Turn the ship around. Turn the ship around.

Think about this, guys and gals. If we had just left the interest in the heritage fund, that \$30 billion that we skimmed... [interjection] Sorry?

The Chair: Through the chair, hon. member.

Mr. Anderson: If we had just saved the interest, that \$30 billion of interest, left it alone, not added another cent from 1986 on, not even the \$3 billion that were added by the government during that time, Mr. Chair, today our heritage fund would be worth well over a hundred billion dollars, likely closer to \$200 billion because of the power of compound interest. But we didn't do that. We leeching onto it. We spent it. The government of Alberta spent it like its own personal piggy bank, and we are here in 2013 with nothing to show for it. We've wasted our savings. We haven't grown the trust fund. Nothing. It is the most incompetent fiscal mismanagement that not only this province has ever seen but this nation has ever seen. Don't come and talk to Albertans about fiscal discipline and about all the wonderful things that you've done with a record like that.

4:10

Now, you can campaign and talk about what you're going to do different to make that not happen over the next 10, 15, 20 years, but don't say that you've got a sterling record of managing this province's finances. It is the most damning indictment possible. What has occurred under previous administrations is awful, and it needs to stop on a go-forward basis.

You know, I do look forward to the budget debate, and we'll be bringing a lot more forward. We'll be bringing some solutions forward for how to deal with this, and we hope that the government will be open to those solutions. We hope that they will have already adopted some of those solutions as their own, which is great, fantastic. If we can come up with solutions that we all agree with for cutting spending in places where we don't need it, that's something to celebrate. I don't care who gets the credit.

Let's just get on the road to financial recovery and not do what we just did over the past 25 years. It's 25 years of total embarrassment other than a brief time where Premier Klein cut the debt that had been put in place primarily by Premier Getty. It wasn't for his whole tenure, unfortunately – the spending got out

of control in the last five years – but in those first few years that was a bright spot, and that was something to show.

The Chair: Hon. member, your 10 minutes have expired.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you very much.

The Chair: An opportunity for the minister to respond if he chooses.

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Chair, I shouldn't get up, but I'm going to. A lot of rhetoric there. I think that first of all we have to understand that this is now a province of 3.8 million people. It's not 1.2 million people. Some of the people in the opposition like to think that we're still back in the good old days. The fact of the matter is that we're not. When I came here in 1978, I think there were 1.2 million people in this province.

An Hon. Member: I wasn't even born then.

Mr. Campbell: Well, there you go. There you go.

You know, Mr. Chair, we've heard comments about different jurisdictions. People are saying: well, look at Alaska, for example. Let's look at Alaska. The roads are in disarray. Employment is not very good. They're asking us for bitumen because their pipeline is not going to be operating here very quickly if they don't get product going through it.

Mr. Hehr: They're getting out of oil.

Mr. Campbell: Well, they're not getting out of oil. They've got no oil. They'd like to stay in oil.

The Chair: Through the chair, hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

Mr. Campbell: Also, Mr. Chair, as I say, you know, we've seen unprecedented growth in this province. When I look at the opposition and I look at the demands that they've made, they have the same concerns in their ridings, but they don't want to talk about that. They want new schools. They want new hospitals. They want new roads. They want recreation centres. You know, to sit there and say, "We're going to be fiscally responsible" and then to come and say to the government, "Well, we want these same demands from you" is a little hypocritical.

Our Premier, Mr. Chair, has made it very clear that we're going to spend within our means, that we're going to continue to build infrastructure, and that we're going to have a savings plan. We're going to keep money in the heritage trust fund, and we're going to have a savings plan. Even in tough times we're going to save money. So we are moving in the right direction.

I think that, again, to sit here and say that 25 years ago the government did bad things – the fact of the matter is that you look at what happened over the years. To bring Premier Getty's name forward, I can remember that in rural Alberta people were very happy with the decisions that Premier Getty made at the time when he made them because rural Alberta was in real tough shape. There were people about to lose their farmlands, and Premier Getty and this government made sure that they didn't.

As each Premier has come through this Chamber – and, fortunately, they've been Progressive Conservative Premiers – they've all done good things for this province. I'm proud of what Premier Klein did, I was proud to serve with Premier Stelmach and proud of the work that he did, and I'm proud to serve with this Premier. They all came with different ideas and different visions, but at the end of the day they all came forward to look after what was best for Albertans and best for this province. I have complete

confidence in our Premier. When she goes forward, when she talks about the Canadian energy strategy, when she talks about world-class education, when she talks about ending child poverty, when she talks about looking after the most vulnerable, Mr. Chair, you can take those words to the bank. She will do that. This caucus is proud to stand behind her, and I'm proud to be part of this government. Again, as I said before, I'm looking forward to our budget, and I'm looking forward to our Finance minister going out and having that dialogue with Albertans. Albertans can be excited about where this province is going to take us in the next 20, 25 years.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The next 20 minutes are for the fourth party.

Ms Blakeman: Third.

The Chair: The third party. My apologies, hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, you have the floor.

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. It has been an interesting afternoon so far. I don't know how successful we will be at getting answers for some of the more minute questions I had proposed for each ministry given the fact that we only have one representative from cabinet here to deal with all that. Frankly, I will say that I am disappointed in that. [interjection] Sir, we're all here for three hours. We take supplementary supply relatively seriously. It is \$500 million in spending that is occurring that's going to affect Albertans, affect our budget in a manner, and in my view the government didn't treat this exercise seriously. I'll leave that as it may be. I understand the hon. member here is doing the best he can.

Nevertheless, I will pick up and use this as an opportunity to talk about some things that I saw happening out there over the course of the last 40 years and where we are now and to say that actually I agree with many of the comments made by the hon. Member for Airdrie, and I don't often do that, you might know. We don't see things the same way. We don't see the role of government the same way. We usually don't see spending or fiscal matters the same way. But I will say that he is absolutely correct in using the term "intergenerational theft." He used that term, which is a bold term and one that I think he discussed very well. That is what has happened over the course of the last 40 years, intergenerational theft. That is the only way you can describe where we are at this juncture in Alberta.

I'll elaborate on that. Since 1971 we have brought in \$350 billion in nonrenewable resource revenue. As you are aware, Mr. Chair, once you sell a barrel of oil, you never have that barrel of oil to sell again. Wise fiscal planning would say that you have to convert that into another asset. You have to convert that cash you get from a barrel of oil or a hectolitre or whatever of natural gas or something of that nature into an asset. We have a vehicle to do that. It's called the heritage trust fund, that was devised to recognize that this is a one-time opportunity that we're going to get to sell these treasured resources. To be honest, sir, we have not done a very good job as a government in planning for the eventual day when, one, we'll either run out of oil and gas or, two, the world will move on. Those are two things that are without a shadow of a doubt going to happen to Alberta, and if people in this room believe that agriculture and tourism are going to carry the day after that's gone, well, I believe they are fundamentally misguided.

Turning towards the time I've been in the Legislature over the last five years, let's talk about the spending. I had in the main agreed with Premier Stelmach's decision to continue to build Alberta at that time. I continue to agree with this Premier, depending on what's happening in tomorrow's budget – we'll wait and see – to build infrastructure and the like. I understand why it behooves us to build schools, roads, and hospitals. I do not have a problem with that. In fact, I think those are wise government expenditures. But, believe me, that intergenerational theft continued under the last year of this administration, and depending on what happens tomorrow and, I guess, in future years, that intergenerational theft could continue.

4:20

There are a couple of moral propositions out there that you can do. You can cut the budget by \$6 billion – okay? – and take that to the electorate and say: "You get your low taxes, you get to drive on substandard roads, your kids can stay in schools that are overcrowded, and that is the price you pay for low taxes, or you can continue to spend and build Alberta." Here's a novel approach. You can ask Albertans to pay for the services that they're using today, for the services that they have used over the last 40 years that we have just decided to pay for through intergenerational theft, or the use of our nonrenewable resource revenue.

