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The 28th Legislature
First Session

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Thursday, March 21, 2013

Issue 40

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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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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Johnson, L.	Young
McDonald	

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Bikman	Khan
Bilous	Kubinec
Blakeman	Lemke
Calahasen	Sandhu
Casey	Stier
Fenske	Webber

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 21, 2013

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Let us pray. As we conclude this week's work in this Assembly, we renew our energies with thanks so that we may continue the work with the people in the constituencies we represent. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Webber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests sitting in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon. My first guest really needs no introduction to anybody in this building, and that is Mr. Peter Elzinga. Peter spent many years as the MLA for Sherwood Park and served under numerous portfolios as a provincial cabinet minister and as Deputy Premier. He later served as chief of staff to the hon. Premier Ralph Klein. Prior to his long, distinguished career here at the Alberta Legislature Peter served for 12 years as the Member of Parliament for Pembina.

In addition to his many political, business, and community achievements, Peter willingly and without hesitation chose to help his friend and brother Tom Shields by donating a healthy kidney to him in 2004. Tom enjoyed life to its fullest despite various health concerns, and he was daily grateful to his friend Peter Elzinga for the gift of a kidney, that extended his life for several years. Peter is here today to support my private member's bill, the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Amendment Act, 2013, which is up for introduction later today, Mr. Speaker. I ask that Peter please stand – I think he's standing; I can't see him – and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Mr. Speaker, accompanying Mr. Elzinga is Ms Karen Korchinski. Karen is a friend of mine and a friend of many and is faced with the possibility of someday needing a liver transplant. It is through her experience that I learned about the challenges facing our organ donor system. I thank her for enlightening me and inspiring me to do what I can to improve Alberta's organ donation system. She is here today to support Bill 207, and I ask her to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. J. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 24 students and four adults accompanying them from the Guthrie school in Lancaster Park. These students attend the school at Edmonton Garrison, and most have parents who serve in Canada's military. I've had the pleasure of visiting the school on many occasions, most recently in February with their Reading Rampage. I read to grade 2 and grade 6, and this grade 6 class is here today. It was a lot of fun. I hope to see them again soon. They are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Colleen Tremblay and Ms

Carol Moores and by parent helpers Cheryl Hamel and Melissa Colson. They tell me they love the Premier, and when I asked them, "Why do you like the Premier so much?" they said: "What's not to like? She's the Premier." I agree. They also said that they love it when we pound on the desks, so let's give them a warm welcome to the Assembly.

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

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure for me to rise to introduce 46 bright students, the future of our province. They are accompanied by their teacher, Keri Clifford, by assistant Catherine Manigo, and by parents Rachel Ross and Bradley Dundas. Before we started the session today, I had a brief conversation with them. They asked big questions. They asked about the budget, you know, about the Education budget, and also about negotiations with the doctors. Now I ask them to rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you some special people in this province that actually define this province. The work that they do through medical innovation and trying to increase the quality of care for Albertans through medically based evidence is what makes Alberta and what makes Alberta proud, and I'm certainly proud of the work they do.

First, I'd like to introduce Ian McEwan. He is a friend and a paramedic that's been on calls with me in the city of Calgary. He's also an accomplished flight paramedic with Alberta Health Services, and now he is again leading in his profession through some of this work that he's doing.

Second, I'd like to introduce Nancy Clayden, who is a researcher and paramedic, and Greg Hallihan, also a research associate. They are from the Ward of the 21st Century at the University of Calgary, and again they are leading the way with medical innovation to improve the quality of care that we give our patients. You can read more about this research. They made the front page of the *Edmonton Journal*. Thank you for joining me in this House today, and if the House could give them a warm welcome, I'd appreciate it.

