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The 28th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday, March 7, 2013

Issue 32

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
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Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (W)
Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)
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Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC),
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Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)
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Pedersen, Blake, Medicine Hat (W)
Quadri, Sohail, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)
Quest, Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)
Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC),
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Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
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Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)
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Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W)
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC),
 Government Whip

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 61

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

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McDonald	Xiao

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Khan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Anderson
Casey
Dorward
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Kubinec
Sandhu
Sherman

Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

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Fenske	Wilson
Johnson, L.	Young
McDonald	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Cusanelli	Leskiw
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Forsyth	McDonald
Fraser	Quest
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	Smith

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Anglin	Khan
Bilous	Pastoor
Donovan	Quadri
Fenske	Quest
Goudreau	Sarich
Hale	Stier

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Barnes	Johnson, L.
Bikman	Khan
Bilous	Kubinec
Blakeman	Lemke
Calahasen	Sandhu
Casey	Stier
Fenske	Webber

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 7, 2013

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, let us pray. Let us be grateful for that which unites us, let us be respectful of that which sets us apart, but let us always be mindful that we are here to address and serve the needs of others first. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, just a brief reminder. Further to the memo I sent you all at 1 o'clock today, we have almost 30 introductions to be done today, so please be ever so brief so we can get through them all. Thank you to those members who have already withdrawn or postponed their particular introductions.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 20 interns who began their local government careers in the municipal internship program in May of last year. The program has provided them with the opportunity to gain real-life experience within the municipal government setting, supporting our province's towns, villages, counties, and cities. They'll join more than 170 interns who have been part of this program since 2002 who have demonstrated incredible leadership and administration and a dedication to ensure our communities from one end of the province to another are strong. They're seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly students from Our Lady of Perpetual Help school, some of the brightest and best from our community. They are seated in both the public and members' galleries and are accompanied by their teacher, Sinead Taylor, and a large contingent of volunteers. I would now ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been truly blessed in my life. I've been raised in a great family and been blessed by a great partner and family of my own. Two things that make me capable of fulfilling the duties of this job are the foundation of my faith and the rock of my family, and I'm very proud of them. Each is a gem on the ring of life that makes up our home. As I introduce them, I'd ask each of them to rise as I call their name. First, someone who is the half that makes me whole, my wife, Rose; my daughter Aukje Meghan; my daughter Jacqueline; and my son, Sean. I'm so very proud of all of them. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier about how blessed I was to be raised in a great family. I have four brothers, each successful in his own right, and I'm very proud of them as well. With us today

are two with whom I was fortunate enough to start and operate several companies, including Westglen Milling. They are Bruce Horner, currently the CEO of Great Northern Grain; and Dave Horner, president of Horner International. I see they've risen in the gallery. I'd ask you to give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. Finally, my next introduction is someone who has been with me since I was first elected. She has been the foundation of the tremendously important constituency work we do, and on each of my campaigns she has been a tireless worker. She is a member of our extended family. I would ask Carol Stewart from Spruce Grove to please rise.

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly several guests of mine. These guests are watching these proceedings in another room and are looking forward to the budget: first, Gary Duffett, a retired RCMP veteran of 32 years and the current Two Hills regional economic development officer; Paul Belter, the vice president of Colliers International; Gordon and Eileen Taylor, the president of the Battle River-Wainwright Wildrose Constituency Association; Kelly Dales, a partner at Rosetown Consulting; Joseph Snape, with wealth management at CIBC World Markets; Carmen Glossop, the president of the St. Paul local ATA; John Corie, a senior manager at a consulting firm here in Edmonton. Please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association local 37, Ed Butler. Ed is a teacher with over 35 years of experience and leadership to the district. Ed, like many teachers across the province, is working with our most treasured resource, our children. Children are the future of our province, and great teachers just like Ed make it their life's work to ensure that their future is a bright one. He and his colleagues are asking for more teachers, more support for those teachers, and better schools so that Alberta can have a better future. I'd like everyone to welcome Ed Butler to the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a community leader from Calgary-Hays, Doug Hayden, and his son Dexter. Doug and his son travelled to Edmonton today to watch the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance deliver the budget. They're great public volunteers, and I'd invite the House to give them the traditional warm greeting.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my guest, Professor Carolyn Sale. Carolyn Sale is an associate professor in the department of English and film studies at the University of Alberta. She's also chair of the Academic Faculty Committee of the University of Alberta's Association of Academic Staff. The Academic Faculty Committee represents the interests of the

University of Alberta's over 2,000 faculty members. Professor Sale hopes to hear today that the government of Alberta's budget reflects a commitment to postsecondary education as one of the province's most vital public goods. I would now ask Professor Sale to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Finance.

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you the most important person in my life and possibly the most beautiful woman here today in the Assembly, and that's my wife, Ashley. She's been a huge supporter of mine through the ups and downs that normally come with public life. As many members know, they can be many, and quite often it does take a toll on our significant others as they go through them with us. She has been by my side, an unwavering supporter and someone that's been my best friend through the last five years in going through this process. She's a marketing manager for global operations for Paradigm geophysical, a large geophysical software company. She's got a great career. I'm very proud of her. Ashley, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two talented and hardworking representatives from the Medicine Hat & District Chamber of Commerce. Mrs. Paula Stodalka is the events and communications co-ordinator and has been on staff for 12 years. Next is Ms Lisa Kowalchuk, the executive director. Last year Lisa was awarded the Alberta Chambers of Commerce executive of the year award. Congratulations, Lisa, on this fantastic achievement. We are proud of these two hardworking individuals, and Medicine Hat is blessed to have their talents among our midst. I would ask these two great Hatters to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two of my closest friends and mentors, who have travelled here from Fort McMurray to witness question period and the budget announcement this afternoon: first of all, Mr. Mike Evans, who previously was the adviser to the mayor of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, now serving in government relations; and a long-term resident who is the vice-president of government and public relations with Syncrude Canada and the newly appointed chair of the Keyano College board of governors, Kara Flynn. I ask them to rise and please receive the warm welcome of this House.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature two of my friends: the mayor of Parkland County, Rod Shaigec; and the mayor of the town of Stony Plain, William Choy. Gentlemen, if you would please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me today to introduce a friend and colleague from the city of Calgary, Joe Ceci, a city councillor for 15 long or short years, depending on how he interpreted that. He currently works for an organization in Calgary called Momentum, an organization committed to community economic development, and is the manager of public policy. He led the poverty reduction initiative called Action To End Poverty in Alberta, that put out the Poverty Costs report last year. Joe has been a tireless advocate for social justice and enhancement of preventive social services. Please welcome him to the Legislature.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. McDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you Mr. Tom Burton, director of district 4, northern region, of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. Elected to the MD of Greenview council in 2001, Tom has served on a variety of boards and committees. He has also held the position of chief of the DeBolt fire and rescue for the past 13 years and has also been involved in the Grande Prairie Rural Crime Watch. Mr. Burton is a registered EMR and is very active in his community. I'd ask that Tom rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

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

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and all members of the House two gentlemen seated in the members' gallery today. Mr. Richard Gotfried is the vice-president, corporate and community engagement, at Calgary Economic Development. In previous roles in the private sector he was instrumental in the establishment of the PEAK home ownership attainable housing program in co-operation with the government of Alberta and Habitat for Humanity. He's been active in the Calgary Asian communities for over 30 years.

I would also like to introduce Mr. Ram Chengkalath, also from Calgary. Ram has 33 years of experience as a chartered accountant in public practice, including as auditor for the town of Banff, town of Canmore, municipal district of Bighorn, and town of Sundre. Ram is a founding partner of Chengkalath Gangi LLP chartered accountants. I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Towle: I'll be stepping in on his behalf, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Please.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two constituents from Lacombe-Ponoka, Christine and Melissa Warkema. These ladies work very hard on the constituency association and worked very hard during the last election to elect the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you Maryann Chichak and Darlene Chartrand. Maryann and Darlene are councillors for the town of Whitecourt and are very interested to be here and watch the budget. I'll ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you six wonderful constituents of mine who are not only leaders in the community but are considered personal friends of mine. I would ask them to rise as I call their names: first of all, Mr. John Irwin, councillor for the town of Bonnyville; His Worship Craig Copeland, mayor of the city of Cold Lake; Bob Buckle, councillor for the city of Cold Lake; Roger Nippard, superintendent of Northern Lights; Arlene Hrynyk, board chair for Northern Lights; and Don Nuttall, president of the Bonnyville-Cold Lake PC association. Please give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you the director of the Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities, Mickey Greiner, and her colleague Sheri Wyllie. Based in Calgary-Currie, this unique not-for-profit organization has provided residential support to 45 individuals with physical and developmental disabilities and their families for over 35 years. It goes without saying that CSPD's day-to-day service allows clients to flourish and participate in community life. I'd ask Mickey and Sheri to stand now and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I have two introductions. If you'll indulge me, I will endeavour to be brief. First and foremost, I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a couple of people who are no strangers to the Assembly and no strangers to public education either. In the gallery today from the Public School Boards' Association are Patty Ditrack, the president, and also Mary Lynne Campbell, the executive director, strong advocates for education in this province. With them today is Patty's daughter Ally, who is missing a grade 12 class today for some better education potentially, I guess you could argue. In any event, I'd like my colleagues to join me in wishing them well today.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly my guests Natasha Prihoda and Keathann LaFlamme. Natasha is a field placement student at the Alberta College of Social Workers, and Keathann is a client care assistant at Alberta Health Services' youth residential addiction services. I'd ask them to please stand and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Chestermere-Rocky View, for your second introduction. My apologies.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It was a surprise to you, so thank you very much.

I am proud to also have a couple of postsecondary students here today that I hold in very high regard, and I think most of us should. Matthew Armstrong is the vice-president external of the SAIT Students' Association as well as chair of the Alberta Students' Executive Council. Joining Matt is Franco Rizzuti, who is the president of the University of Calgary students' association and chair of the Alberta Graduate Council. I would ask Matt and Franco to rise, and as they do, I would like to point out that we often refer to postsecondary students as the leaders of tomorrow,

but I think that given what people like Matt and Franco do, we should also recognize that they are very much leaders of today, too, in representing other students.

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

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly two very special guests of mine. As I mention their names, I'd ask them to stand: Mr. Doug Stevens and Ms Kelli Taylor. Both are active volunteers in my community and long-time PC members and are sitting on the executive team of the PC Calgary-Hawkwood association. They bring their strong values to the table such as living within your means and being socially conscious when you do spend what you have so that every Albertan has the opportunity to succeed in our soaring economy. I can't help thinking that those fundamental, balanced, and responsible principles are the ones that connect us to my constituency and Alberta. I would like to ask my guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

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

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to introduce to you and through you my guests today, who are seated in the public gallery. Brad Trumble, a resident of Calgary-Glenmore, works in the venture capital field, serves on the marketing committee of Hockey Calgary, and assists me as the CFO of my constituency association and campaign team.