That, to me, if we do not raise revenue, is just saying that that's all right, that it's simply all right to treat this nonrenewable resource revenue as something we paper over deficits with, use in our daily lives. Let the future generations take care of themselves because – guess what? – they don't vote anyway. It's probably, actually, the wisest strategy for your party to go with. There are projections out there that maybe see oil and gas revenues going up, and by the sheer volume of bitumen we may – and I use the term "may" – be selling into the marketplace, we'll be all right. The Tories save the day. By the way, it's common knowledge out there for many people that you guys put the oil and gas in the ground anyway. So let's just carry on this way and leave it to the next crisis for a government to have the temerity to deal with our fiscal structure.

I am a recovering lawyer; I am not an economist. If you look at virtually every economist over the last 20 years, in the main they say that our fiscal structure is broken. You guys can get up in your press conferences and deny that, but I'd encourage anyone with an ounce of care for the future of this province and who wants to save something for when this province may not be in a better position to look at those reports. Ask yourself: what is right? If you ran as a progressive – and I think many of you over there did – ask yourself: was being a progressive just simply to spend the oil wealth faster? Well, if it was, you know, to me, that's not right, and you obviously didn't have a concept of finance or what that entails. I mean that. If you want to continue doing this, ask the citizens to pay for it, okay? I believe it would be the right move.

Between us and Saskatchewan, the second-lowest tax jurisdiction, there is a \$12 billion gap. From a perfectly moral principle you'd say: well, why wouldn't we just adopt something to that effect and save this oil and gas revenue for the future? I realize that may not be politically easy. It would be a tremendous moral argument to make. But, to me, even taking back half of that, looking Albertans in the eye and saying, "We're still the lowest tax jurisdiction by a country mile; we're going to pay a little more as we go and save some of this one-time resource for future generations," if your government wants to continue building Alberta, which it sounds like your Premier does – I understand the

caucus is all over the place on what they want to do. I guess you guys have got to decide that in the next year.

Really ask yourselves. If you are a progressive, you've got to ask citizens to pay for it. If you want to be, I guess, a fiscal hawk and do what the Wildrose is doing, well, whack the budget by \$6 billion. Okay? Having it both ways is really just lazy. It's lazy politics. It's unfair. It is intergenerational theft. That's why I agree with the Member for Airdrie when he said that. I believe it was a valid and fair comment.

How much time do I have, sir?

The Chair: Thirty seconds, hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Out of his first 10?

The Chair: Out of the first 10.

Mr. Hehr: Thirty seconds. Well, I won't be able to get into any detailed questions. Nevertheless, I might see if the minister can provide for me the number of students that came into this province that you had to top up on a per-student grant.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Minister, would you like to respond to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo?

Mr. Campbell: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I always enjoy hearing the Member for Calgary-Buffalo talk about his ideas. I always find them quite interesting. I can say that I don't always disagree with everything he says, but with some of the things he did say today I do have to disagree.

You know, the sense I got from across the floor is that on this side of the floor we're getting rich doing something here, that we're walking away with piles of money, that we just take great delight in spending money, that we make lazy decisions.

I sat as an MLA and found it challenging. I found the work challenging. One thing I can say is that nothing prepares you for coming into this House as an MLA. There's no job out there that prepares you to come here. Then the Premier had the faith to make me a minister, and I can tell you that it's no place for lazy people. [interjections] No. Let me finish. I mean, we don't make lazy decisions on this side of the House. We make very informed decisions. We make decisions based on what we think is the best for Albertans.

Going forward, when we're looking at our budget, as I said, our Premier has a vision. We're going to save money. We're going to continue to build infrastructure. We're going to spend within our means on our operating side of things. You know, I think it's important to understand that saving money in good times and bad times is a step out of the ordinary. Even when times are bad, we're going to put money in the bank, which means that we're not going to be able to finance some programs as we have in the past. That's going to bring some hardship to some Albertans.

I look at, you know, the roads we build and the infrastructure. I look at our schools, our hospitals. I look at the wages that we pay our public sector. We're the highest paid anywhere in Canada. Again, we're taking that money and investing in our future. When you talk about oil and gas, the fact of the matter is that as we diversify our economy – and we will do that because the Premier has a vision of that – the oil and gas is going into research and technology. Money from oil and gas and from forestry and from coal mining and from agriculture is going into building some world-class institutions in this province, our postsecondary institutions. We have some of the best research people anywhere in Canada or the world working in this province right now.

From that, we will diversify our economy. We're moving so that our budget is not dependent just on oil and gas. We know that's not going to be there forever. We know that, coming out of the ground, once it's out, it's gone. We've got to get the best bang for our dollar when we bring it out. We're going to continue to work on that. We're going to continue to invest in research and technology, and we're going to continue to make sure this province stays competitive in agriculture, for example.

There are lots of good things going on in agriculture. One thing is important. There are going to be six countries in this world in the next decade that are going to be able to export food. Canada is going to be one of them. When you go down to Medicine Hat and look at the commercial greenhouses they have in Medicine Hat that they've been able to build through the irrigation work that we've done, that I think they're heating with natural gas from the area, we're taking land that probably in any other part of the world wouldn't be farmable. The minister was just down there last week. I flew back with him, and I saw the red peppers and the cucumbers and the tomatoes that he took out of those greenhouses in the middle of winter. That's what we're investing in. That's how we're going to diversify our economy and make this province what it is today.

The fact of the matter is that oil and gas is going to get us there and that forestry is going to get us there. We'll continue to invest in forestry. Why? Because next to agriculture, forestry is the most sustainable industry in this province. It's a green industry. We cut the trees; we plant the trees. We cut the trees; we plant the trees. Forestry gets it. I mean, they've had to change their ways of doing business to be able to sell their product world-wide because the customer dictated to them to do that. As we move forward as a province, we're going to continue to look at that innovation that you're talking about, we're going to continue to look at research and technology, we're going to continue to diversify this economy, and we are going to have something here for future generations. You know, it's not all about us. It's got to be about our kids.

4:30

When I go around the province in my portfolio, Aboriginal Relations, when I visit the chiefs and councils on 48 different reserves in this province, of which I think I've hit 27 now, we talk about doing things for the children. People like me: they're going to stick tubes in me and keep me alive because we have a good health care system, right? But the fact of the matter is that we have to make sure that we have a system in place for education and health care and economic opportunities for our young people. When you see our budget tomorrow, it's going to be about that. It's going to be about the future. It's going to be about making sure that we live within our means.

I look at, you know, the supplementary estimate for education. We're asking for \$24 million, and \$12 million of that is related to unexpected increases in student enrolment. As the committee knows, much of our funding is tied to students. As the number of students rises, so does our investment. That's what we spend it on. Then, of course, we have to have more teachers, so we're going to spend money on teachers. The actual increase in cost due to enrolment is \$29 million. We've been able to offset a significant amount by year-end savings in the department.

The remaining \$12 million that we're asking for, \$12,289,000 to be exact, is for the Alberta contribution to the new College Park school in Lloydminster, which is cost shared with our neighbours in Saskatchewan. Under the Lloydminster charter Alberta funds the new construction in accordance with the government of Saskatchewan's capital planning processes, approvals, and

guidelines. The total amount of Alberta's share is based on the residency of students who will eventually be attending that school. Again, we're able to reprofile \$1.4 million from other school construction projects to put towards the total cost of \$13,714,000. I look at what the Minister of Education is asking for for student increases. I mean, we're increasing. That's just the way it is. We can't build schools quick enough. We'd like to build more, okay?

When we go to advanced education and we talk about why we're looking for money in advanced education, two key areas. First of all, it's due to the enhancement within the student aid program. We have a 29 per cent increase in students going to postsecondary, and to me that's a good thing, that we're going to increase our student loans and allow more people to go to postsecondary. Without those student loans some people would not be able to go to postsecondary, and I think everybody should have that chance or that choice to go. The cool thing about this is that we recover over 98 per cent of our student loans, so this is a very good program. We're helping people get an education, they're graduating, and they're paying the money back to Albertans. Again, I think that when we look at advanced education, the lion's share, you know, is for the student aid program.