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

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this House the Girl Guides of Canada Alberta Council, here to participate in the 42nd session of the Alberta Girls' Parliament right here in Edmonton. This unique program is modelled on the Alberta Legislature, with decorum, of course, and the delegates come from all over Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia. There are eight staff members here accompanying the girls: Shannen Hoffman, Laurie Robertson, Veronica Hoffman, Shannon Robertson, Heather Robertson, Claire Dubreuil, Emilie Brien, and Anja Clyke. I'm looking forward to having dinner with these girls and learning much from them. I'd ask you to please stand and receive our welcome.

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two very amazing women. Glori Meldrum and Randi Tyler rep-

resent the Little Warriors, a charity organization committed to awareness, prevention, and treatment of child sexual abuse. The work that Little Warriors carries out is something every Albertan supports. Today the Wildrose Caucus Foundation showed its support for Glori and Randi's work by donating the 8 per cent MLA pay raise to Little Warriors. I personally offer my thanks and gratitude for their dedication to help find healing for the most vulnerable members of our society, child victims of sexual abuse. I ask Glori and Randi to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a good friend and constituent from Edmonton-Whitemud, Barb Esdale. Barb is the co-chair of Alberta Donates Life Coalition. Alberta Donates Life Coalition is a group of several health organizations and individual advocates from around the province who have come together to encourage the government of Alberta to co-ordinate organ donation, create an organ donor public awareness campaign, and create an intent-to-donate registry for the citizens of Alberta. Barb's husband, David, who leads the music mission at Riverbend United church, was fortunate to receive the gift of a double-lung transplant from a generous donor family. Barb is here today in support of and to observe the introduction of private member's Bill 207 later this afternoon. Barb is seated in the members' gallery. I might also add, though, that she served the public of Alberta for many years in the Department of Education in, I think, the curriculum branch if I'm not incorrect. If Barb would rise and get the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What an honour it is for me to rise today and introduce a great Albertan and a friend, Mr. Charles Rees, who is seated in the gallery. In addition to a varied business career in the Edmonton region, Mr. Rees is a really important figure in the arts and culture scene in Edmonton. He's personally purchased and renovated two homes that are designated as provincial historic sites, he's an associate member of Alberta Music, he's a strong supporter of Festival Place, he's produced and promoted music concerts in Alberta, he's supported Broadway Across Canada for seven years, and he's a big supporter of the visual arts. He's also a member of the Canadian Diabetes golf committee and yearly organizes a successful tournament. In what little spare time he has left, he also takes an interest in organ transplant awareness and is here today to witness the first reading of Bill 207. I submit that Mr. Rees is working hard to enrich our community and to make Alberta a better place. Please give him the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture for two introductions.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you Tammy Fifield. Tammy is a kidney transplant recipient and is here to represent the Kidney Foundation of Canada, northern Alberta chapter. I'd ask Tammy to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

I did have another guest to introduce, Rachele Sandy, representing the Canadian Liver Foundation, the Edmonton chapter, but she was unable to make the trip due to the beautiful Alberta spring

weather we're having today. Both of these groups are part of the Alberta Donates Life Coalition and support private member's Bill 207, which will be introduced later this afternoon by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two transplant surgeons who are here to support the introduction of private member's Bill 207, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills. Our guests are Dr. Atul Humar, director of the Alberta transplant institute, member of the Alberta Donates Life Coalition, and Dr. Lori West, pediatric transplant cardiologist at the Stollery children's hospital, professor of pediatrics and director of research at the Alberta transplant institute, and also a member of the Alberta Donates Life Coalition. I ask that both physicians rise and receive the traditional warm welcome and appreciation of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two guests sitting in the members' gallery this afternoon. The first is Mr. Al Arntson, a 35-year resident of Leduc, Alberta, and a double-lung transplant recipient. This past summer in Calgary Mr. Arntson competed in the Canadian transplant summer games in cycling and is now a motivational speaker speaking on the importance of organ donation awareness. He drove in today from Leduc to support Bill 207.

Also, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dave Smith, from Edmonton. Dave is the past president of the Canadian Transplant Association and is the current executive director of the Alberta transplant association. He is a living kidney transplant recipient of 16 years. He also competed in the Canadian Transplant Games and is also here today to support Bill 207. I ask these gentlemen to please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly Sharon Marcus, the co-chair of Alberta Donates Life Coalition and mother of a kidney transplant recipient.