My other guest is Stephen Lougheed, a friend for over 30 years and a trusted political adviser. Stephen is also the CEO of Alberta Innovates: Technology Futures, an organization that is working hard to further research and development initiatives in support of diversification for Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that these guests receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Seeing none, let me just quickly, in 10 seconds or less, before we start question period, introduce someone very special to you. It was on this day just a few years ago that she came into this world, and today we're celebrating her birthday. To the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, otherwise known as our Premier: happy birthday.

Now let's see what gifts this day brings.

1:50

Oral Question Period

Ms Smith: I'd like to wish the Premier a very happy birthday.

Provincial Fiscal Deficit

Ms Smith: Back in 2004, when Premier Klein announced that we had paid off the debt racked up during the '80s and '90s – remember paid in full? – Albertans were justifiably proud of the fact that we were debt free, but that was then. Today we are back in debt thanks to the overpromising, overspending, and overborrowing. The Premier's mixed messages on this are the main reasons Albertans do not trust her. Whatever you call it and whatever they do to try to hide it, it is still debt. Why can't the Premier just admit that?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Redford: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The one thing that I find often with the opposition is that they're very fond of saying: that was then. The part they've forgotten is that this is now.

Alberta in 2013 is a province that is the strongest economic engine in this country. It is because of that that we are presenting a budget today, presented by our Minister of Finance, that will build Alberta, will continue to ensure that Albertans live within their means, will put in place a savings plan, will ensure that we're investing in infrastructure, and will allow us to continue to open new markets to continue to grow our economy.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that's what has Albertans so upset, that the strongest economy in the country can't pay its bills.

Given that they use euphemisms galore like "once in a generation" and "going to the capital markets" and given that they will attempt to bury or disguise the real number by splitting things into multiple different budgets, why have they destroyed our paid-in-full legacy?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure why it's so difficult for the opposition to understand a financial statement, but Albertans understand it. We have made a commitment, as we have since the time that I became the Premier and our Minister of Finance took on his responsibilities, to set a clear picture with respect to our fiscal situation to ensure that Albertans understand that we do have to make tough choices. The budget today will represent not only a clear picture, a transparent picture, and an honest picture, but it will reflect the values of Albertans, that want us to keep building this province for the future.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted the Premier has pledged to give us a clear picture.

Maybe we'll get a clear answer to this question. Given that Albertans have worked hard to pay off that old multibillion-dollar debt and given that the Premier has plunged us right back into new multibillion-dollar debt, does this Premier have a plan to ever return us to paid in full?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we are very proud of that is a Progressive Conservative legacy is that Premier Klein was one of the first Premiers in this country to introduce the approach of building infrastructure through P3s. P3s are important because they allow us to build infrastructure, to transfer the risk, to retain ownership of the asset, and those are good decisions.

The Speaker: The hon. leader. Second main set of questions.

Ms Smith: It's another euphemism. It is still all debt.

Provincial Tax Policy

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, it was instructive to listen to the Premier yesterday as my colleague from Airdrie was seeking a very clear picture about her future plans to raise taxes. Even to a simple, plain, unambiguous, clear question the Premier still couldn't say yes or no as to whether or not she would be increasing taxes before the next election. Perhaps we can try again today. After this once-in-a-generation budget, according to the Premier, let's talk about future generations. Will future generations have to pay for the debt, or will the current generation pay for it when she introduces a provincial sales tax?

Ms Redford: You know, Mr. Speaker, the exciting thing about a budget is that it doesn't just set the plan for the year. It sets a long-term vision. It puts in place the fiscal plan for the next three years, that allows us to paint the picture of the future. I think that the

Leader of the Opposition and the opposition parties will be very interested today to see our Minister of Finance's comments with respect to how we will continue to build Alberta, a very clear fiscal picture and a commitment to Albertans that will ensure success for generations to come.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's about as clear as mud.

I'm going to try for the fifth time in a row asking this question. Since there is every likelihood that the government's affection for overspending is going to continue for the balance of the Premier's mandate and since the Premier's non-denials are, quite frankly, unconvincing, perhaps she is going to raise personal and corporate income taxes. Is that it?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I don't know why it seems to be acceptable to stand up over a period of 18 months and make wild allegations that are never proven to be true, yet the opposition still continues to do it. I have stood up every day since the Alberta economic summit and said that we will not have a provincial sales tax in Alberta, and this is my opportunity to say it again. The budget that gets tabled today is going to clearly set out how Alberta will succeed. It will succeed because we are making the tough, long-term decisions that create a fiscal framework based on pragmatism and not on extreme ideology.

Ms Smith: It certainly wasn't this party that was locking the public-sector unions out of the budget lock-up if you're talking about ideology.

Being that we still have not received a clear answer to the previous question, let me try for a sixth time, Mr. Speaker. Given that we know that the Premier wants to keep overspending for the rest of her mandate because she keeps on insisting that all of this debt that she is racking up is the result of a revenue problem, what is it going to be: personal and corporate income taxes, health care premiums, liquor taxes, fuel taxes, or some other taxes? What is it the Premier is going to raise?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, in that very question we see three absolutely incorrect statements. I understand there was a lock-up today that included absolutely everybody that wanted to be there. Not only that, but we continue to see ridiculous allegations that never become reality because we are making thoughtful choices. The budget that is tabled today will clearly set out a plan for the next three years that again will prove that the opposition is not prepared to have an intelligent conversation about this debate but to keep throwing out political allegations that are incorrect.

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

Alberta Health Services Parking Fees

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to make a mess of our health care system. Now it's the people versus parking. This government has announced another parking fee increase for Alberta patients despite the fact that year after year Alberta Health Services fails to meet its own pathetically low targets while executives continue to drive up the cost of the health care system with outrageous expenses like video games or butlers. With this in mind, how can the Premier possibly justify nickel and diming vulnerable Alberta families with another parking fee increase?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the hon. member conveniently ignores the fact that Alberta Health Services has the lowest administration costs of any health delivery organization in Canada, at 3.3 per cent. I'm personally very proud of that. The hon. member should also know that Alberta Health Services charges parking fees for its facilities on a cost-recovery basis only. These are reasonable changes made in a reasonable way with full notice to Albertans. They reflect a commitment to value for taxpayers that we see throughout our health care system.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the minister should know is what they use the parking fees for, and that's Calgary Lab Services also.

The fact is that AHS collected \$61 million in parking fees that came straight out of the pockets of patients and front-line workers. Now, given the fact that over 26,000 managers at AHS spent over a hundred million dollars in 17 months alone on questionable expenses . . .

An Hon. Member: Shameful.

Mrs. Forsyth: . . . does the Premier really believe that parking fees are the problem with health care?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, what's shameful is the premise of the question. The suggestion that the organization has spent a hundred million dollars on executive expenses, on frills is actually not correct, and it's been very well documented by AHS and in the media. The vast majority of these expenses are spent in services that directly benefit patients: travel of health care professionals across the province; procurement of supplies that are used in services such as home care; many, many other services that Albertans depend on. [interjections] This member needs to check her facts. [interjections]

2:00

The Speaker: Hon. members, let's be a little bit respectful of both the people asking the questions and the people answering them. Some people may not like to listen to the questions, others may not like to listen to the answers, but we have a large number of guests up there who might be interested in both. Let's be respectful of them as well.

The hon. member.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that AHS executives feel they are entitled to half a million dollars in performance failure bonuses, how do you think Albertans should feel being nickelled and dined with more fees when those in charge of the health care system continue to use it as their own personal piggy bank?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are very, very proud to have a board at Alberta Health Services and a chair who has in the last several weeks spoken extensively about the board's plans to reduce administrative expenses, furthering their position as the lowest in the country. The board has talked about plans to revamp management positions in the organization, to look at issues such as compensation compared to other jurisdictions across the country. This is a board that is clearly focused on improving value for taxpayers' dollars, and to suggest anything less is a disservice to this health system as a whole.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Premier, happy birthday.

Yesterday I couldn't believe my ears as the Minister of Municipal Affairs expressed his Romney-esque disdain for the 83 per cent of Albertans who live and work in cities and towns. I asked the Premier who her government planned to be mean to, and I guess we just got the answer. To the Premier: do you condone your minister saying that 83 per cent of Albertans "sit in high-rise condos and don't . . . contribute to the grassroots of this economy"?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of reviewing the back and forth in the House over that discussion, and I think the unfortunate part is that what prompted that sort of comment really was an overgeneralization with respect to the importance of rural economies in this province. There is no doubt that we are all productive and contributing members of society, whether we live in rural Alberta or in urban Alberta. In fact, we have people who live in urban Alberta who work in rural Alberta and vice versa. What I was really disappointed by, frankly, was the reaction, which was then to see other people pit different communities against each other. That's not the Alberta way.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, what prompted that was a question about fairness that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre asked. This is at least the third eruption of Mount Griffiths in the past year. The minister is clearly at war with municipal leaders. He bullied the AUMA president, Linda Sloan, calling her a liar; he insulted the mayor of Calgary, calling him a puffed-up peacock; and now he's offended 83 per cent of Albertans. To the Premier: why do you have a Minister of Municipal Affairs who doesn't like cities?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, you know, one of the things that I think is really appropriate in this House is for us to respect the fact that there are lots of people that have lots of different leadership roles. In fact, since the hon. member brought up Ms Sloan, I would say that I did receive a note from a number of councillors in the city of Edmonton, including Ms Sloan, talking about what a wonderful job our Minister of Municipal Affairs did at the last AUMA breakfast, so I would actually pay him tribute for that.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, what's appropriate is that the Premier and the minister show respect to elected representatives. I'm sorry; I'm not convinced. We're talking about a minister who discriminates against cities and towns, refuses to deliver on the promise of the big city charter, and blows up at anybody who questions him. To the Premier: will you apologize on behalf of your government for the minister's behaviour and give him a time out?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, I'm kind of stunned that this is the most serious issue that has to be brought up in the House today. Look, I have worked very well with every single municipality, like I said, from Fort Macleod to Fort McMurray, from Edmonton to Edgerton, from Calgary to Cold Lake, and I respect every single municipality regardless of the size. We work very well together.