The other part of the program that we're looking for is in the minister's capital budget, and that's \$13 million. Of course, that goes to the fact that the University of Alberta is looking at basic infrastructure upgrades for the Devonian Botanic Garden, and that's to accommodate the new Islamic garden, to be funded by a gift from the Aga Khan. Again, this money was initially approved in 2011-12, contingent on the gift from the Aga Khan. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. There were changes in the project plan, but it's expected that agreement will be signed this year. I look at that, and I think we're in pretty good shape.

I look at, you know, SRD. We're asking for \$17.4 million for the joint Alberta-Canada implementation plan for oil sands monitoring. We're asking for \$258 million for wildfire management and \$39.8 million for mountain pine beetle mitigation. Now, I've already talked about the wildfire management and the importance of that, and I've talked about the mountain pine beetle mitigation and the importance of that.

The joint oil sands monitoring plan calls for unprecedented steps to enhance monitoring for air, land, water, and biodiversity. This plan improves our ability to detect changes in the environment and manages the cumulative effects on development. The enhanced monitoring program will be one of the most progressive of any industrially developed region in the world. Industry has committed to fund up to \$50 million per year until fiscal year 2014-2015. In order to collect those funds in support of the joint plan, SRD is asking to increase its budget by \$17.4 million, so we're spending \$17.4 million to get \$50 million from industry. I think that's a pretty good trade-off.

The other reason the joint monitoring is so important is that it gives us social licence. When you hear in the news about the Keystone pipeline, they're talking about social licence. When we talk about the oil sands or any natural resource extraction on the land site, people are talking about social licence. What does industry have to do to get that social licence? Again, I can tell you that in talking to First Nations and Métis around the province, areas like air quality, water quality, and biodiversity are all very important.

Some of you sat on the all-party committee on natural resources, and you listened to the presentations on the hydro proposal for the Slave River run of the river. You heard the concerns. There's social licence that we have to have for some-

thing like that go through. I think it's a great project. Then when you go and you talk about the Peace River and what B.C. wants to do in putting a dam on the Peace, you know . . .

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The next 20 minutes are reserved for members of the fourth party, and you can go back and forth. I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll make a few initial comments, and then I have several questions relating to the different portfolios. You know, I find it interesting that today we're debating roughly \$500 million and the government's approval to spend that, yet we have only one minister of the Crown sitting here to debate on five different ministries, and when I say interesting, I mean that I find that frustrating. Acknowledging that, though, I realize that the minister across the way might not be able to answer some of my questions.

To start off the debate on this budget, I think it needs to be recognized that cuts to essential services won't be acceptable to many Albertans. I've had the privilege of touring Alberta for the last several weeks, visiting multiple cities along the way, listening to Albertans on the proposed deficit budget and how it's going to affect the services that they provide and deliver on the ground. I can tell you that the bulk of Albertans that I've spoken to and listened to have said that the last thing they want to see are cuts, especially in the areas of education, health care, and social services.

I find the most fascinating thing is the fact that many Albertans are left scratching their heads and wondering why they are facing a recessionary-style budget when they look around and see that our economy is quite strong at the moment. We've got healthy growth, as the Leader of the Official Opposition pointed out. Statistically Alberta has a very low unemployment rate right now – I believe it's around 4.3 per cent – and in cities all around the province workers are talking about having lots of opportunities for work. Our GDP is strong. So the question comes: well, then, why are we facing this style of budget?

It can only mean a couple of things. I know my colleagues from the Wildrose would say that there's a spending problem on the other side of the floor. I think there's more of a management issue going on here, you know, with things like hundreds of thousands of dollars going to be paid to high-level executives having extensive expense accounts instead of investing those dollars into front-line workers, that provide the bulk of services that we experience day to day.

I think the government should be looking at the revenue side of our situation. Again, Alberta is the wealthiest jurisdiction in North America, many argue, yet when we look at what's left in our heritage trust account, when we look what we're anticipating to be a skimpy amount left in the sustainability fund, there are no excuses. There are no reasons for this. As has been pointed out by colleagues on all sides of the House, the bitumen bubble argument is almost laughable considering that last year, at the start of the PC leadership race, the differential was somewhere around \$36 a barrel. So nothing new.

Albertans, the ones that I've spoken with, I should clarify, have made it clear that they're not opposed to moving back to a progressive income tax system. They're in favour of charging a competitive rate for our royalties, competitive in other jurisdictions, maybe even collecting the royalties that are due to us. I find it almost laughable that we have companies with

outstanding royalties due to Albertans, to the Crown, that they aren't even paying and that this government is failing to collect.

4:40

As well, looking at having a competitive corporate tax rate. I mean, there are many ways to address the revenue shortfall that this government is experiencing, but the fact of the matter is that if we continue to kick the can forward, to pass ailing and aging infrastructure and maintenance to future generations, we are merely robbing future generations. I think that's unacceptable, and many Albertans have communicated quite clearly that they're opposed to that.

Again, we need to look at investing in things like education. I've said this many times, that it's clear that on this side of the House education is viewed as an investment while I strongly believe that on that side of the House you view education as a cost as opposed to investing in our future generations and ensuring that Albertans will be competitive in the future.

The other thing that I find fascinating is diversification. The term "diversification" for this government, as was made clear in the Economic Summit, just means building more pipelines and shipping more of an unrefined product to an area where they already have a glut. I find that ironic coming from the party that should have a better handle on supply-and-demand economics. You know, when you're already getting a low price for something, pumping even more supply into the market isn't going to somehow magically increase what you're going to get paid for your product as opposed to looking at a long-term solution of investing in Alberta and investing in Albertans, whether we're looking at upgrading more of our product here.

Again, fascinating to learn that Alberta is the only jurisdiction that pumps out the least-refined product as opposed to other provinces in our own country or looking down south, where at least they understand that if we add value, we keep quality jobs in our own province. We can sell a much higher quality product.

I think what I'll do is that I'll allow the hon. minister to respond to that, and then I have numerous questions regarding the various ministries being debated this afternoon.

The Chair: Thank you.
The hon. minister.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, for a young guy I think he needs some hearing aids. I think that within our MLA plan we can help him out because he hasn't been listening.

Education is an investment for this government. The Premier has made that clear on numerous occasions. The Education minister has made that clear on numerous occasions. If he's attended aboriginal communities, he's heard me say that on numerous occasions, that education is the key to close the socioeconomic gap between aboriginal communities and Albertans. We're going to continue to work on that. As a matter of fact, we came to agreement with the national chief last week in Edmonton and with the Premier on the work that we're going to do in education. To say that education is not an investment is totally wrong.

The other thing that the hon. member hasn't listened to is the Premier's talk about the Canadian energy strategy. She's talking about pipelines to the south, to the east, to the west, to the north, about opening up markets. We know that we have to get our product to tidewater to get the best market, but we understand that when you're a landlocked province like we are, you have to work with your neighbours. You have to form partnerships and alliances to get that product to market. We're doing that right now, and the Premier is leading that charge. She's been to Washington on a

number of occasions just on the Keystone, but she's also talked to the different Premiers across the country and the Prime Minister about a Canadian energy strategy. People are now starting to wake up to that. They understand the importance of it.

What we do in Alberta helps everybody. It helps people in Ontario. It helps people on the east coast. You know, when you leave Alberta and you go to some of our other provinces, especially when you go to the Maritimes, businesses are boarded up. My family comes from Glace Bay. I can remember that Glace Bay was a booming coal-mining community for years. All of my family worked in coal mines. If you go to Glace Bay now, everything is boarded up. There is no more coal-mining industry. People are coming out here to work in Alberta because that's where they have a chance for a future. When you go into Ontario, look at all the manufacturing plants that were shut down that now have a future because of the oil and gas industry in this province and our Premier's vision of a Canadian energy strategy. So we are looking at what's good for Alberta, but we also understand that what's good for Alberta is good for Canada.