I also have Silvio Dobri. Silvio is a heart transplant recipient and one of the founders of the GoodHearts mentoring foundation. You can read more about them at goodhearts.ca. This organization is a support for all organ recipients. As mentioned by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, Alberta Donates Life Coalition is a group of several health organizations and individual advocates from around the province who have come together to encourage the government of Alberta to co-ordinate organ donation, create an organ donor public awareness campaign, and create an intent-to-donate registry for citizens of Alberta.

The Alberta Donates Life Coalition supports the MLA for Calgary-Foothills' private member's Bill 207. I personally would like to encourage all Albertans to sit down with their family members and have that conversation about giving the gift of life. Sharon and Silvio are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that they rise and that we give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Tony White, a liver transplant recipient since the spring of 2009. Tony is a passionate organ donor advocate and is a member of the Alberta Donates Life Coalition. He is here in support of Bill 207, which will be introduced by my friend the Member for Calgary-Foothills. I'd ask that Tony, seated in the members' gallery today, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

It's also a real honour today to introduce a woman who's had a big impact on me. I recently made a member's statement this past session on Little Warriors, and I'd just like to take the opportunity to introduce Mrs. Glori Meldrum and her friend Randi here today.

The Deputy Speaker: The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Mr. Quest: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my constituent Dwight Kroening, who's been living in Strathcona county for the last 17 years. Dwight will be 27 years post heart transplant this August and has been the subject of numerous research projects at the University of Alberta hospital. As a result of that research along with his many athletic endeavours he's become well known not just within the transplant community but also amongst the media and the general public. Dwight is a member of the Canadian Transplant Association and GoodHearts. In 2008 Dwight became the first and only heart transplant to date to complete an Ironman triathlon, and on April 15 of this year he will be the first heart transplant to run the Boston Marathon, all in an effort to raise organ donor awareness. Dwight is seated in the members' gallery with other supporters of Bill 207, which is being introduced today by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, and I ask that he now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two front-line pharmacists from my constituency of Lacombe-Ponoka. Max Beirsto is a pharmacist at the Blackfalds IDA. Jennifer Fookes is a pharmacist and owner of the Blackfalds IDA. Max and Jennifer are strong advocates of their community and anticipate finally being consulted on the pharmacy issues here in Alberta. I ask Max and Jennifer to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the pleasure of introducing to you and through you to this Assembly a friend of mine and an important figure in the Edmonton media landscape. Arnim Joop is the founder and editor of two major news publications, the *Albertaner* and the *Mill Woods Mosaic*. Through these two newspapers Arnim has been instrumental in giving voice to multicultural communities in Edmonton and has been a strong champion of multiculturalism and social justice. His work as a journalist has garnered him numerous awards, including the Canadian ethnic journalists' and writers' award, the Alberta centennial medal, and the Queen's golden jubilee medal. I would now ask Arnim to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

I have a second one, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you a constituent of mine,

Kathryn Westlund. For over four years Kathryn has been facing numerous obstacles with her workers' compensation claim and the subsequent appeals process. Kathryn is frustrated by the current legislation that, in her view, allows the WCB to question physicians' reports and discourages physicians from engaging with the WCB on behalf of the patient. Kathryn is facing foreclosure on her home due to lengthy delays and practices of the Workers' Compensation Board. I would like Kathryn to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:50

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this day, when people world-wide acknowledge that March 21 is the UN-designated International Day for the Elimination of Racism, it is my pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you my guest, who is himself international. Reed Bennett is visiting us from the United States, where he is a political science student at Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina. He is part of Killam, an undergraduate exchange program between Canada and the U.S. He is exchanging with a student from the University of Alberta. I would now like to ask Reed to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Mr. Jean Johnson, newly appointed executive director of the city of Edmonton French Quarter revitalization zone, located in the constituencies of Edmonton-Gold Bar and Edmonton-Strathcona. Please, Mr. Johnson, stand and receive the welcome of the House.