All I ever pointed out was that there was no us versus them, that Edmonton feels that they contribute and feels sometimes that they don't get enough, but rural Alberta feels the same way. Dwelling on that will not serve building a better province or building stronger communities, which is our focus here in this government.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before the election the Minister of Municipal Affairs attempted to organize a PC boycott of an Alberta Urban Municipalities Association event because the president said something the minister didn't want to hear. Yesterday we heard outrageous statements by the minister dismissing urban dwellers in the latest in a series of hotheaded and insulting comments. To the Premier: will she ask her minister to apologize to urban Albertans, and if he refuses, will she do the right thing and sack him?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, I have complete respect for people who live in the city and live in condos. I own one. I lived in one while I went to the University of Alberta and got two University of Alberta degrees. I've spent half my life in the city. I have full respect for people from both sides, but I will not tolerate or indulge people who try and say that rural Alberta has too much money. They make the impression that people in rural Alberta are driving down streets paved with gold. Lots of those streets in rural Alberta aren't paved at all. Everyone is struggling with infrastructure, and everyone deserves respect and the resources available to them.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that recently the Minister of Municipal Affairs compared the mayor of Calgary, the largest city in Alberta, to a peacock because he dared to suggest that this government has broken yet another promise to municipalities, will the Premier force the minister to apologize to the mayor and all Calgarians for his gratuitous insult, and if not, why not?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I represent a Calgary constituency. I'm a Calgarian. I actually received today from the mayor of Calgary a beautiful birthday bouquet, which I was very appreciative of. I think the relations we have right now with respect to amendments to the Municipal Government Act and the city charter are exactly what we're able to work with with municipal leaders across this province, including the mayor of Calgary. I think we're all looking forward to seeing that concluded quite soon.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: given that the Minister of Municipal Affairs seems to be more interested in positioning himself for a run at the Tory leadership than he is in building partnerships with urban municipalities, shouldn't he be doing his job instead of jockeying for your job?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear right now. I have no intention of ever seeking the leadership again because we have the most exceptional leader that this province has seen in a long time. I am honoured and proud to work with our entire team, and we will continue to work with municipalities on the Municipal Government Act, on the civic charter, and on the Calgary Regional Partnership. We're months ahead of schedule on the civic charter alone, and I'm looking forward to continuing that work.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by Calgary-South East.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Municipal Affairs decided that insulting the mayor of Calgary just

wasn't enough for him. He had to take it right up to the next level. After calling Mayor Nenshi a strutting peacock, the minister one-upped himself by saying that urban Albertans "sit in high-rise condos and don't necessarily contribute to the grassroots of this economy." I am a proud Calgarian, proud to live in one of Canada's best and most economically vibrant communities. To the hon. minister: given your position, sir, when are you going to swallow your ego, retract your insulting remarks, and apologize to all urban Albertans?

Speaker's Ruling Repetition

The Speaker: Hon. member, you can see what happens when you dance on the fine line of breaking the rules and things. There is a section in *Beauchesne's* and elsewhere that talks about that questions ought not be repetitious or refer to matters that have already been addressed. However, on this occasion we will allow one answer, and then we'll listen to one sup and see if we're in order or not.

The hon. minister.

Minister of Municipal Affairs (continued)

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been asked this already, and I've answered it very clearly. We're going to work with every single one of the 349 municipalities in this province to make sure that every single one of them has the opportunity to be successful because I want every single Albertan, every single one who lives in a community to know that for the next 20 years they're going to enjoy long-term prosperity in strong communities.

Now I look forward to any policy questions the opposition might like to ask.

2:10

Mr. Wilson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that quite qualifies as a retraction.

Given that the Premier continues day in and day out to lament the tone in the Legislature and given that the same minister in a different exchange yesterday labelled the opposition as arrogant and ignorant, will the minister accept responsibility for his role in contributing to the tone that his leader finds so troubling?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, my comments were directed at the fact that the opposition had insinuated that there was no reason whatsoever to locate medevac services at the International Airport, which is patently untrue. It disrespects the city of Edmonton and their desire to alternately use the municipal airport lands. That's what was ignorant, deliberately ignorant of the facts.

Mr. Wilson: My final question is to the same minister. Given his numerous gaffes over the past couple of weeks I'm sure he's learned a lesson or two about how to conduct himself as the minister responsible for cities. I just want to know if he plans on adding another chapter to his bestselling book, *The 14th Way To Kill Your Community*. It could even be called *How To Insult Mayors and Tell Urbanites They're Lazy*.

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate him pointing out that it's a bestselling book and that many people have read it. It's great advertising.

My dedication to communities has been exemplary for 11 years as an MLA. I've dedicated most of my life to working to build

stronger communities in this province, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to do that going forward every single day.

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

Ground Ambulance Services

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a registered advance care paramedic and the MLA for Calgary-South East I hear from Albertans that there is inadequate access to ground ambulance. I hear they're waiting longer for ambulances to arrive at their home and that when transported to the hospital, patients are waiting needlessly in the hallways before they receive care from nurses and physicians. To the Minister of Health: how will your announcement this week on ground ambulances lead to tangible changes in how Albertans access ground ambulances and receive further care in the system?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. As the House knows, the Health Quality Council of Alberta recently completed a year-long review of ground ambulance service across the province. What they told us very clearly is that we are correct in believing that EMS is health care and that we need to complete the very elaborate plan that we have put in place to get us to the point where all ground ambulance services function as an integral, central first point of contact in our health care system.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was born and raised in the city, but I started my career in rural EMS. The decision to resume consolidation of EMS dispatch operations from 15 into 3: how is this going to impact the rural dispatch centres? Can the minister assure rural Albertans that there will continue to be reliable dispatch service for ambulances in rural Alberta?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, we certainly can assure Albertans that through the consolidation of dispatch across the province we can provide better ambulance service. The reason for that is that it gives us the opportunity to manage all ground ambulance services as one fleet. When an ambulance is called out of a given community to assist in another community, we can arrange for appropriate backup. The system also allows us to ensure that the rural ambulance, if that happens to be the case, is able to return home as quickly as possible. This is a job that was started a while back and needs to be completed. The report provides a road map for that, and we're committed to finishing.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a private member I have a responsibility to ask questions for my members of Calgary-South East and my fellow paramedics. I hear a number of times that ambulances are tied up transferring patients with nonurgent medical concerns, and in fact I've experienced that. Will the minister be exploring all options that will appropriately use interfacility transport units for nonemergent transports and allow emergent ground ambulances to respond to the critically ill?

Mr. Horne: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That is, in fact, an issue that was not specifically referred to the Health Quality Council but one which I have directed Alberta Health Services to explore. In our growing population across the province we see communities that are seeing increasing demands in both hospital services and for ground ambulance. We need to make sure that our best equipment

and our most highly trained personnel are available at all times to serve those who are most in need, most critically ill. There are options available that AHS will be bringing forward to make sure we do not use those resources for nonurgent situations.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Banff-Cochrane.

Volunteer Ambulance Services

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've lived in the village of Stirling since 1972. Volunteers using the ambulances supplied by the county of Warner were saving lives before I came and continued doing so until stopped by Alberta Health Services. My neighbours and I neither asked for nor needed our service upgraded through credential creep. The system wasn't broken. It didn't need fixing. To the Minister of Health: when will AHS stop meddling, start listening, and allow our villages and towns to keep their volunteer ambulance services?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, in many small communities the volunteer first responders are also the fire departments, which is why, when the Health Quality Council's report was released, we pulled out 911, the volunteer fire departments, and first emergency responders, to make sure that they're interconnected into the system to make sure that we get the best possible service for every community, including Warner.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Health. Given that AHS has notified the village of Warner that its volunteer ambulance service will be taken away soon, I've been inundated with phone calls and letters, some claiming you're jeopardizing the viability of their world-class girls' hockey school by creating unnecessary safety issues. I suspect they've told you this, too. Will the minister do the right thing and immediately allow their ambulances to continue serving the needs of the village of Warner?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, one thing needs to be made very clear. This government made a commitment a long time ago to recognizing a very basic fact. EMS is health care. In order to make full use of all the resources that EMS has to offer, we need to operate EMS as part of our provincial health care system. AHS contracts with many municipalities and other agencies to provide specific services, but one thing must be made clear. We have made a commitment to improve ground ambulance service in the province. That commitment depends on capitalizing on all of the opportunities that a single provincial health system has to offer. We'll continue to work with the municipalities, but it will not divert us from that commitment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Health: given that many other communities in my riding and throughout the province have historically received good service from dedicated volunteers, will you also undo the harm AHS is causing them and restore their right to continue operating their ambulances as they've successfully done for decades?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has already noted, we have in place a strategy to work with municipalities, to work with volunteer fire departments in order to

make sure that we're making the best use of everything they have to offer in delivering a first-class EMS system for Albertans.

With respect to the specific community that the hon. member refers to, again, Alberta Health Services works with municipalities in terms of contracting for services. But, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake. The EMS system in this province is grounded on standards, it's grounded on equity of access to all, and we will continue to deliver that level of service.

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

Municipal Government Act Review

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2010 AUMA and AAMD and C completed a joint task force report on assessment and taxation, and in 2012 AUMA completed a second report on issues identified by urban municipalities. Both reports identified issues of transparency, accountability, equity, and functionality in our current assessment and taxation process. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. What are the minister's plans to deal with the obvious disparities and transparency issues identified by the task force report?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Griffiths: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over a year ago we undertook to review the MGA. It's the document that really guides what municipalities do and how they operate. I indicated then that we were going to undertake a very vigorous review over a couple of years so that we could rewrite the legislation because our modern communities need a modern piece of legislation that can help them be flexible. One-third section of that document is on taxation assessment, and I know the AUMA, as a very important stakeholder in municipal relations, will be inputting that information into the process.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that many of these issues have existed for decades, what is the minister willing to do to address these issues on a more timely and comprehensive basis than the MGA review will allow?

Mr. Griffiths: Well, Mr. Speaker, the MGA itself is the single largest piece of legislation the province of Alberta has. It's a very complex document, and it has a lot of stakeholders that are going to be very interested in what it says. We already have a very vigorous timeline for the MGA review, and I would prefer that it was done within the context of the MGA review so all stakeholders, whether it's private business, the public sector, municipalities, AUMA, AAMD and C, all have the opportunity for input so we can come up with the best, most comprehensive document to guide municipalities for another generation.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what is the minister willing to do to address the long-standing disparity and detrimental effects on municipalities, both urban and rural, that tax and assessment breaks create by transferring the tax load from one sector to another, especially in the case of the education property tax?

Mr. Griffiths: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's why the MGA review is going to be a very detailed and thorough review, and it's going to have a lot of discussion from a lot of different stakeholders. I can tell you that in the Department of Municipal Affairs and in the context of the MGA review we have four principles. We understand there is only one taxpayer from which we all collect our resources. We know that we have to make sure that we're competitive as a province and as municipalities. We say every day that there is no us versus them; there's only us. We're all Albertans, and we need to work together. Finally, it's about the cost-effective, efficient delivery of services for the clients that we all serve collectively.