You know, again, I think that we are making decisions today for the future. I can tell you that we're making some tough decisions. As I said before and the Premier has made very clear in her prebudget talks, we're going to save money, we're going to build infrastructure, and we're going to live within our means, within our operating budget.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll start off just talking a little bit about Education. One of the areas is that \$12 million has been requested to address unexpected increased student enrolment. My question to the minister: what was the enrolment projected to be, and how has it been exceeded?

Mr. Campbell: I'll get those numbers for the member, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.
Back to the hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Okay. I imagine this is going to be a lot of back and forth. The Fort McMurray public school board talked about its budget problems based on a decreased enrolment even though the city is growing quite rapidly. Specifically, I'd like to know: where in the province has the unexpected increased enrolment occurred, whether it's a school board or even within a region?

Mr. Campbell: Well, again, those are numbers that I don't have at my fingertips and I would suggest that the minister wouldn't have at his fingertips either, but we'll get the numbers for the hon. member.

The Chair: Thank you.
The hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Yes. Thank you for that.

Still on Education, looking at school facilities infrastructure, there's a request for just over \$12 million for infrastructure. And a comment: priority initiative 2.4 of the 2012-15 business plan is to develop a strategic long-term plan to provide and maintain Alberta's school infrastructure. Considering that supplementary funds are being requested to support school facilities infrastructure, can the

minister update this body on the progress that's been made on the strategic long-term plan?

Mr. Campbell: Again, I'd have to talk to the Minister of Infrastructure to get those numbers.

The Chair: Thank you.
The hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Moving over to Transportation. There's a certain irony that at this time last year the House was being asked to approve supplementary estimates for the GreenTRIP initiatives and the light rail transit. Now we're in the process of debating cost overruns for P3 ring roads, which seem to be somewhat problematic. Ring road costs were estimated at \$305 million and now have a supplementary estimate of another \$100 million. This is an enormous difference and a very poor original projection. What explains the massive cost overrun this past year? What are the unpredictable aspects of these projects, in fact, \$100 million worth of unpredictability? If we could get some clarity on that, please.

Mr. Campbell: I'll make sure that the Minister of Transportation gets the information to the hon. member.

The Chair: Thank you.
Back to the hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left, please?

The Chair: You have seven minutes and 33 seconds, sir.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you. Moving on to Environment and Sustainable Resource Development – this was touched on previously, but I think it's something that is important enough to come back to – we're looking at \$258 million of emergency spending for firefighting costs as a result of high wildfire hazard levels and high fire activity in some parts of Alberta's forest protection area. I find it interesting that for numerous years the practice has been to budget zero for fighting forest fires, yet every year Alberta finds itself in a position where, amazingly, we have forest fires. It must catch everyone off guard. Last year we budgeted zero and spent \$250 million, that was approved during supplementary supply. That's a significant amount of money, so the question is: why doesn't this government plan a budget when it knows that there are going to be fires every year?

4:50

Mr. Campbell: I'll make sure that the minister of SRD gets back to the hon. member.

Just on the money, it's for firefighting, but it's important to note that \$16 million is also to supplement the \$990,000 that was made available from lower than budgeted capital in other programs. It's to convert a department-owned air tanker from piston to turbine engines. There are only two turbine conversion kits available world-wide. The department owns four amphibious aircrafts, which have been used in wildfire suppression since the mid-1980s. The department would like to proceed with converting the fourth aircraft, which is currently grounded because its engines are not serviceable, parts are in short supply, and it faces corrosion issues. This conversion will give ESRD greater suppression capability along the eastern slopes during wildfire management operations. Being that I live in the eastern slopes, I find that a pretty important thing to get accomplished.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you. I'd like to thank the hon. minister for that clarification.

Looking again at Environment and SRD, there is \$40 million of emergency spending for ground survey and control operations to fight the mountain pine beetle infestation. We know this problem exists. It happens on a yearly basis, yet again the government has budgeted zero for this. Question to the minister: knowing that this is a challenge that we're going to be facing and we're going to be spending money on it, instead of returning to this discussion year after year, why won't the government budget for the mountain pine beetle infestation?

Mr. Campbell: Well, again, it's not as easy as just budgeting the money. But I'll make sure that the minister gets back to the hon. member.

The Chair: Thank you.
The hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you. I'm going to move on to Enterprise and Advanced Education. We have \$18 million, roughly, requested for new completion grants, expanded part-time grants, and increases in program delivery support for student assistance programs. Question of clarification: how have the new completion grants been prioritized? According to the institution or demographics or region or type of program?

Mr. Campbell: I'll get the minister to get the answer back, but I am being told that every student that graduates gets a completion grant. I can also say that with the introduction of a flat-rate contribution of \$1,500 reduced to zero for single parents; the elimination of savings, RRSP, part-time earnings, or parental contributions in determining loan eligibility; and replacing the previous loan remission program with completion incentive grants, what will happen when they graduate is that they'll get the grant.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.
Hon. member, you still have three minutes.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, hon. minister. Next, still sticking with advanced education, \$13 million has been requested for postsecondary infrastructure, specifically at the U of A. I'm going to throw out some numbers here, so please bear with me. The postsecondary infrastructure budget line was around \$600 million in 2010-2011 and forecasted at \$268 million for '11-12. Estimates for '12-13 and beyond are at \$76 million or below. With such a sharp decrease in postsecondary infrastructure funding expected going forward, how can we ensure that high supplemental amounts relative to this budget line will not be repeated in the future?

Mr. Campbell: Again, Mr. Chair, I'll get the information back to the hon. member from the department.

The Chair: Thank you.
The hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Continuing with this, nonbudgetary disbursements for support for the adult learning program – and nonbudgetary disbursements come from the general revenue fund – a sum of \$124 million could be used to defray the costs. The \$77.5 million is a large sum to allocate to

support for the adult learning program. That's in addition to the almost \$18 million being requested as a supplemental amount under 2.1 and 2.14 of the department's program spending. The question is: what steps are being taken to more accurately assess the higher than expected student loan disbursements?

Mr. Campbell: Again, we'll get the department to get the figures back to the hon. member.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. member, you still have a minute and a half.

Mr. Bilous: A minute and a half. Okay. I'll try to get this in.

Now moving on to Municipal Affairs, approximately \$60 million is being requested to address the disaster recovery and municipal wildfire assistance programs. The requested amount is for both disaster recovery and municipal wildfire assistance programs. While disaster recovery is a specific line under the program spending for the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, municipal wildfire assistance programs are not a separate item. Does the municipal wildfire assistance program fall under disaster recovery?

Mr. Campbell: Again, that's an answer I'll have to get back to the hon. member on.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bilous: The last question which I'll get into *Hansard*: what portion of the disaster recovery budget was originally dedicated toward the municipal wildfire assistance programs?

The Chair: The same: you'll endeavour to get that, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Campbell: Yeah, we'll get those numbers.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are you concluded, hon. member?

Mr. Bilous: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, the next 20 minutes is afforded to members of the government caucus should anyone wish to ask a question of the ministers. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Dorward: Yes. Mr. Chair, I was actually quite shocked to hear the Leader of the Official Opposition speak so casually and unknowingly about results-based budgeting, quite frankly. It's all on the website.

Results-based budgeting was a bill that came in in the early part of 2012. Then the various departments and ministries have been working on information to be able to go through their costs in a results-based budgeting way. We call those people proponents. There are six categories of broad costs that are being looked at by the results-based budgeting process. There were six committees. The six committees met just before Christmas and sat with the proponents. The proponents actually laid out their plans to go through the results-based budgeting process right now and, indeed, up to the end of April, in that kind of time frame. Then the committees will come together again and look at the results of that.

I guess my question is: has anybody on the other side done any reading of the website, or do they have any idea at all what results-based budgeting is all about?

The Chair: Is this a question of the minister, hon. member?

Mr. Dorward: Well, sure, I will frame it that way. Minister, have you had any interaction with the results-based budgeting process, and what are your thoughts on it?