Oral Question Period

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

Little Warriors Program Funding

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the government's priorities are all wrong. They're racking up \$17 billion in debt, they're running a cash deficit as well, yet they refuse to make meaningful cuts to the number of managers or to trim bloated expenses. They focus their cutting on the front lines and on our most vulnerable citizens. They don't seem to have any trouble making life easier for criminals but are reluctant to help victims. The work done by Little Warriors helping child victims of sexual abuse is critical. Doesn't the Premier agree?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's fundamental to the work that we have to do as a community and government. Ensuring that we're supporting victims of child sexual assault has been a commitment that we've certainly kept in this government. We have partnerships with community agencies like the Zebra foundation here in Edmonton, the Child Advocacy Centre in Calgary, working with many of the sexual assault centres across this province. In fact, we have funded in the last year \$18 million with respect to these programs. We think these are important programs. We want to make sure that we get good results for people that have been victims, and we're always prepared to do that work.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Smith: We appreciate that work, Mr. Speaker, but there is money available to help the Little Warriors establish its Be Brave Ranch. They're only seeking \$650,000. The money is available in the victims of crime fund, which, we understand, has \$50 million worth of net assets. What better use could there be for the money in that fund than helping to heal and nurture victims of child sexual abuse?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more that the victims of crime fund money should be used to help victims of crime. There's no worse situation than a child who's been sexually exploited.

In this particular case, I met with Little Warriors on October 18, 2012, to talk about the Be Brave Ranch program and asked specifically for a business case and for a treatment plan so that we could know that any investment in that project would yield results. I'm awaiting that information, and when that comes, I'm more than happy to deal with that particular issue. It's more than \$650,000 as a capital grant. It's operating money as well. That's Albertans' money, that they want to be used well, and we . . .

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

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're not asking for new spending, just spending on the right kinds of things.

Why is the money just sitting there in that fund? Why not make a commitment today to support a charitable group, Little Warriors, that helps the victims of child sexual abuse? Just make the commitment today.

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would think that this hon. member more than anyone, given what they've espoused over the years about the effective use of public funds, would know that you have to have a process for any project. There's no shortage of really wonderful projects that are brought in the door. Our job is to make very difficult decisions. We ask for data, we ask for information to make sure that the investment is going to achieve a result for Albertans. That's what we've asked for. That's what we're waiting for. When that comes, we'll be more than happy to take a look at that particular project to say: is this the best use of funds to achieve the outcomes for Albertans?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Hon. leader, your second set of questions.

Ms Smith: I'm glad the representative of Little Warriors is here to hear that answer, and we'll be following up.

Compensation for Pharmacy Services

Ms Smith: We've been warning the government about the problems they're causing with pharmacies. It's another example of cutting spending in the wrong place, and it's another blow to front-line services. Repeated cuts to compensation levels for pharmacies is putting the entire industry at risk. The level of concern is evidenced by the protest that we witnessed earlier today in the Legislature. Doesn't the Premier realize that putting pharmacies out of business is not the way to save money in health care in Alberta?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, if that was actually going to happen, then we wouldn't have made the decisions that we did. We believe pharmacies are fundamental to primary health care in this province. In fact, that's one of the reasons that in the past two

years we've actually changed the fee structure for pharmacists, who have asked us for a wider scope of practice, that is paid for by Alberta taxpayers, in order to support people in communities. In fact, I was just in Vermilion last week working with a pharmacist who was saying that he is very pleased with the decisions that have been made. Of course, as we transition through this, we've made some commitments that we're prepared to keep to support rural . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Health minister made a mistake. The surprise changes that were announced in the budget without consultation will have a drastic effect on compensation for pharmacies. Inventory costs can't be recovered, revenue streams are being restricted, and additional services are not being priced fairly. The Health minister doesn't get that. Will the Premier step in to clean up the Health minister's most recent mess?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, no one should ever suggest that our Minister of Health doesn't understand exactly what needs to be done. In fact, I am truly proud of the work that our Minister of Health has done in the last two weeks and well before that in working with pharmacists to ensure that this transition goes smoothly. In fact, pharmacists have said that they're pleased with these changes. There is always work to be done. We will always make commitments to improve the system. Our Minister of Health has said that, and I have a lot of confidence in him.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I don't think 300 pharmacists are rallying because they support the government's changes.