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

Municipal Charters

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. As any woman can tell you, one size does not fit all. So it is no surprise that Edmonton and Calgary, with two-thirds of Alberta's population between them, have different issues and need different powers and tools than smaller cities or towns, but the MGA is forcing the large and the small into the same one size. Why does the Minister of Municipal Affairs insist that two large cities and three smaller cities must work within the MGA one-size pantyhose?

Mr. Griffiths: Well, I assure you, Mr. Speaker, I know nothing about pantyhose, and I won't comment on that.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked very vigorously on a civic charter so that cities who want to take on new roles and assume new responsibilities will be able to have an enhanced relationship with the province and the co-ordination on how we're going to deliver those services, knowing there's only one taxpayer and knowing we all serve the same client. We had proposed to have it done before the next municipal election. We are months ahead of schedule and look to be signing it this spring. So we don't have one size fits all, we know every municipality is unique, and we're trying to work with them to make sure they can deliver services as best they can.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that big cities, small cities, and towns in Alberta have all been supportive of each other's need for different tools under or outside the MGA, why is it that the minister is the one who doesn't support the Calgary and Edmonton charters?

Mr. Griffiths: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I was just very clear that we are months ahead of schedule in signing the civic charter. I am incredibly supportive of that. I don't know how else to say it to make it more clear. That's what we're working on.

Ms Blakeman: Well, I think, to be very clear, in fact, he's signing civic charters. He is not signing big-city charters, an Edmonton city charter and a Calgary city charter. That's why it strikes me as so odd that Edmonton and Calgary, again large urban centres with most of the province's population, are treated like unreasonable teenagers by this parental province. What is it about this minister or this government that they don't seem to respect what these cities and their citizens want, their own charter?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, there are 349 municipalities in this province. If I tried to write a charter for every single one of them,

we would have a mishmash that wouldn't be very competitive and very good for the citizens that live in those communities. I am working very hard with the municipalities to sign a civic charter that enhances the relationship with the province for those that can take on more roles and responsibilities, but it's important to note that the MGA the province currently has, the one we're going to write is going to be less prescriptive and more open for municipalities to manage their own affairs than any other piece of legislation in North America, and that's where they're going to get their power.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Little Bow.

Alberta Health Services Parking Fees

(continued)

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, yesterday Albertans learned once again that they'll have to pay significantly more to park at hospitals so that Alberta Health Services can pay for crucial maintenance on their infrastructure. This is nothing more than a tax on the sick and on their families. My question is to the Health minister. Why has the government put Alberta Health Services in this kind of financial position, which means they have to gouge sick Albertans and their families to pay for parking?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member had the first part of his question exactly right. Parking fees are charged to assist with site maintenance and reconstruction and all of the other things that make parking facilities possible at our health care facilities.

The second part of his question, however, could not be more off base. Any major centre in this province that delivers health care has to charge parking fees on a recovery basis in order to make parking viable at these facilities. Equally, any large organization that employs staff also charges staff for parking at the place of employment. These practices are not out of line with anywhere in Canada. To suggest that somehow they're aimed at disadvantaging people who are ill is simply not the case.

Mr. Eggen: Well, let me get this straight, Mr. Speaker. Given that the staff in our hospitals are already facing financial hits and layoffs before the budget starts and people need to go to visit their loved ones regardless of if they get gouged or not, why is this Health minister asking the workers and families visiting sick people to pay more to park at the hospitals where they need to go to do their jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horne: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member couldn't be further off the mark. First of all, health workers in Alberta are among the best compensated anywhere in Canada, and we're very proud of that. Secondly, my belief is that they understand that, as with other employees in other large organizations, they do have to contribute to parking costs for their own vehicles at their places of employment. Finally, I guess, and most importantly, the hon. member is attempting to suggest in some way that the government is gouging or disadvantaging people who are ill and who require health care. That's simply not the case.

Mr. Eggen: Well, that's not what people feel when they have to reach into their pockets and pay outrageous sums to see their loved ones in the hospital.

Perhaps the minister can explain to me why health care workers and sick Albertans will wind up paying more once again for this PC government's broken promise when we know that people find it unaffordable to pay?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what promise the hon. member is referring to. We've certainly made no promise to freeze parking rates at our facilities. That said, I'm assured that our rates are comparable to other major centres across Canada. I know, based on my own questions of Alberta Health Services, that they attempt to keep them as low as possible. But I also know that they're a very real cost. I trust that Albertans understand, that they would want us to charge people in order to park at our facilities if it meant that that money could not be spent on health care services, which they value much more highly, I assure you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by Calgary-Fort.

Fusarium Management

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Agriculture is a large part of this province's history and economy, and through thick and thin it has remained Alberta's largest renewable resource; however, in the early 2000s the government implemented a Fusarium management plan with a zero-tolerance policy in order to reduce the Fusarium, a serious fungal disease affecting cereal crops. This plan has not been properly enforced. Considering the lack of enforcement and that it is costing this industry millions of dollars every year, will this minister please explain the current situation and why seed cleaning plants in Alberta are not adhering to these regulations?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for the question. I know that in his area of the province this is something of significant concern. Actually, if you go back in history to the early 2000s, that was at a time when there was early detection in southern Alberta, largely in irrigated crops. But it seems as though this problem is moving north. We take this very seriously because, as he points out, agriculture is a very important industry for Alberta, and in order for it to maintain its profitability, we have to make sure that we manage these diseases.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that there's a lack of enforcement regarding the Fusarium management plan and the fact that it's virtually impossible for pedigree seed growers to grow a zero per cent standard to meet, will this government work to change the policy to the ministry accepted standard of 0.5 per cent, which would be acceptable and through best management practices could be followed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member does make a good point because these criteria were developed early on. There has been an evolution of this disease in the province, and as I say, it is moving northward. There has been a significant amount of debate. We do have a committee working on this and reviewing our current policy. We are working with producers as well as industry, ag fieldmen, ag service boards, and we are going to review whether or not the current policy is still the one that we should have.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

2:30

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that large companies are turning away from investing in our hybrid seed-growing industry due to this unattainable standard and given that even the Premier has been taking my good advice lately, will this minister be willing to work with me and with seed growers in Alberta to address this industry-wide problem? Or I'll write a note.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, we already are doing that. Just for example, in 2010 we tested some 900 wheat crops, the following year another 400 wheat crops. We've also randomly tested corn crops, barley crops. We are working on this. I take his concerns very seriously. We will continue our conversations, and I'm happy to discuss them with him.

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

Electricity System

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To build Alberta, we need electricity. Electricity is the lifeblood of our economy and quality of life. Given that Alberta has adopted a deregulated regime of electricity generation, that brings uncertainty and fluctuation. My question today is to the hon. Minister of Energy. What can the minister tell Albertans about the situation of electricity supply and demand? Are we an importer or an exporter of electricity?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hughes: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm pleased to take that question. You know that we're building in this province in many ways, and one of the ways is that we're building that critical enabler of economic development in this province, which is the electricity system. Now, some suggest that we're building infrastructure in order to export, but if you look at the history over the last 10 years, we actually continue year after year after year to import electricity on a net basis, over 4 and a half per cent last year. I would say that that's because the opportunities are right here in Alberta, a great province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like natural gas needs pipelines to transport it, electricity generation needs transmission lines to transport electrons to end users. My question is to the same hon. minister. What is the situation of transmission line networks in Alberta to meet the demand?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hughes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, like any house that has a roof, it needs to be upgraded. It needs to be replaced after 50 or 60 years. What we're doing in this province is upgrading the transmission infrastructure. What I can tell you and can reassure all Albertans is the fact that we are very concerned about the cost to consumers of this. If you reflect upon our decision back in January, we ensured that there was indeed going to be greater oversight, six different initiatives to ensure there's greater oversight over the cost structure of the electrical transmission system in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the same hon. minister. Given that electricity can be generated with natural gas and that the natural gas price is low, my constituents would like to know why the electricity price is still high and gas is low?

Mr. Hughes: Mr. Speaker, all Albertans are paying a fair price for electricity. If you look at the facts in a StatsCan report most recently published, last month Alberta was the only province to post a year-over-year price decrease for electricity. This happens in Alberta. It doesn't happen in most of the rest of the country. We have a very competitive electricity system, and on top of that, there isn't one cent of public debt on the electricity system in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Health Care Workforce

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to mismanage our health care system. Instead of taking aim at the layers of upper management and bureaucracy at AHS, this government continues to make foolish cuts that impact the most vulnerable. At the long-term care facility in Three Hills we have heard there has been a 30 per cent reduction in staff presence even though patients in these beds are still in need of care. Will the Health minister, then, please explain why front-line health workers and services continue to be targeted?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, front-line health services workers across Alberta in our health system are being supported as they never have been before. When we hear the budget later this afternoon, we'll be talking about other things that we are doing to support them in their work and to make it easier for them. Our long-term care system and all of the continuing care services that we provide in Alberta are based on patient need. Funding and staffing levels are based on regular assessments of patient need, assessments that are conducted by health care professionals.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the nursing aides at these facilities provide Albertans with some of the most cost-effective care for our most vulnerable and that the reduction of staff will just add further cost to our health care system, how can the minister justify another cut that impacts Albertans in need?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more with the hon. member about the role that personal care aides and health care aides and others that work in continuing care play. They put the care in continuing care for the residents in our facilities. As I said in response to the last question, decisions about staffing levels in individual facilities are based on the actual needs of the residents who live there. This is what allows us to ensure quality and safety in the system. It's what allows us to do the best job we can of supporting residents, and it's a system that's working well for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think cutting staff accomplishes that.

Given that this government has tried to cut nurse practitioners in Airdrie and has shut down a cost-efficient transition centre right here in Edmonton, can the minister explain to Albertans why cuts are being made to long-term care centres instead of taking aim at executive and management perks in our health care system?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to answer that question. First of all, the closure of the transition unit at the Royal Alexandra hospital is not a cut in service. It's a reflection of the fact that we have managed to significantly reduce the number of patients waiting in hospitals for access to continuing care. That's a very good thing, and Alberta Health Services deserves credit for it. The allegations around staff cuts – again, I'm not sure where the hon. member is getting his information, but decisions around staffing levels in individual facilities are made based on resident need. Resident needs in facilities go up and they go down, and staff levels are adjusted accordingly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by Livingstone-Macleod.

Aboriginal Relations

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have First Nations peoples in the constituency of Gold Bar as well as Inuit and Métis residents. My question is directed to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations. Alberta's aboriginal people are the fastest growing and youngest segment of our population but have some of the highest unemployment rates and socioeconomic challenges in the province. What is your ministry doing to address these concerns?