Mr. Campbell: Well, you know, my department hasn't been up yet to be involved in the process. But I can say from talking to the different MLAs that have been chairs of the committees that they found it a very worthwhile exercise and the public that we brought in to sit in on those committees have found the exercise very useful.

I think that, you know, going forward with what our Premier wants to do in results-based budgeting and what our Finance minister wants to do, we are headed on the right track. Again, we've just started the process. You know, I'm quite confident from what I've seen of it sitting on Treasury Board and what I've heard in the feedback from both MLAs that have chaired the committees and MLAs that have sat on the committee that we are headed in the right direction with results-based budgeting.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

For the rest of your 10 minutes, hon. member, do you have an actual question about the estimates?

Mr. Dorward: No.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there other members of the government caucus that might have a question?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Centre for the next round of questions. You have five minutes, hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: It's five and five?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. For those few that are following along at home and on the computers, thank you for expressing your interest in what we're doing here.

What's essentially happening is that the government has spent additional money, extra money above and beyond the budget that they presented last year, and they are required to come before the Assembly and explain to us why or give us the opportunity to ask questions about why they needed to spend extra money. In this case we've got about \$450 million that they've actually gone over the budget with, and that money has been spent in the departments of Education, Enterprise and Advanced Education, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Municipal Affairs, and Transportation.

For three of them it's disaster recovery money. This government has an ongoing choice, and as you can tell, it makes everybody in the opposition a little crazy. They always underbudget it, and then every year they're back in front of us with a sup supply request when they know exactly how much money they've actually spent. It's sort of budgeting after the fact. I haven't been able to knock them off that particular way of doing things in my 17 years, so good luck to the rest of you that are trying.

5:00

On page 19 of the supplementary supply request from the general revenue fund for ESRD a total is being requested of \$286,497,000. So, you know, it's a chunk of change. Now, \$17 million of it is for the joint Canada-Alberta implementation plan for oil sands monitoring, fully offset by revenue from the oil sands industry. Well, did we spend it or not? It sounds like we spent it.

Are we expecting to get money back from the oil sands industry? What exactly was it spent on? Was this hosting, travel, consultants, communications, brochures, media press releases? What was that \$17 million spent on? Was it research scientists? What? We've got no information in front of us here.

There is \$258.6 million of emergency spending for firefighting. The government always underestimates, and then they come and fess up with the real amount that they spent.

Another \$39.7 million of emergency spending is for continued ground survey and control operations for the mountain pine beetle infestation. Oh, my Lord, that little bugger has cost us a lot of money in this province and other ones. But I have to say that it looks like we did not a bad job, not terrific – not honours, not 90 per cent – but a pretty good job of managing the pine beetle infestation, so I'm not questioning that money.

But I do want to know what this joint Canada-Alberta plan for the oil sands monitoring is all about. To be honest with you, I'm pretty good about details, but I have lost track of the number of studies, strategies, reports, committees, and implementation plans that this particular minister of environment has managed to get rolling, and now we can't get any information because everything is tied up in one of these committees.

I think I'm nearing the end of my five minutes, so I'm going to ask the minister who is with us today. And thank you very much for showing up. We appreciate your effort. There is silence while I stare at the other empty chairs here. I really appreciate your being here. Are you able to answer my questions?

Mr. Campbell: A pleasure to be here, hon. member. I think I can answer your questions, but to be safe, I'm going to have the minister give you the breakdown on the monitoring. I'm confident I could, but I want to make sure we have the right numbers and you do get the right answers, so I'll have her get a hold of you and give you the proper amounts.

The Chair: Hon. member, your time is up, unfortunately. I'll put you back on the list.

Ms Blakeman: Please do so. Thank you.

The Chair: The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a couple of questions. I suppose this is the difference between the private sector and the public sector. But this is a bit of an embarrassment – no disrespect to the hon. minister who is here trying to answer the questions; I have a great regard for that – the fact that the other ministers are not here. We are dealing with something that is not new, zero-based budgeting. You can call it results-based budgeting, or you can call it deceptive budgeting. I want to talk about that for a second. When you mislead, it's deceptive. This isn't rocket science. It's a budget. A budget is nothing more than a tool.

I will tell you, having been a person who has done a lot of budgets and done it professionally in a corporate setting, that it is not hard to budget for emergencies. It is a fact of life. Boy, we would love to make sure at year end that the emergency budget was zero on our expenses, and we'd all be happier for it. The fact is that there are trends. In the utilities, where I came from, we always had ice storms, tornados, windstorms, all these natural disasters that followed weather patterns, and we had to deal with that.

Forest fires are no different. We know we have forest fires during the annual fire season, and we have to deal with that. There's nothing wrong with budgeting that along the trend line.

Everyone is better off if it comes in at zero. We would love to not have forest fires, but they are a fact of life. It's not that hard to predict the trend when we have a trend line. So it's unreasonable to not take a look at that and say: we've been under by a hundred million dollars a year, year over year over year. At what point do you realize that you're not budgeting properly? That is a question that someone needs to address.

What I'd like the hon. minister to talk about – and I'm not sure you can answer it. I have the same concerns you do over this pine beetle. I represent a large number of constituents who are in the forestry industry. It's an extremely serious matter, and it does need to be dealt with. It is going to take funds – we all realize that – but that's not the issue. The issue is that we're just about doubling this. When I look at the action plan and I look at the management strategy, which is, by the way, on your Internet websites – and I follow that because I have constituents that are very much involved with this – what I don't understand is how that money is being expended within the management strategy and within the action plan. That's the key. The whole part of accountability is to make sure we are following the plan. You know, when we look at the budget and those numbers start rising, what are we doing that we missed when we created the budget? What happened there? So we can go back and ask those questions.

If the minister could, I would like an answer to how this extra \$17 million goes into the action plan or goes into the management plan. How is it broken down? How did we miss it? See, that's the key. On dealing with the pine beetle, we're not talking about sudden forest fires. This is something we've been watching for years. We know how far it's gotten. We've actually had one point where we got ahead of it. Now the forestry industry is telling us that we have to relook at this because it is real. As the member said, with this warm weather that we've had this winter, we can fully expect that there's going to be more to deal with in the coming season. This is logical, and this is how we should budget. So if the minister could please address that particular issue on where that money has been spent. What effect does it have on these plans, the management strategy and the action plan? That is really important.

But the real thing I want to talk about is the accountability. Any time anyone does a budget, the person responsible for these extra expenses should be here to answer that. You have to do that in all private sectors no matter what business you're in. You just don't get to throw this out and say, "I need so many millions more, so many billions more," and nobody is there, when we go to approve this, to answer those tough questions. I will tell you this. It is disrespectful to Albertans that not all the ministers are here that are directly affected by this request, that they have their staff so they can answer these tough questions and put it on the record. [interjection] I didn't mention them by name.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. minister to respond.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, I can't give you a breakdown of exactly what the \$40 million is going to be used for. The minister can probably do that. I think it's important to understand that you're talking about mitigation, you're talking about control, and you're talking about rehabilitation. To me here's the real challenge of fighting the mountain pine beetle. No matter what good work we do in Alberta, if we're not doing the same work in B.C. and the federal government is not doing the same work in the national parks, all we're doing is maintaining.

5:10

I can say to you that living on the eastern slopes, I go into the Willmore wilderness area. If you fly over the Willmore wilderness, the Kakwa, the sea of red is there. I mean, you go over the Coquihalla; they've cut everything down. There's nothing there anymore. It was red for a while and dead, and then they cut it all down. We're going to continue to invest this money into Alberta because we have to make sure that our forest industry stays sustainable. For the \$40 million we're spending, industry is doing the same thing. To fix this problem, we have to get the feds involved. The federal government has to be involved. We have to have a better strategy for our national parks.

I was down in Banff a couple of years ago meeting with the Banff town council and the Jasper town council, and we were talking about tourism. I think we were at a lodge on the side of the road before you get into Banff.