The entire Health portfolio is a mess. Doctors, nurses, and now pharmacists are threatened, seniors and long-term care are ignored, but managers, VPs, and executives of AHS are looked after handsomely. Their expenses are obscene. The executive is well taken care of. When is this Premier going to start taking care of the front lines?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member actually paid attention to the communications that we have with Alberta Health Services, she would know that one of the things we have said very clearly to Alberta Health Services is that while they are getting a 3.5 per cent increase and while we're holding the line at zero spending, which is 4.5 per cent less than this opposition would have done, they are not to impact front-line workers. They will not impact front-line workers because at the end of the day that's fundamental to the access to health care that Albertans need.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Labour Negotiations with Teachers

Mr. McAllister: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents and teachers breathed a sigh of relief last week when it was discussed that the ATA and the province had reached a labour deal. True to form, the government nearly threw out its shoulder patting itself on the back. Well, that was then and this is now, as the Premier likes to say. The deal appears to be falling apart. School boards are saying that the government is not putting boards first. To the Premier: did you really expect a ringing endorsement from boards when you didn't involve them in the process?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, it was really wonderful last week on Friday to be able to make the announcement standing next to the president of the ATA and to actually have the Education critic for the opposition at the meeting saying very constructive things with respect to the deal. I don't think it was just us patting ourselves on the back. It was many people. The reason is that this is a good deal for kids. We have school boards, 15 across this province, that have already said that they like this deal. It allows us to hold spending in line, to respect teachers, and to take care of families and kids. That's what we promised Albertans.

2:00

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, given that we should all be putting our kids first in line here and given that the boards who are elected to represent these kids are concerned and are telling us that this deal does not put children first, again to the Premier: are you listening to the concerns of the boards, or will you impose your government-knows-best imposition on them, too?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, we're absolutely listening to the boards. That's why our field people are out talking to the boards, and that's why I'm very happy to report that I think by the end of the day we're going to have in the neighbourhood of 20 boards supporting this deal and only one or two against it. This deal is good for kids. The last five years in this province have been fantastic in the classroom because we've had labour peace. We're going to have labour peace for the next four or five years again.

Mr. McAllister: Again to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: given that you can't swoop in with \$107 million this time and given that you used local autonomy as a crutch to do nothing about that silly no-zero policy, why is it that this time you seem to have no problem disregarding the autonomy of locally elected officials?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, what we're actually seeing from locally elected officials is a lot of consideration about a deal that makes sense for kids and families. That's one of the reasons that we have school boards across this province, including the Edmonton Catholic board, the Calgary Catholic board, Medicine Hat, and I believe Grasslands, saying that this is a good deal for parents, for kids, for teachers, and for their taxpayers.

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

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another day, another major bungle from this government through its intellectually and morally bankrupt budget. It's great that the government has got labour peace with the teachers – that's a good thing – but it seems that this government forgot that any teachers' deal would need to be approved by all school boards in the province. Two of the biggest, Edmonton and Calgary, are saying that it's a deal they can't afford through the government's severe underfunding of the K to 12 system. To the Premier: since you knew you would be offering this deal to the teachers, why did you not properly fund the school boards so they could pay for it?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, you know, the wonderful thing about bringing people together in common cause is that it gives you the opportunity to exchange ideas. One of the things that's been tremendously important in this negotiation and in this deal is that we've been able to ensure that we can keep our commitment to Albertans to keep spending at zero but at the same time support the teachers, who are so valuable in our classrooms. In fact, there were increases to the Education budget this year. We made

commitments with respect to classroom size, and we made commitments with respect to inclusion that actually increased spending with respect to those. That's what matters to Alberta families.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, this Premier is great at cutting deals, but I'll tell you that 25 per cent of our kids aren't finishing school.