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you for that question. It is a very important question, and this is a very important priority that is closing the social gap for all First Nations and Métis people in this province. When our Premier talks about families and communities, she talks about social outcomes. When she talks about world stewardship of our natural resources, she's made it very clear that First Nations must be at the table and partner with this province as we move forward. We are working with First Nations. I've now toured over half of the Nations in the province. We've had very good discussions with the chiefs and councils. I'm confident that we're moving in the right direction and that we will be able to close that socioeconomic gap as we move forward in the coming years.

Mr. Dorward: Also to the same minister: let's talk education, then. Has any work been done to address the low school graduation rates amongst First Nations peoples referenced in a memorandum of understanding, that I've reviewed, on First Nations education, signed in 2010?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it's important to realize that the purpose of the MOU is to address gaps in funding, services, legislation, and to increase collaboration and co-ordination in the education system. There are over 40 commitments at eight subtables that we have, with a tripartite agreement that our Education minister has worked on very closely with the federal government and with all of First Nations. We're moving forward on this MOU very quickly. In fact, the Premier and I and the Education minister met with Shawn Atleo, the national chief, and representatives from all treaty organizations

last week, and we agreed that this is a priority issue. We're going to work very closely on it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Dorward: Mr. Speaker, I've been following closely on social media, and I recognize the things that are being done in this area, but I'm also concerned about the treaty rights of First Nations and how all of this work may infringe on that and if it's been done in harmony with the treaties that are in place.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. The Premier made it very clear to the First Nations that none of the work that we will do will infringe on treaty rights, and that was recognized by the national chief last week.

Mr. Speaker, I want to leave you with three words: language, history, and culture, language because you should be proud of who you are, history because you should know where you came from and where you're going, and culture because you should be able to celebrate that heritage. We're going to make sure that all First Nations and all Métis people in this province have the ability to do that and to be proud of who they are.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

2:40

Grizzly Bear Management

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently in southwest Alberta many constituents on ranches, farms, small acreages have seen their livestock be targeted by grizzly bears, and many other constituents have felt scared of close contact with these bears on their property. This leads me to believe that the BearSmart program has been poorly designed by the government by applying too broad a stroke for the entire province without regional needs being strongly considered. Will the ESRD minister please update the House on what the current status of the grizzly bear population is in southern Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy for the question. I would say that our grizzly bear recovery program is working. This is a very important species for Alberta, and certainly we're starting to see the recovery happening throughout the province but particularly, as the member raises, in southern Alberta. The importance, though, is that we are working with ranchers and farmers in southern Alberta and across the province to make sure that we're helping them to manage the populations. This is a very important species for us, an endangered species, and we continue to make sure that we recover the numbers that are needed in this province for the important grizzly bear population.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Yes. Well, thank you for that, but I actually asked something specific: if the population was increasing or not. Perhaps if it is, does it need to be the case where we have to refocus on the BearSmart program, then, or are we just going to carry on with the same old, as we've seen in the past?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, as I said, the grizzly bear population is increasing. We know that's happening, and that's a good sign of the good work that the department is doing with regard to the grizzly bear recovery program. The BearSmart program is working as well, but we know that in southern Alberta there are more of the grizzly bears surviving there, so we are working with the ranchers to ensure that we're working with them on the protection of their livestock. We have programs with them to do that as well. We're happy that the numbers of the grizzly bear population are increasing because that's the whole point of the recovery program.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Yes. Thanks for that. Given that they are increasing and given that there's a lot of stuff in the media today and in the past few weeks with regard to possibly culling or moving animals, does the minister have anything to say in that regard?

Mrs. McQueen: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly, if we have problem grizzly bears in different parts of the province, the department looks at how we can work to move those populations. We're making sure that, first and foremost, the recovery plan is in place, that we have BearSmart in place, working with the ranchers to make sure that we can mitigate the issues for them. We certainly look at: how do we move some of the problem bears? That's important for us. But, first and foremost – I'll say it again – what's most important is for us to get the recovery program working and to make sure we can get this species, that's very important to Alberta, off the endangered list.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 15 seconds I will call on the first private member, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, for her statement.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by Calgary-Shaw.

International Women's Day

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta, as we all know, is home to thousands of extraordinary men and women, but tomorrow we will be recognizing the women of our province as we join with people from around the globe in acknowledgement of International Women's Day.

Alberta is home to some of Canada's first suffragettes. It's in their honour that we created the Persons Case scholarship to commemorate the efforts of our Famous Five Alberta women, who fought and won the right for the women of Canada to be officially deemed persons under the law.

Our government has made a pledge to the women of Alberta not only to celebrate with them on International Women's Day but throughout the year such as our Minister of Human Services did when he joined others in the One Billion Rising movement. You know, we can make a difference in the lives of women around the world and here at home. I'd like to commend the International Women's Day committee of Strathcona county on their four-day celebration as well as the city of Fort Saskatchewan on their first International Women's Day event for raising the profile of the wonderful women in their communities.

On a personal note, as a female parliamentarian I would like to recognize all the brilliant and innovative women in the House,

including Alberta's first female Premier. Ladies, you are models of resilient dynamism, as are many of the women in our communities, and I am proud to work alongside the women on both sides of this House.

I am looking forward to the day, though, when the granddaughters of Albertans question the need to have a day to recognize one gender over another. You know, we've come a long way since the Famous Five, but we still have some ground to make up. I ask that the men and women of this Assembly join with me in recognizing the accomplishments of women from all across this glorious province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek in place of Calgary-Shaw.

Economic Value of Cities

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like all members of this Assembly representing urban constituencies, I am a proud city dweller. Alberta's major cities are the envy of Canada, if not the entire world. Rich culturally, blessed with stunning natural beauty, and as the Minister of Municipal Affairs apparently needs reminding, they are the economic powerhouses. Edmonton and Calgary are expected to grow well beyond the Canadian average in 2013. Edmonton's 2011 real GDP growth of 3.9 per cent doubled the Canadian figure and even outpaced Alberta's growth by almost a full percentage point. Calgary, the city I live in and love and am proud to represent, currently has Canada's best paid and most productive workforce, highest personal income, and the second-lowest unemployment of Canada's six major cities.

If there is one person in the Assembly who should understand and appreciate the economic value of the cities, it's the Minister of Municipal Affairs, but yesterday the minister shocked us when he said that Alberta urban residents sit in their high-price condos and don't necessarily contribute to the grassroots of the economy. Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. The minister is wrong, and he owes my constituents and every single resident of Edmonton and Calgary an honest apology. This isn't the first time this minister has gaffed when it comes to Alberta cities. You'll recall he called Mayor Nenshi of Calgary a strutting peacock when he had the utter nerve to actually question the government's treatment of cities. I humbly suggest that his comments towards urban Alberta residents yesterday offer a glimpse of where the insult came from.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately, in the end I think Albertans were simply disappointed with the minister's comment yesterday. They expect and they deserve better from the minister, whose job is to represent, stand up for, and understand all Alberta municipalities, rural and urban.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by Sherwood Park.

Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a group of individuals in my constituency who demonstrate forward thinking and capacity building for those in our community with developmental disabilities. The Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities is a nonprofit organization that provides housing services to persons with disabilities in Calgary. I had the pleasure of collaborating with their team towards the goal of providing housing for their aging clients.

They have raised considerable funds towards their long-term goal, construction of a side-by-side duplex. CSPD has even engaged their own clients in launching their own fundraising ideas. A penny drive and the sale of handcrafted greeting cards are just two examples of their community spirit. I even have today a card for our Premier for her birthday, which I will pass on to her after.

Our government's Ministry of Infrastructure's support in extending their land lease to 30 years has ensured that this group will meet their goal to build housing in Calgary-Currie for an aging developmentally disabled population. I look forward to our continued work together in the coming years, and I thank them very sincerely for their advocacy for some of Alberta's most vulnerable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park, followed by Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

2:50

Blood Donation

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently a prominent and beloved member of my community had a very serious operation. He is alive today because of the investment Albertans have made in medical facilities and training, certainly, but also because 15 Albertans took the time to donate blood.

When surgical procedures are undertaken, there is an inevitable loss of blood that must be replaced for the patient to live. He required 15 units. Some accident victims can go through 50 units before they are stabilized. Standard hip replacements require two units, and some leukemia sufferers require eight units a week. Thanks to the voluntary contributions of thousands of Albertans, Canadian Blood Services is able to ensure that blood is available to meet the needs of the injured and sick as required, and it is a cornerstone of our universal health care system.

Our voluntary system also endeavours to ensure that the blood provided comes from healthy members of our society, which is not the case in some countries that may rely on the purchase of blood. Blood is not purchased here, and users are not charged. While blood donor clinics are used to solicit donations, our system depends on regular donors. Prospective donors can register online and schedule regular appointments into their busy lives. Check out www.blood.ca for more information on where to donate or to set up an appointment.

The gift of life is precious. We all rely on blood being available to meet our needs and those of our loved ones, friends, and neighbours. Let's find room on our calendars for an appointment to donate. Thank you to the hundreds of thousands of Albertans who have given blood and special thanks to those who do so on a regular basis.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, followed by Calgary-Fort.

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week I was granted the opportunity to attend the United Nations 57th Commission on the Status of Women in New York City. Along with my colleague Donna Kennedy-Glans and a Canadian delegation led by Minister Rona Ambrose, we were privileged to experience first-hand the great work our international community is doing to end violence against women and girls.

During our visit the Canadian delegation presented an event featuring an international panel of experts committed to developing a strategy to engage men and boys to prevent violence

against women. This is an initiative that I know our government is working on as well through the taking a stand project developed by the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General. Change begins at home, and I am proud that we are working with our communities not only to prevent but to eliminate violence against women and girls. I encourage each and every one of you to take note of efforts being made in your constituencies to understand and address gender-based violence.

The Hope Resource Centre in Westlock provides support to individuals affected by family violence and abuse. These are the types of initiatives that help create hope and stability in our communities. The creating change treatment program is a great example of support developed by the Hope Resource Centre in partnership with communities in Barrhead and Athabasca. This collaborative program operates in rural Alberta with a success rate that is pretty extraordinary.

As we mark International Women's Day tomorrow, I am privileged to have spent part of this past week with some of the world's most prominent and progressive women. These are the moments that make me proud to be a Canadian, an Albertan, and a woman, and I am thankful to have the opportunity to serve as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, the best province in Canada.

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

Immigrants of Distinction Awards

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to recognize the work of the organization Immigrant Services Calgary. On March 1 I attended the ISC annual immigrants of distinction awards gala. Attending with me were the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Justice, and hon. members for Calgary-Bow, Calgary-Glenmore, and Calgary-Hawkwood.

The immigrants of distinction awards were given to deserving individuals who have successfully integrated into our local Canadian society, are extremely accomplished themselves, and work very hard to build Alberta. The awards also were given to businesses and organizations that help newcomers and promote diversity. Their efforts showcase what Alberta is. It's a good model for integration within a new social environment, a leader in building new relationships not only in Alberta but in the world. I wish to congratulate all recipients and all nominees.