An Hon. Member: The Rimrock.

Mr. Campbell: No, it's not Rimrock. It's outside of Banff.

Anyway, we were looking at this vista of green. I said to the folks in Banff: if you don't get on board and get after the federal government, you're not going to have a vista here anymore; it's going to be red because the beetle is coming. Again, we can't predict climate, but the last two winters have been fairly warm. We all know that. Last year was a great ski season. I don't know about the rest of you, but I had a good time on the slopes. We had a record snowfall. Again the beetle continued to infest. We're working with the province of Saskatchewan on the pine beetle because it's getting into Saskatchewan now.

We're going to continue to invest these monies because we have to. It keeps the workforce of a number of our rural communities engaged. We understand that we have to have a broader strategy. It has to involve the federal government, and it has to involve the province of B.C. In some ways we're spending good money after bad, when you think about, in the sense that all we're doing is maintaining.

I'll make sure that the minister gives the hon. member a good breakdown, but I know that this \$40 million that we're spending on the beetle, to me, is money well spent because it's helping a lot of rural forest communities to survive. As I said earlier, all we're doing is maintaining right now, and we have to get ahead of the problem. That's going to take a three-pronged approach of the provincial government, the federal government, and other provinces working together to deal with this infestation.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, I have a partial list of speakers, but I'm going to try to rotate it through the parties, just to be fair. Is there a government member that wishes to ask a question?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Oh, goody. Thank you. I have four questions this time around. I'm going back to page 22 for the department of environment. Looking at the breakdown, it looks like under vote 8 for lands there is \$12,600,000 being spent there.

Mr. Campbell: What page are you on?

Ms Blakeman: Page 22, vote 8, lands. Land, Scarlett, land.

It says \$12,600,000. What's that for?

Oh, I see there are more ministers that have joined us. Welcome. You're most welcome. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Campbell: I'll have to get the minister to get you an answer.

Ms Blakeman: I'll give you a few more questions that you can ask the minister.

The Chair: Okay. Hon. minister, did you care to respond, or are you going to get an answer for her?

Mr. Campbell: I'll get an answer for her.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Well, while you're getting that answer, in the Department of Municipal Affairs, there is \$530,000 for the Whispering Pines lodge in Grande Cache. You should know this one.

Mr. Campbell: I can speak to that one.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. That'll be great. I'm looking forward to the answer. Let me just get all my questions on the record, and then you can let 'er rip. I'm looking for the details. Is this a new seniors' lodge? It turns up under vote 10.8, assistance to Alberta Social Housing Corporation, seniors' lodges. Is it new? Was this a grant to a private corporation building this? Is it specifically long-term care, which has a medical component to it, or is it assisted living or supportive living? Is it a private one, an NGO, or completely government. Finally, is there any kind of special housing? I know you know a lot about that one, so you'll tell me.

Back to Environment. Does the minister accept that severe weather is on the rise? We are all experiencing the results of that, I would argue. What changes have been instituted in the budgeting in Environment for severe weather? This is sort of a policy decision, but what are you doing about it? When you look at organizations like CEMA, for example, they are actually looking at what kind of trees we should be planting now because the old lodgepole pine, much as we love it – emblem of Alberta, tree of Alberta – is not going to do so well in a more arid environment so not the right thing to be planting today as we deal with climate change. I'm wondering what changes have actually been instituted in the policies around budgeting to deal with severe climate, severe weather.

I asked the same question for Municipal Affairs because under the disaster recovery programs in Municipal Affairs it's the same thing. Severe weather is a huge issue to us. It's Grande Prairie flooding. It's Medicine Hat flooding. It's Slave Lake fires. I mean, it's affecting Alberta, so what are the policy changes, and how have you instituted different budgeting to deal with that?

I'm talking faster and faster. A Transportation question because you know how much I love that. The west side of the Henday was paved a few years ago. Now it's being repaved. I'm wondering: was this a P3 contract? Oh, I'm getting nodding. Excellent. Well, the Transportation minister could answer me. Was it a P3 contract? Does the contract between the provider and the government designate who is responsible for the repaving or for the repairs? What exactly are the costs?

That's three of three. I think somehow I snuck five questions into there, so I look forward to the answers. If I can go back on the list, please.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll start with the easy one, the seniors' lodge in Grande Cache. This is an assisted living facility, and this is owned by the Evergreen Foundation, which is

all of the municipalities in West Yellowhead that put monies in. They have homes in Grande Cache, Jasper, Edson, and Hinton. This is for renovations to add six more beds to the facility. The facility is actually adjoined to the hospital. You can go from the hospital to the facility through a door. This \$530,000: the Evergreen Foundation asked for that money to build some more rooms, and we're giving the grant from Municipal Affairs.

Do I believe that severe weather is happening? Weather patterns are definitely changing. I mean, we see it every day, right? You can't deny that. I know that we've had discussions within our ministerial working groups about greenhouse gasses, about changing weather. I would say that we're not at that level yet where we could actually bring forward a policy, but we are starting to have those initial discussions. Again, you said the lodgepole pine. I mean, I live in an area where the predominant tree is the lodgepole pine, and in some areas it's hard to tell if it's actually drought killing the trees or if it's mountain pine beetle. It is definitely something that we have to address in the near future.

I'll turn it over to my colleague the Minister of Transportation to talk about the Anthony Henday.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

You have three minutes.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, thanks, Mr. Chair. The questions you asked on the Henday really, respectfully, don't have much to do with the sup estimates, but as a courtesy I'll do my best to answer them anyway. The hundred million dollars for construction of the Henday ring road was more in the way that the P3 contract was financed. There was a piece that wasn't included in the initial estimate that had to be added in as a supplementary. That's simply a matter of a contractual obligation that wasn't in there.

5:20

You were asking about some additional paving on the Henday, the P3. My understanding of that – well, first of all, it's typical that when we pave a road, we go back a couple of years later, and we put an additional lift on. What that allows is some of the fine settling, when the road gets built, to be in place and then have another coat with a nice smooth surface for Albertans that, hopefully, will last longer.

In this section of the Henday I think what you're referring to is a piece where there's a different base under that section of the Henday than there was under other parts of it. Consequently, the decision was made in the interest of innovation to try something different to see if it'll last longer, which it's supposed to do. An interim step that had to be added was another lift of asphalt to be put on after the fact, which was done. There were some additional costs, but it's still felt – and I'm pretty sure I was asked and answered this in the House in question period at some point earlier – that it'll still be less expensive going through this extra process than it would have been through the normal process.

Now, for the member that asked the question, Chair, since it's not part of the sup estimates, I don't have the dollar amount of what that cost, but I will make it my business to go find that answer and get it to the member. Despite the fact that it's outside of the supplementary estimates, it will be my pleasure to do that for the member.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Your time is up, hon. member, unfortunately. I'll have to put you back in the rotation.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you.

The Chair: The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. Campbell: We answered four questions. I think the hon. member had five.

The Chair: It's a timing problem, hon. minister.

Mr. Campbell: Okay.

The Chair: The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. McAllister: Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to join in the debate and the discussion. I think it's getting better as we go along. We're getting some questions answered. I'd like to start with a tip of the cap to the minister of aboriginal affairs for being here, and it's good to see a couple of colleagues, some reinforcements, join him for the last half an hour or so. I wonder if he pulled a short straw or was on the naughty list or how this worked out today.

The member to my left who spoke a few times formerly – and I forget her riding. Edmonton . . .

An Hon. Member: Centre.

Mr. McAllister: How could I forget it?

Ms Blakeman: Fabulous.

Mr. McAllister: The fabulous riding of Edmonton-Centre. I think she did a nice job, for those who are tuning in, of explaining why we're here and what we're trying to accomplish. I believe in the same type of set-up, Mr. Chair. This is the point that I'd like to make. We're discussing \$500 million here. That's half a billion dollars, Mr. Chair. It's public money. It's taxpayer money. Those responsible for it ought to be here to answer the questions for their specific portfolios.