Given that our schools are already short 650 teachers compared to three years ago despite the fact that enrolments are up 5 per cent over the same period and are projected to increase every year for the next 10 years and that the cancellation of the AISI program means the loss of 400 more teachers, to the Premier: if you end up imposing this deal, how many more teachers do you estimate school boards will need to lay off so they can meet payroll?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, one of the great things this deal does is that it keeps teachers in the classroom. One of the things we've focused on with the budget is strategically looking at every area of the Ministry of Education that we could trim, that we could cut, that does not affect the classroom, where we could put the resources in the classroom. AISI was one of those programs. It's a great program.

I don't know how you can argue that you can't afford a deal with three zeros. The only concern I have if you say that you can't afford a deal with three zeros is that you want to have discussions about rollbacks. We don't want discussions about rollbacks. We want teachers focused on teaching our kids and doing the things that they do best.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, I can't believe that the Premier and the minister honestly believe that laying off more teachers is good for our kids.

Given that today there are two rallies in Edmonton alone to protest the devastating effects this bankrupt budget will have on K to 12 and postsecondary education, which means we now have students, parents, school boards, university faculty and staff giving your budget an F when it comes to education, to the Premier: what plan do you have to deal with the chaos your budget is creating at every level of education from K to PhD? Your budget is a failure, Premier. What are you going to do about it?

Ms Redford: You know, Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago we very clearly set out a budget that ensured we could provide services to Alberta families and build communities. We made a commitment to invest in infrastructure. We made a commitment to save. We just had the AAMD and C, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, here talking about building communities, and what we heard from them is that they understood we had some tough choices to make but that we made the right choices. We're increasing funding to education, to health care. We're investing in communities, we're investing in savings, and we're doing it in a way that meets the priorities of Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. leader of the New Democratic opposition.

Government Communications

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government has taken the politicization of government communications to a new low. One political scientist warns that it really causes Albertans to question the value of everything the government is telling us. Adding a partisan spin to government communications is something we've grown used to seeing from the Harper Conservatives, who are well known for their disdain for openness

and democracy. My question is to the Premier. Why does she feel that it's okay to use the resources of the government to distribute PC propaganda?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that this member, the leader of the fourth party, has to read a newspaper that quotes a political scientist to tell him what Albertans really think. Well, I can tell him that Albertans want to hear what the facts are, and the reason why the Harper Conservatives and this government have to send clear information to Albertans is because Mr. Mulcair and this leader of the NDP Party won't do that. [interjections]

Mr. Mason: Oh, goody for him.

Well, I happen to have a government information bulletin about 511, which is travel information, road information, and it contains this statement: "Our government was elected to keep building Alberta, to live within its means and to fight to open new markets." [interjections] Well might they thump, but why don't they tell the real reason this government was elected? They scared people to death about the Wildrose. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, please.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, did you rise on a point of order?

Mr. Anderson: I want her to answer the question, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. So no point of order.

The hon. Deputy Premier, please.

Mr. Lukaszuk: May I answer this question by way of posing a question? Is it possible for me to give this member my 30 seconds so he can continue reading that press release? It is refreshing to hear him speak the truth.

Mr. Mason: And, indeed, out of the mouths of babes: the Deputy Premier has put his finger on it. The government has transformed the Public Affairs Bureau into the Ministry of Truth.

Given that partisan politicking is not the responsible change that Alberta voted for and given the Premier has always claimed she wants government to be more open and transparent, can the Premier explain whether openness and transparency, in her mind, is forcing public servants to regurgitate meaningless PC propaganda?