Immigrant Services Calgary is an organization that has provided newcomers a variety of services for over 35 years. They help new immigrants find language training opportunities and other community resources. They help them adjust to life in Canada by supporting them in their settlement process.

At this time I would like to acknowledge ISC Board Chair Alicia Backman-Beharry and CEO Din Ladak, board members, and all staff for their great work.

On this note, I would like also to commend all other immigrant service organizations for their contributions to help newcomers integrate quickly into our local societies and communities, to realize their full potential, and to build Alberta together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and table this petition signed by 1,162 Albertans supporting the implementation of

newborn hearing screening or early hearing detection and intervention. These concerned Albertans encourage the government to mandate and fund a program to screen newborn children for hearing disabilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Hon. member, just remember that all petitions must be vetted past and approved by Parliamentary Counsel, and I assume yours has been.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) to advise the House that on Monday, March 11, 2013, written questions 20, 21, 22, and 23 will be accepted, and written questions 19, 24, 25, 26, and 27 will be dealt with.

Also on Monday, March 11, 2013, Motion for a Return 4 will be accepted, and motions for returns 3, 5, and 6 will be dealt with.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 12

Fiscal Management Act

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

This bill has been developed as a result of the extensive consultations that occurred across the province last fall. It fulfills the Premier's commitment to rebalance the fiscal framework and reduce our dependency on nonrenewable resource revenues. Bill 12 will ensure that we are able to meet the needs of a growing province while living within our means. More details will be available later today when I present Budget 2013.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of an ad campaign this PC government ran in the 2012 election. In this ad Premier Redford clearly promises the people of Alberta that there'll be no new taxes and no service cuts. This ad is proof that promises from this PC government are not worth the paper they're printed on.

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings with the requisite copies. The first is an e-mail dated March 6 from a resident of Slave Lake, with respect to her son who was in a tragedy, and

she's imploring the government to keep the runway at the municipal airport open as it will save lives. That's signed by Elizabeth Lund, Patrick Lund, Tyler Lund, Kaitlin Lund, Jillian Lund, and Kristen Lund.

My next tabling is an e-mail dated March 6. It's by Bob Hetherington. He's from Cold Lake. He is urging the government to keep the runway open past March 15, to "be human and consider the lives of all Rural Albertans," and he has signed it, "Concerned Rural Albertan and supporter of the PC party for years."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the requisite number of copies of some of the letters, e-mails, and phone calls that I received from the concerned citizens of Warner.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Centre.

3:00

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, I have several tablings that support the comments he made during his questions today. There is support for the reference to the Minister of Municipal Affairs' comments about rural Albertans doing all the work and people in high-rise condos not contributing to the grassroots of the economy, two of those; additional support for the comments that were made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs to the mayor of Calgary calling him a politicking peacock; and a second support for the name-calling of the Calgary mayor. Unbelievable.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in order to allow time to prepare for the Budget Address by the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, I will declare the House recessed until 3:15 p.m. today.

[The Assembly adjourned from 3:01 p.m. to 3:17 p.m.]

Orders of the Day

Transmittal of Estimates

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I've received certain messages from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All rise, please.

The Speaker: The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, and recommends the same to the Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the government for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

Please be seated.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the 2013-14 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates as well as the 2013-14 government estimates. Further, I now wish to table the government's

business plan, titled Strategic Plan, and the ministry business plans.

Mr. Speaker, the government has introduced Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act, which will define the fiscal and financial reporting requirements of the province beginning April 1, 2013. The content of these plans anticipates this new legislation.

3:20

Government Motions

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now wish to table the government's Budget 2013 fiscal plan, which contains the operational plan, savings plan, capital plan, and major economic assumptions used in developing these plans. Once again, these plans anticipate requirements proposed under Bill 12.

Budget Address

28. Mr. Horner moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

Mr. Horner: Premier, happy birthday.

It is my privilege today to present the government of Alberta's proposed budget for the fiscal year 2013-14. This has been a highly anticipated budget, probably one of the most anticipated ones in some time. We are facing a number of sizable challenges. Our current fiscal situation means we are tasked with making some necessary decisions and some tough but thoughtful choices.

The essence of Budget 2013 is responsible change. Indeed, there is no question that today we have reached a turning point for Alberta. I like to think of it as a lookout point. It's the perfect place to look out into the distance and clearly see the opportunity on the horizon while recognizing the dangers of being too close to the edge.

Budget 2013 is a watershed moment. It finds us embarking on an new era in Alberta, one that finds the balance between delivering for Albertans today and looking down the road to ensure success for Albertans 20 years from now.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has grown to be the great economy it is today, the economic engine of Canada, in part because of the hard work undertaken 20 years ago. Nearly two decades ago, in 1994, the government under Premier Klein delivered an aggressive budget that changed the direction of this province. Like the government of today, that government was tasked with taking action in the face of growing concerns about deficits and debt. It wasn't easy, and not every decision was popular with everyone, but those decisions helped to eliminate the province's operating debt, transform the public service, and set a new direction for Alberta, one that continues to breed success for our province today, 20 years later.

We can go back 20 years prior to that, to 1973, to see how events of the day would shape Alberta for the next two, three, four decades. It was 1973 when the world oil crisis sent energy prices skyrocketing from \$3 a barrel to \$15 a barrel to \$40 by the end of the decade. This was the boom that put Alberta's oil sands on the map and created untold wealth and unprecedented growth in our province.

Peter Lougheed and his team, of which I'm proud to say my father, Doc Horner, was a member – I thought I'd skate over that one, Mr. Speaker – knew that this would create tremendous

opportunity amongst the challenges of growth. The fortunes and the foresight of that generation's government are among the reasons Alberta continues to be home to all of the tremendous infrastructure, financial assets, and opportunity that we must preserve today and into the future.

Here we are, 40 years later, in an Alberta that was built on the measured and thoughtful decisions and the inspired vision of Progressive Conservative governments that came before us.

With Budget 2013 it's our turn. This government is carving out a new path that will lead us to where we need to be 20 years from now. Mr. Speaker, Budget 2013 is rooted in the realities of today while focusing on the road ahead. This budget builds on Alberta's strengths, our strong economy and our ability to stand tall in the wake of turbulence. It creates an action plan to address volatile nonrenewable resource revenue and the tremendous impact these revenues have on our budget. This budget is the building block for future budgets and for the future of this province.

As you will hear today, Budget 2013 is sharply focused on three priorities: building Alberta by investing in families and communities, including the new roads, schools, and health facilities we need; living within our means by challenging every dollar this government spends; and ensuring, Mr. Speaker, that our resources get to market – that's food, technology, and especially today oil and gas – so our resources, which belong to the people of Alberta, get the highest price possible. We will accomplish these goals by continuing to deliver the responsible change Albertans expect, addressing today's challenges while bringing security and prosperity for a new generation of Albertans in the decades ahead.

But, first, let's begin with today. On March 7, 2013, what does Alberta look like? We certainly have our strengths, a fact we should all celebrate. In terms of economic indicators Alberta continues to be a key driver of the Canadian economy. In 2012 our province led the country in both economic growth, more than double that of the rest of the country, and employment growth, consistently leading all other provinces in the number of jobs created over the year. In 2013 our economy is expected to continue to expand but at a more moderate and sustainable pace over the medium term.

Alberta continues to have one of the most competitive business tax environments in North America, and that's enticing a growing number of businesses to come to our province to open up shop. Our tax regime is inviting. Alberta offers low income tax rates. We have no provincial capital taxes or taxes on financial institutions. We have no payroll taxes, no sales tax, and a publicly funded health care system that is the envy of everyone. Our Premier has been clear, concise, and consistent. There will be no new taxes, no tax increases, no sales tax, period.

Because there's no question that Alberta has an economic environment that continues to attract investors and continues to draw more people, we are expected to grow to more than 5 million people in less than 20 years. Our province is a place where we can continue building our economy and continue building Alberta by making it sustainable.

While our strengths make us attractive, it's our challenges that make us even stronger. It's no secret that we do have challenges, immediate, serious challenges that Budget 2013 speaks to. For example, for the past 10 years on average we have increased spending by 7.3 per cent per year and this year zero. Zero, Mr. Speaker, because it was the responsible thing to do in light of our fiscal situation. We are faced with declining resource revenues, thanks primarily to lower energy prices; the discounted price Alberta producers get for oil in our only market, the United States;

and our current inability to get our products across the ocean to new markets.

After last year's budget some of our critics said that we should have seen the drop in oil prices coming. Some said that the Alberta government's forecast was too high. If that was the case, then everyone's forecast was too high, including the opposition party's. Last year's budget contains a full page of forecasts from private-sector economists, industry experts, and banks, who were forecasting at the time that west Texas intermediate oil would average \$100 a barrel in 2012. The federal Conservative government, our neighbours in Saskatchewan, and our government used that benchmark as the basis for our budget forecasts. So, too, did the opposition parties. Alberta's forecast was actually slightly lower, just to be safe. The WTI average turned out to be \$94, closer to what we expected, but even with our lower forecast that difference in price alone cost our province.

Going forward, we intend to change the way we forecast. As John F. Kennedy once said: "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future." This summer the government will hold an energy forecasting summit. We will bring together experts from around the world to explore and share best practices and fresh ideas on forecasting.

Despite the surprise of the lower prices, we did see the market access problem on the horizon, and we did know it would impact our revenues. It was a dramatic hit. The bitumen bubble means more than a \$6 billion drop in resource revenue from the Budget 2012 forecast, and we expect even larger declines in the coming years.

Bitumen belongs to the people of Alberta. Right now this resource is selling for 30 per cent less than the comparable world price. That's costing us \$4 billion in lost revenues this year, and it's impacting our health care, education, and services we hold so dear. This is precisely why opening new markets across Canada and around the world has become job one for this government.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has led the charge, pushing for a Canadian energy strategy that would allow all Canadians to make the most of the many energy resources with which our country has been blessed. Just two weeks ago the Premier met with the National Governors Association in Washington, DC, her fourth trip to the U.S. capital, to build support for the Keystone XL pipeline and to share Alberta's track record as a leader in responsible energy development. And the Premier took Alberta's case directly to the American people because it's a track record every Albertan should be proud of. It's a track record of success in environmental leadership that this government has led, a record that, dare I say, others in this House should pay close attention to.

3:30

The Premier and our colleagues in government have also been continuing to develop relationships with leaders in Asia and other growing economies to pave the way for entry into these new and lucrative markets. That's the kind of hands-on leadership that's required to build new markets and get the fairest price for our resources, and I'm proud of the Premier for leading the charge, Mr. Speaker.