As far as education and advanced education go, it's tough to look at where the money is going and say: hey, you shouldn't be spending it there. The amounts specified are in areas where we all want to see money spent. You know, I bet there's not a person in here that couldn't find a school project that we'd like to support in our own riding or even neighbouring ridings where we know people.

I've had the pleasure of travelling around and talking to schools, to boards and school councils, about projects and capital plans, and obviously this is money that's needed. I guess what I'd ask – and I don't want to do a back-and-forth, but I'd like the minister to consider, perhaps, how to answer the question. Maybe he can. It might be to the Minister of Transportation's point on the P3 model. I'm just wondering how that money came about late into the game on the Lloydminster school because there are so many others on all sides of this House that would like to be in that same situation where they would have money available for a school project.

To talk about our student population growing is wonderful if we have higher than expected enrolment because I know currently in postsecondary enrolment, Mr. Chair, we have the lowest enrolment rates in the country, so I'm happy to hear that.

Again, I'll just sort of pile some questions in here in my three or four minutes. You can try to address them, and I think that probably the Minister of Education would be the one with the answer on this specific question. I'd like to know, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview asked: where is the enrolment increasing? He mentioned Fort McMurray. I think, specifically, we'd like to know that also. But then the money that's distributed: where is it being distributed and allocated? How is it being broken

down to individual boards? I think those would all be very good questions that I know the people that I meet with would like to know.

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Mr. McAllister: They are good questions.

We have so much evidence, I think, that funds are going to other areas. The problem that I'm having with this \$500 million – I don't begrudge the fact that budgets change and emergencies happen and things happen through the year and you need, you know, potentially to increase that budget. I won't die on that hill. I can understand how that happens with this amount of money. But what we are trying to say on this side is: could we not prioritize where some of that funding is going a little bit differently before we just go back to the banker and spend half a billion dollars?

We learned this year – just recently a story broke, I believe today, about Athabasca University feeling that they had to spend money for lobbyists to secure funding from the government. I think this is the point that I'm trying to make. This is where we could save money. Public money goes to a university to then hire a lobbyist, presumably somebody with connections to the governing party, so that they can then lobby the government for more public money. It just doesn't seem to make a lot of sense, and if that's how the system works, then, you know, we ought to address it. Those would be areas, I think, where the money would be better off in the classroom. It'd be better off in research if we were spending more money. Universities shouldn't have to use money to go to a lobbyist to meet with a minister. The minister of advanced education should be able to pick up the phone and talk to them.

The Chair: Is there a question that you're hoping the minister would answer, hon. member?

Mr. Campbell: Well, let me address the last question, Mr. Chair. We expect all of our institutions to have the ability to pick up the phone and talk to the minister of advanced education. As a matter of fact, we encourage it. You know, I've done business in a number of different provinces. I've done business in a number of different states. One of the things that's great about Alberta is that anybody can pick up the phone and go see a minister or see an MLA. That's one of the great things about this province. The government is open. It's not a problem to go see a minister, MLA for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Fabulous.

Mr. Campbell: Fabulous Edmonton-Centre.

But having said that, it's also important to understand that all these postsecondary institutions are autonomous, and they have boards of directors. They determine how they're going to spend their money and how they're going to do their staffing, but they should follow the rules.

Mr. McAllister: You appoint them.

Mr. Campbell: Well, no, that's not true. The boards hire their people. I mean, again, to say that you have to hire a government consultant to come and see us: you don't have to. If a president wants to pick up the phone and talk to the minister of advanced education, he or she should feel quite comfortable doing that, and I would suggest that about all the ministers in this Premier's cabinet, that we are accessible. We spend our days meeting with Albertans. That's what we do. From the time we get up in the

morning to the time we go to bed, we're on the phone talking to constituents or meeting with stakeholders.

Again, looking at prioritizing our schools, we do the best job we can on growth issues. As I said, the phenomenal growth in this province: all indications are that next year is going to be just as bad. We're going to continue to see growth. I think we will do a good job of prioritizing where we need our schools. We depend on our MLAs and our school boards, that are duly elected, to come to us with those challenges and with those pressures and do the best we can with the money we have allotted to make sure that we are providing a first-class education to all of our students.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

5:30

Ms Blakeman: Edmonton-Centre the fabulous? Thank you.

Back to the Minister of Transportation. You have me a bit puzzled when I look on page 28, reason supplementary supply estimates requested. This is for the Department of Transportation. It says:

This supplementary amount of \$38,986,000 is requested, together with \$89,600,000 made available from lower than budgeted capital investment on other projects, to provide:

- \$99,986,000 for continued construction of the Anthony Henday ring road in Edmonton and the Stoney Trail ring road in Calgary.

This is where I'm puzzled because I think the Transportation minister got up and said that this money has got nothing to do with that, so I'm a little puzzled about what it does have to do with. I'll just remind the minister that I did ask whether this was a P3 contract, and he omitted that information. I'm sure he would like to give it to me, so I'll give him another chance. But I do take it, then, that that Anthony Henday \$99 million is a contract. We're going to find out if it was a P3.

It sounds like the government is having to pay for that repaving. It sounds to me – please correct me – like the government, in fact, didn't sign a very good contract if they have to go back and pay for the renovation the following year. It sounds to me like you might have paid twice for the same kind of thing. I can tell that he really wants to jump to his feet and answer that for me. I would be delighted to hear what his answer is.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Chair. The hon. member asked what I thought was a whole bunch of questions. I was trying to answer different parts of the different questions, and perhaps I wasn't as clear as I ought to have been about when I was stopping with one of the answers and continuing with one of the other answers, which might be leading us to where we are right now. So let me try this again if you please.

I think I was clear – and if I wasn't, I'll try to be clearer now – that the hundred million dollars was most definitely part of the P3 contract in the supplementary estimates, and that was added to fully fund the project after final approval was received for the P3.

Then the hon. member asked a question, which I thought was a separate question, about paving on the Anthony Henday after the initial batch of paving, and that was what my other answer was about. It wasn't entirely clear to me then – and I think I said that in my remarks – whether she was referring to a different piece. At least to me it wasn't very explicit about what piece of the Anthony Henday exactly she was referring to. So I was trying to be helpful, saying that if it wasn't part of this, it might be part of that other

piece where there was a little bit different base under the road and, consequently, that required a later lift of asphalt.

Okay? Hopefully, that's more clear now as my intention is to be more clear. There it is.

Ms Blakeman: I think I still have a little bit left in our combined time.

The Chair: Very little. Thirty seconds.

Ms Blakeman: Great.

Minister, I'm still trying to figure out why we had to pay an additional hundred million dollars on this P3 contract – it was originally budgeted; it looks like it was paid – because supplementary supply is extra money, more money, supplemental money. So why are we paying a hundred million dollars more to a P3 for the Anthony Henday?

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. I'll try it again. We're not actually paying twice or paying more. A hundred million dollars for construction of the northeast Anthony Henday ring road in Edmonton was added to fully fund the project after the final approval was received for the P3. It was only after the final approval was received that the total cost of it was clear, and at that point we still needed to add a hundred million dollars to fully fund it.

Ms Blakeman: It was underbudgeted, then, and this gets it right.

Mr. McIver: I don't know whether you would say it was underbudgeted, but the fact is that there was a hundred million dollars less approved than was required to complete the P3 project; consequently, the need for the supplementary estimates. So I guess you could say underbudgeted, yes, but the reason for that, in my view, is that the full cost of it wasn't clear until the negotiations were finalized.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

I'll recognize the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I just have a couple of opening remarks, and I have four questions for the Minister of Transportation as well, please. First of all, people in Cypress-Medicine Hat are telling me that they're very, very concerned about record spending; \$41.8 billion and here we are asking for another half billion dollars, 2012-2013 record spending.

A couple of hard-working Cypress-Medicine Hatters told me they were very, very concerned that we're back to the end of the Getty years, where we had to make some 5 per cent cuts across the board and as Albertans we all had to work hard to balance the budget and get back in surplus. I asked one of our researchers what that meant, and the long and the short of it is that in the Getty years Alberta spent \$10,100 per person. Adjusted for inflation, we are now spending more, \$10,500 per person per year, headed down possibly the same road of year after year of deficits, of a big accumulated deficit that we will have to deal with someday. Better us than future generations.

A lot of people new to Cypress-Medicine Hat have told me that they're concerned when they hear some of the rhetoric about the cost to the Alberta government to pay for all the new people. They want it acknowledged that new Albertans are taxpayers, too, that

start paying taxes and creating wealth immediately, adding considerable amounts to the quality of life.

To the Minister of Transportation, if I could start with one of my questions. I see there's \$28.6 million being proposed to spend on highway 63. I'm wondering exactly what this \$28.6 million is going to get us. I'm wondering if it's part of the \$1.1 billion that was just borrowed to complete this twinning out there. I'm concerned about cost escalations. Are we headed towards a south Calgary campus situation, where the cost of this may snowball?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you. The hon. member asked a question and actually made the remarks first that his people are concerned about the cost of infrastructure. I would draw the hon. member's attention to the hon. member's own remarks in the last session, where I think he asked for something in the order of \$747 million, or at least in that neighbourhood, for his own riding. So perhaps he could temper his requests for his own riding just slightly if he's truly concerned about what he says he's concerned about. If he said it, I believe that he's truly concerned. Nonetheless, those requests were made by the hon. member in the last session.

However, to answer the question that was asked on the sup estimates, the \$28.6 million is for twinning and passing lane projects along highway 63 as part of the funding approved to twin the highway from House River north to Fort McMurray.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. member, I'm sorry. You should have asked at the beginning to combine your times.

Mr. Barnes: Okay.

The Chair: I have to recognize another speaker now. If there's a chance, I'll come back to you.

Hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, would you like to combine your five minutes with the minister?

Mr. Rowe: I'll try.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question would be to the Municipal Affairs minister; however, with him not being here, I'll ask the question to whoever can answer it. Why are the wildfire supplementary estimates in two different ministries? To further muddy the waters, wildfire estimates are combined with the disaster recovery estimates, being \$59 million, and SRD is 270-some million dollars. Why are they in two different ministries?

The Chair: The hon. minister to respond.

Mr. McIver: Sorry. Which one?

The Chair: Hon. member, would you like to rephrase your question?

Mr. Rowe: I will rephrase it. Why are wildfire supplementary estimates in two different ministries? They're in both Municipal Affairs and sustainable resource development. I wouldn't suggest that one of them is trying to be hidden. The waters are further muddied – no pun intended – where they're combined with disaster recovery in Municipal Affairs. How much is being spent

on disaster recovery in Municipal Affairs, and how much is being spent on wildfire assistance?

5:40

Mr. Campbell: Well, I can tell you that \$258.6 million will be spent within ESRD on fighting wildfires, and within the disaster recovery program within Municipal Affairs we will spend \$59.3 million. Looking at the disaster recovery programs, again, the majority of that being flooding down south, we can get an answer for the hon. member for which is which. I mean, I think I have a good idea, but we'll get the correct answer for him.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll recognize the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. Now I'd like to combine my time for three more questions. Is that okay?

The Chair: Yes. That's allowable. Thank you.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. First of all, the good people of Cypress-Medicine Hat know that infrastructure doesn't get built overnight. We've waited six or eight years for a hospital. We've waited three or four years for an overpass. We're still waiting for a detox centre. We're happy to have a prioritized public infrastructure list and wait our turn in fairness to all Albertans.

I'm concerned about where the \$89 million was saved, made available from lower than budgeted capital investments on other projects. I've heard from a number of stakeholders in the road-building industry that highway rehab and paving has been stalled. There are not projects out there even though we're already behind on what needs to be done for keeping our roads safe and in good condition, apparently not spending enough a year. I hope the money has not been pulled from that or from the government's three-year construction program.

There appears to be a constraint-induced fracture on a North Saskatchewan River bridge on highway 831. The limited information I have about constraint-induced fractures is that they're unpredictable and they're hard to assess with inspections. It may be an area of concern that I would hope for the safety of all Albertans would not be overlooked.

Again, my concern, Mr. Minister, is where this \$89 million is coming from. Hopefully, it is not coming from those two areas.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Chair, the short answer is that the money comes from where all money comes from. It's from the taxpayers. That's why it's a supplementary estimate, and because it's a supplementary estimate, then perhaps the hon. member should understand by the nature of the fact that it's a supplementary estimate that it didn't come from another project, that it's additional taxpayers' money just by definition. Again, the \$89 million is requested together with the other amounts that are in the supplementary estimates.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. member, you still have a couple of minutes.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. I'm sorry. Maybe you misunderstood. I understand from the first sentence that it says that \$89.6 million was made available from lower than budgeted capital investment on other projects. Did those other projects happen? Was there a significant savings? Were there some things that were promised but not completed or not done?

Then my last question is back to the ring roads. I appreciate your earlier answers on what happened with the Henday and the earlier questions to get us to where we were, but I'm concerned.

Did we end up with a cost-plus contract for this final almost a hundred million dollars, one-third of what was estimated? Did we go back to a full and fair bidding process? What percentage of the total road was this, and how was it missed in the first place?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Chair. The money from the other projects: all those projects were either completed or are under construction, so there is nothing that didn't get done as a result. That's what was required to complete that project.

One of the other questions that was asked in earlier remarks was about a bridge with fractures on highway 831.

Mr. Barnes: Yes. I understand, Mr. Minister, from your three-year report that 831 north of Lamont: constraint-induced fractures. We're concerned because it's an overdimension load corridor critical to getting things to Fort McMurray. Is any money going to fix this bridge?

Mr. McIver: I will get the hon. member that answer.

A little more detail on the \$89.6 million. The money lapsed due to other spending: the interchange at the Queen Elizabeth II highway and 41st Avenue S.W.; other projects like the twinning of highway 43 west of Sturgeon Lake Indian reserve, which is under way; as well as the paving on highway 88; the twinning on highway 2A; and the work on the Little Bow reservoir. That is where the money came from that lapsed from those other projects.

I apologize to the hon. member for not giving you that information just a little bit quicker.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a quick question for the Transportation minister seeing as he's right now getting into the groove here. How much of the hundred million dollars that is in this supplementary package here was for the ring road, specifically in Calgary? Which specific projects in Calgary? If you could again explain if that was cost-plus contracts or cost overruns or underbudgeting in the first place.

Thank you.

Mr. McIver: No. The hundred million dollars is for the northeast Anthony Henday. It's part of a P3 project. It's not part of a cost overrun or underrun or anything else. It's part of fully funding the final contractual price of the project. That is what I have here.

Mr. Wilson: In the document it does suggest Stoney Trail in Calgary as well as the Henday.

Mr. McIver: Indeed, it does. I have two different documents that say two different things, so I will get clarification for you.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2012-13 General Revenue Fund

The Chair: Seeing no other speakers, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

The Chair: The question has been called.

Agreed to:
Education
Expense \$24,289,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:
Enterprise and Advanced Education
Expense \$30,900,000
Nonbudgetary Disbursements \$77,451,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:
Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
Expense \$286,497,000
Capital Investment \$16,010,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:
Municipal Affairs
Expense \$59,318,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Transportation
Capital Investment \$38,986,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That is carried.
The committee shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

5:50

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following resolutions relating to the 2012-13 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013, have been approved.

Education: expense, \$24,289,000.

Enterprise and Advanced Education: expense, \$30,900,000; nonbudgetary disbursements, \$77,451,000.

Environment and Sustainable Resource Development: expense, \$286,497,000; capital investment, \$16,010,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$59,318,000.

Transportation: capital investment, \$38,986,000.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 11

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2013

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 11, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2013. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a first time]

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

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing that it's almost 6 o'clock, I would ask that we adjourn the House until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:51 p.m. to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

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