Opening up new international markets for our products is not a new concept for Alberta governments. Four decades ago Premier Lougheed's team had a vision of expanding their access to new international opportunities. In fact, I can quote my dad, who in this very room on February 27, 1973, said: "There are tremendous markets around this world for all things that we can produce, if we are able to market them effectively. That means that we have to know how things are marketed in these various countries." Just

like the government under Peter Lougheed, our government under this Premier is committed to success in expanding market access.

Mr. Speaker, the budget I am presenting to you today represents the steps this government is taking to address our immediate fiscal challenges. Budget 2013 will deliver the responsible change that Albertans expect. It will show how we are not only reining in spending but that we are also spending smarter. That means focusing tax dollars on core programs and directing our spending to where there is the greatest need.

The decisions in Budget 2013 are also rooted in the long term. Just as choices made 20 and 40 years ago helped create economic success and quality of life for Albertans today, our decisions today are made with foresight and optimism and a determination to become the province we want and need to be 20 years from now. In 2033 we need to be the place that can meet the needs of a much larger number of Albertans. Certainly, our province will reap the benefits that come with new people, including higher housing starts, more consumer spending, and more tax revenue. But what these new Albertans won't be bringing with them are schools, roads, or hospitals. The Alberta that we need to be is one that will keep building our province by investing in families and communities, including those new roads, schools, and the health facilities we need.

The Alberta we need to be will be home to leaders in industry, industries that include among the most qualified workforces in the world. The Alberta we need to be will have a more diversified economy, one that relies less on nonrenewable resource revenues and more on Alberta innovation. Alberta innovation has of course been our strong point for more than a century. Alberta continues to focus on its most important resource, its people. That's why it's been so important for us to connect with that resource.

We've had many conversations with Albertans over the last year: during budget consultations, at the Dollars and Sense fiscal framework town halls, and at last month's economic summit. The principles and values of the people of Alberta are the foundation for this document. Albertans have told us they value health, education, and infrastructure. They've told us they expect a budget that is responsible, balanced, and facilitates economic growth. Albertans are driving the responsible change that we are undergoing today and tomorrow as we become the province we need to be in the future.

Budget 2013 marks a new direction for Alberta. The budget itself has a new structure, representing an important transition for this government. I think the team of 1971, including my dad, would be proud of where Alberta is today and of our Premier's vision for the future, and that's a future that includes tomorrow as well as 20 years from now.

Budget 2013 is guided by the Fiscal Management Act. This new act sets out clear fiscal rules and creates the requirement for an operational plan, a savings plan, and a capital plan. It will focus our finances on areas Albertans told us are important like savings and priority services like health care and education and will ultimately reduce our reliance on nonrenewable resource revenues. It will ensure we live within our means and continue to be one of the most fiscally responsible jurisdictions in the world.

Budget 2013 represents a once-in-a-generation restructuring. It brings a renewed fiscal framework that will help us ensure success for Alberta now and meet the evolving needs of a growing Alberta in the long term. Our plan includes an operational plan that protects core services but ensures we are living within our means, a savings plan that ensures we save in good and in challenging times, and a fully funded capital plan that will enable us to meet the needs of a province of 5 million people.

Mr. Speaker, our approach to Budget 2013 is not unlike how a responsible Albertan would approach their own household budget. As a banker I learned that valuable lesson: before you spend on anything, put some away to save first. In Budget 2013 before we spend any of our revenue, we will first take money off the top to put into savings. In fact, the new Fiscal Management Act legislates that we put aside in good times and in bad. Our forecast total revenue in 2013-14 is \$38.6 billion. That's a reduction from our original forecast of \$44 billion. Before we do anything else with it, we are putting \$297 million into the heritage savings trust fund, our long-term savings account. We are also keeping back \$238 million to pay the cost on our capital borrowing, part of our debt repayment plan.

Alberta's new savings policy will replenish the savings in the contingency account, which replaces the sustainability fund, and will also grow the province's longer term savings vehicles, including the heritage savings trust fund. Under our plan, Mr. Speaker, Alberta's savings will grow to over \$24 billion over the next three years. As we grow our savings, we will continue to build the programs and services in the areas that Albertans have identified as priorities, including health, education, and supporting those Albertans who are most vulnerable.

Budget 2013's operating expense is forecast to be \$36.4 billion. As I said, this is a zero per cent increase over the operating expense forecast for 2012-13. In a time when population growth plus inflation is 4.3 per cent, we are significantly holding the line on spending and living within our means. There will be changes, but they will be not be across-the-board reductions, where everyone gets a haircut. Instead, we are embarking on important and necessary structural change in this government with an eye to ensuring that Albertans continue to receive the outcomes that they expect. We will protect core services and provide for Albertans' priorities. This is at the heart of results-based budgeting, which I will speak more about in a moment.

First, I want to talk about what we're doing in specific program areas, beginning with Health. Our government is increasing the Ministry of Health's operational budget to \$17.1 billion, an increase of nearly \$500 million, or 3 per cent. The increase reflects the priority that Albertans and our government place on building a strong and accessible health care system.

Alberta Health Services is receiving a 3 per cent increase in base operating funding for the delivery of health services across the province. This is lower than the 4 and a half per cent increase the health sector was expecting, but we believe AHS can provide better outcomes for better value by using its resources more effectively. AHS is also receiving \$393 million for operating costs of new health facilities in the province.

Starting in 2014 all Albertans will have access to comprehensive drug and supplementary health benefit coverage. Currently 20 per cent of Albertans have no such coverage, Mr. Speaker.

With the new seniors' property tax deferral program we are focusing our funding on the greatest need. This program will ensure that seniors will be able to keep more money in their pockets by deferring taxes until they sell their home.

This budget will also provide increased access to primary health care through family care clinics and primary care networks. It will see Albertans paying less for generic drugs, and it includes early childhood development initiatives that will improve maternal and infant health.

The Premier has been clear that despite the difficult budget, we will continue to support our most vulnerable Albertans. While the operating expense for Human Services does see a \$9 million reduction from the 2012-13 forecast, at nearly \$4.3 billion we

continue to focus on positive outcomes for vulnerable Albertans and maintain funding in priority areas. Through responsible spending funding will increase slightly for supports for persons with disabilities, child care, child intervention, family support for children with disabilities, homelessness, and the assured income for the severely handicapped program.

3:40

Funding for the 10-year plan to end homelessness will also increase slightly, enabling it to provide outreach support services and help house about 1,800 homeless Albertans this year as well as fund over 3,200 spaces in emergency/transitional shelters. As part of government's focus on early childhood development we will provide \$89 million in 2013-14 for early intervention and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder initiatives.

We are changing how we do business. Employment training and income supports will see a reduction, and caseloads for Alberta Works are expected to decline as Alberta's economy and job prospects continue to improve. We are suspending indefinitely the summer temporary employment program, and we will work with our nonprofits to address their unique needs. We will be sharpening our focus on long-term career development and connecting Albertans with sustainable employment.

Budget 2013 will focus our education spending where it matters most, on the classroom, putting students first. Education's budget, including capital, increases by \$204 million from the 2012-13 forecast. Despite the current economic challenges we are maintaining base instruction funding for school boards at 2012 levels. To do so, we had to make some tough but responsible decisions. To this end, we are suspending funding to the Alberta initiative for school improvement. To ensure we lessen the impact on those with the greatest need, we are increasing inclusion funding. This gives school boards the flexibility to support the unique needs of every learner. We are also increasing our support for the small class size initiative. We are looking to spend smarter. We want to ensure that we are focusing on core areas that support the vision of Inspiring Education.

Postsecondary education remains a key priority area for our province, and we will continue to support postsecondary students. Alberta will continue to provide more money in scholarships to deserving students than all other provinces combined, with 38,000 students sharing in over \$71 million. As well, Alberta's publicly funded postsecondary institutions will receive over \$2 billion in base operating grants in 2013-14. We maintain our position as one of the highest rates of per capita funding in Canada to postsecondary institutions.

To truly lead in education and innovation, we need to more closely align university research funding with the government's economic diversification agenda. To help achieve this dynamic new direction, institutions will be given mandate letters defining their roles and government's expectation for a more unified postsecondary system. Alberta Innovates corporations will also receive mandate letters.

Alberta has an international reputation for producing world-class research in important fields like health, food safety, environment, and energy. The Alberta government is committed to finding ways to deliver that research to market. That's why we are continuing our work to more closely align publicly funded postsecondary education, research, and innovation in our province. We will strengthen the connection of Alberta's postsecondary institutions, called Campus Alberta, with our research and innovation body, Alberta Innovates. We want postsecondary institutions, businesses, and government to share

resources, experts, and ideas to solve complex problems while at the same time diversifying and strengthening Alberta's economy.

We are developing a new umbrella organization dedicated to unleashing more robust collaboration throughout Alberta's postsecondary education, research, innovation, and technology commercialization system as we diversify and evolve Alberta's economy. Through this new institute the Alberta government can strategically focus its research agenda and financial resources in areas where they will have the greatest impact and benefit for Albertans. The areas include energy and the environment, health, agriculture and food, and water. The creation of this institute will work toward achieving the Premier's vision of where we want to be 20 years from now.

The Premier has continued to make it clear. We will not be balancing the budget on the backs of municipalities. With the Ministry of Municipal Affairs budget at \$1.4 billion, we remain clearly committed to municipalities. Our municipal investments are strategic and drive positive transformation. They are not based on the price of oil today but with the next 20 years in mind. By maintaining municipal sustainability initiative funding at nearly \$900 million in 2013-14, we are demonstrating our commitment to municipalities and the continued importance of investing in local infrastructure for the long-term future of our province. Today's fiscal situation is an opportunity for government to spend smarter as it supports Alberta's municipalities, and we'll be doing that in several ways. Among them, we will be shifting money into grants that encourage municipal collaboration, and we will be making smart use of existing resources and consider P3 opportunities to invest in affordable housing.

Through Budget 2013 we will continue to work for safe and secure communities and an innovative and accessible justice system. Funding for police, prosecutors, and judges is being maintained. We've increased funding for the provincial policing contract, which will mean more RCMP officers are on the job in Alberta. In 2013-14 we will also be adding two new judges to the system. We will continue to support important programs for Albertans, including the victims of crime fund and legal aid. We're also working to ensure Albertans can continue to access justice services by making them more sustainable, effective, and efficient. This work will include streamlining how fines are paid, increasing the claim limit in small claims court – lawyers like that one, Mr. Speaker – and integrating programs and services that help Albertans with court-related processes.

Energy continues to be a driver of Alberta's economy, and with Budget 2013 we will continue to ensure Alberta is a leader in responsible energy development. For example, approvals for all oil, gas, oil sands, and coal projects will be processed through a single energy regulator. This one-stop shop will enforce legislation related to our energy resources such as land and water acts. If you break the rules, the Alberta energy regulator will have more tools to hold you accountable, including larger fines. The province will also continue to honour its commitments to current bioenergy and carbon capture and storage projects. We are committed to projects that have the right combination of technology, financing, and overall benefit to Albertans. These projects effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and they encourage private-sector investment.

Agriculture is Alberta's largest renewable industry. It is a proud part of our heritage, and it will play an even greater role in our province's future. Budget 2013 is changing the way we invest in agriculture. We are focusing dollars on programs and initiatives that will grow our industry and ensure that it's sustainable and internationally competitive. With the federal government scaling back income support programs for producers and with the

elimination of the farm fuel distribution allowance portion of the Alberta farm fuel benefit program, we can focus on research and innovation, on food safety, and on building the value-added side of our industry and opening up new markets and new opportunities for our producers. We will continue to invest in rural communities, and our farmers will continue to be fully exempt from provincial fuel taxes to ensure they remain competitive with producers in other prairie provinces.

The ability to do more with less is essential. While the operating budget for Environment and Sustainable Resource Development is \$516 million, it is a decrease of \$22 million. We are spending smarter with the funds we have. For example, we're allocating \$2.2 million to Asian market access for our forest products. Expanding market access for Alberta's natural resources and products is one of the government's top priorities. We're saving \$2 million by creating the integrated resource management planning division, which allocates staff from within the ministry to develop the land-use framework plan. This move reduces the need for contractors and will result in increased efficiencies, and it won't impact the timing of the current projected land-use plan development.

As we address fiscal challenges, Budget 2013 provides us an opportunity to make government more effective by reshaping our organization. Public-sector compensation makes up roughly half of our spending every year. The fact is that Alberta has the highest paid physicians, postsecondary faculty, and teachers in Canada. Only Saskatchewan pays more to the top-earning registered nurses. In light of this and our fiscal reality, Budget 2013 makes no provision for increased public-sector compensation costs. Our government has shown leadership on this issue. Last month we introduced a three-year wage freeze for all government managers. We're also planning to reduce the size of management by 10 per cent over the same three years. That's almost 500 positions. We want the right people, in the right positions, doing the right work.

3:50

We're also embarking on a review of Alberta's public-sector pension plans to ensure the sustainability of these plans. The pension boards are reviewing four major public-sector plans: the local authorities pension plan, the public service pension plan, the management employees pension plan, and the special forces pension plan. This review will ensure these plans remain part of a competitive compensation package for the public service while protecting taxpayers' interests. Reports will be provided to me by the end of this month.

Responsible change means making thoughtful decisions to ensure our organizational structures are effective, efficient, and delivering the right outcomes. This is at the heart, as I said, of the results-based budgeting process. This process is already under way, and the review will look at some 800 government programs and services, including those provided by government agencies. We are looking to ensure we are effective at delivering the outcomes that Albertans expect, and this work is accelerating. All reviews are now expected to be complete in May 2014, one year earlier than the original plan.

We're also looking at the outcomes that a much larger number of Albertans will be expecting over the next two decades. Right now our province is growing by almost 100,000 people each year. In about 17 years Alberta's population is forecast to reach more than 5 million people. That's the equivalent of adding a city the size of Calgary to the province. This tremendous growth will have a significant impact on our province, on our public infrastructure, and on the way we work as government to meet the needs of this much larger population.

This is one of the main reasons Budget 2013 is changing Alberta's path forward. Given today's fiscal challenges and given the challenges ahead as the province grows and changes, we can no longer proceed with business as usual. Of course, with every challenge comes an opportunity to do things better, but we need to be prepared.

Albertans have told us they want infrastructure in place to meet their needs today and the needs of their growing communities tomorrow. We know that investing in roads, schools, and hospitals both in good times and in challenging ones is critical to our quality of life. We also know that there is both a financial and a social cost to deferring capital projects until we have the cash in hand. That's why Budget 2013 includes a fully funded capital plan, one that allows this government to continue building Alberta for future generations.

Over the last 15 years Alberta has invested over \$72 billion in infrastructure. Our capital plan spending will average \$5 billion per year over the next three years, including \$5.2 billion in 2013-14. Financial experts, business leaders, academics, and Albertans have told us we should borrow for capital when it makes good financial sense, and right now it does make good financial sense.

They also told us the importance of having a plan to pay back the debt. Interest rates are at historic lows, and on top of that, Alberta's triple-A credit rating means we have access to the lowest possible borrowing costs. Budget 2013's fully funded capital plan will be supported by a responsible borrowing strategy to finance infrastructure projects. It includes a plan for borrowing that sets limits on the debt and a plan for paying down the debt. Our priority is to protect Alberta's triple-A credit rating and grow our net asset position, a testament to our fiscal responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, we must continue to make prudent choices, as we have done with a comprehensive review of approved capital projects. Some projects were cancelled, and others were deferred beyond 2016. Last August we announced that the Alberta public safety law enforcement training centre in Fort Macleod was cancelled. It has also been determined that the TransAlta Project Pioneer and Swan Hills Synfuels carbon capture and storage projects are not economical at this time, and the provincial funding for these projects is no longer included in the capital plan.

However, even though the 2013-16 capital plan is lower than in recent years, we're continuing to build Alberta, and the plan includes some significant additions. For example, the capital plan includes \$503 million over the next three years and more than \$2

billion over five years for 50 new schools and 70 school modernizations, as our Premier committed to. The capital plan has allocated \$282 million over the next three years and over \$650 million over five years for new postsecondary facilities at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, NorQuest College, the University of Calgary, Lethbridge College, and Mount Royal University. Promises kept, Mr. Speaker. As well, \$60 million is being provided over the next three years as part of the Premier's commitment to complete multidisciplinary family care clinics across the province.

Just like governments before us, this government is adjusting to current realities. We also recognize that some of the issues we are dealing with today are not the same as past governments had to deal with 10, 20, and 40 years ago. Mr. Speaker, Budget 2013 includes some tough decisions that won't be popular with all Albertans today, but they ensure we are focused on delivering the right outcomes for the people who need them most. This budget also ensures that Alberta continues to have the best financial situation in Canada. We will be in a net asset position of \$44 billion by 2016.

Budget 2013 is a blueprint for responsible change, enabling us to achieve this government's plan of building Alberta, living within our means, and ensuring that our resources get to the markets they should. This budget resets our compass, and it opens up new possibilities for charting exciting new paths, empowering us to become the province that we need to be.

Mr. Speaker, it is both an honour and a privilege to present Budget 2013 to the Assembly today, and I look forward to supporting this budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills on behalf of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to adjourn.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on March 11, 2013.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:58 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 28th Legislature - 1st Session (2012-2013)

Activity to March 07, 2013

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 199 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 200 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

*An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

1* Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012 (Redford)

First Reading -- 8 (May 24 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 177 (Oct. 23 eve.), 193-96 (Oct. 23 eve.), 233 (Oct. 24 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 336-39 (Oct. 29 eve.), 354-71 (Oct. 30 aft.), 373-80 (Oct. 30 eve., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 476-84 (Nov. 1 aft., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 10, 2012; SA 2012 c8]

2* Responsible Energy Development Act (Hughes)

First Reading -- 207 (Oct. 24 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 263 (Oct. 25 aft.), 424-43 (Oct. 31 aft.), 445-57 (Oct. 31 eve.), 526-46 (Nov. 5 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 563-71 (Nov. 6 aft.), 593 (Nov. 6 eve.), 644-48 (Nov. 7 aft.), 649-69 (Nov. 7 eve.), 731-53 (Nov. 19 eve.), 777-94 (Nov. 20 aft.), 795-853 (Nov. 20 eve.), 902-05 (Nov. 20 eve., passed on division, with amendments)

Third Reading -- 921-41 (Nov. 21 aft., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2012 cR-17.3]

3* Education Act (J. Johnson)

First Reading -- 155 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 219-31 (Oct. 24 aft.), 238 (Oct. 24 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 380-407 (Oct. 30 eve., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 669 (Nov. 7 eve.), 688-94 (Nov. 8 aft.), 753-63 (Nov. 19 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cE-0.3]

4 Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act (Scott)

First Reading -- 352-53 (Oct. 30 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 423-24 (Oct. 31 aft.), 593-614 (Nov. 6 eve.), 627-44 (Nov. 7 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 975-80 (Nov. 22 aft.), 1057-74 (Nov. 27 aft.), 1075-101 (Nov. 27 eve.), 1127-137 (Nov. 28 aft.), 1139-161 (Nov. 28 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 1161-166 (Nov. 28 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cP-39.5]

5 New Home Buyer Protection Act (Griffiths)

First Reading -- 261 (Oct. 25 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 354 (Oct. 30 aft.), 457-59 (Oct. 31 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 546-49 (Nov. 5 eve.), 571-83 (Nov. 6 aft.), 585-93 (Nov. 6 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 853-55 (Nov. 20 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cN-3.2]

6 Protection and Compliance Statutes Amendment Act, 2012 (Jeneroux)

First Reading -- 155 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 209 (Oct. 24 aft.), 264 (Oct. 25 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 459-62 (Oct. 31 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 855-56 (Nov. 20 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2012 c7]

- 7*** **Election Accountability Amendment Act, 2012 (Denis)**
First Reading -- 774 (Nov. 20 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 972-75 (Nov. 22 aft.), 1015-41 (Nov. 26 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1166-167 (Nov. 28 eve.), 1191-92 (Nov. 29 aft.), 1221-43 (Dec. 3 eve.), 1261-79 (Dec. 4 aft.), 1281-1300 (Dec. 4 eve., passed, with amendments)
Third Reading -- 1315-37 (Dec. 5 aft., passed on division)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2012 c5]
- 8** **Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2012 (Hughes)**
First Reading -- 156 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 233 (Oct. 24 eve.), 316-36 (Oct. 29 eve, passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 857-902 (Nov. 20 eve.), 943-53 (Nov. 21 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 953-56 (Nov. 21 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 10, 2012; SA 2012 c6]
- 9** **Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2012 (\$) (Horner)**
First Reading -- 156 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 209-10 (Oct. 24 aft.), 272 (Oct. 25 aft.), 311-16 (Oct. 29 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 462 (Oct. 31 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 856-57 (Nov. 20 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates, SA 2012 c4]
- 10** **Employment Pension Plans Act (Kennedy-Glans)**
First Reading -- 261 (Oct. 25 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 521-26 (Nov. 5 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 668-69 (Nov. 7 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 857 (Nov. 20 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cE-8.1]
- 11** **Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2013 (\$) (Horner)**
First Reading -- 1424 (Mar. 6 aft., passed)

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