Mr. Lukaszuk: It is unfortunate that reading Orwell hasn't changed that member's mind and that he hasn't changed his political views. Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that the government of Alberta issues information that is factual to Albertans. Unfortunately, when we have an Official Opposition that resorts to printing coupons and posters and we have leaders of the provincial opposition and federal opposition that insist on misspeaking on matters of truth, the only party that can possibly do it is the government of Alberta. We will continue telling Albertans the truth.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

Senior Public-sector Compensation

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, this government continues to show how out of touch they are with the priorities of Albertans. I've received a number of phone calls indicating that AHS is in the midst of pushing through executive bonuses now to beat the freeze that will come into effect April 1. When the government is asking physicians to take a \$275 million pay cut, this is troubling, to say the least. Can the Minister of Health confirm or deny that pay-at-risk

bonuses will be processed before the end of the fiscal year, and will he take the necessary steps to ensure this does not happen?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what information the hon. member has or thinks she has, once again. But what I can tell her is that the chair of the AHS board has been very clear about the intentions of that board with respect to both management salaries, including pay at risk, and expenses. The chair has outlined a clear plan to reduce both within the next budget cycle. I find no inconsistency between that position and the position of that chair and that board right now.

2:10

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Speaker. Minister, prove I'm wrong. Pick up the phone and call him.

Given that U of C officials have committed to a wage freeze but not until July 1, meaning plenty of time for raises and bonuses before then, will the advanced education minister commit there will be no special bonuses for university executives, boards, and commissions either today, tomorrow, or any point this fiscal year or the next fiscal year?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, it is still acceptable that the Leader of the Official Opposition makes these very simple mistakes because she's still a rookie, but for this member there's no excuse. She knows that all 26 schools within Campus Alberta are governed by boards of governors who manage the salaries, not this government. However, some schools should be commended. For example, the University of Calgary has recently put out a directive on freezing wages for their management and executive staff, and I hope that other schools are watching it carefully and will follow the trend.

Mrs. Forsyth: With the freeze on senior government bureaucrats being lifted in June of 2012, will the Minister of Finance please tell Albertans whether all deputy ministers, chiefs of staff, senior officials, opted-out and excluded staff will receive any pay hikes or bonus packages in the next 10 days or the next fiscal year?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I think we were pretty clear back in the third-quarter update when we said that all management and opted-out salary grids will be frozen for the next three years. There will be no bonuses. The opposition knows this. This is not news. I don't know what else I would answer.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

Transportation Strategic Services Budget

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the opposition proposed cutting the department that provides Alberta's important transportation infrastructure. One of these proposals was to cut strategic services by \$1.7 million. To the Minister of Transportation: will this cut-and-slash approach of the opposition influence the government's commitments to keep transportation infrastructure safe for Albertans?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Strategic services provides information technology and database services. I was shocked,

frankly, that the opposition would propose to impair our ability to monitor and repair bridges and roads, threatening the safety of Albertans while they travel around Alberta. This clearly shows the Wildrose opposition's lack of regard for the safety of Albertans, and frankly the member in the party that made the amendment should be embarrassed for the lack of concern for Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member. [interjections] The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Hon. members, please. The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has the floor.

Proceed, hon. member.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the opposition's proposal would also have cut funding to traffic safety services by \$1.4 million, can the minister please inform the House if the safety of motorists on our highways will become a lower priority?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that the opposition is so ill informed about the important work that we do on behalf of Albertans and they continue to hack and slash. Traffic safety services makes sure the vehicles on the roads are safe. They ensure compliance of dangerous goods and make sure that we look after drivers' licences and other important functions. What's clear to me and ought to be to all Albertans is that the opposition is prepared to sacrifice the safety of Albertans with an ideologically driven agenda rather than deal with what's important. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjections]

Hon. Member for Airdrie, you rose on a point of order at 2:15. Thank you.

Hon. members, please. I know it's Thursday, and we're all anxious to get home in the snow and the springtime weather. But, please, could we allow those asking the questions to be heard and, even more importantly, that we might hear the answers? Please.

I'll recognize the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for your final supplemental.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Transportation: given that the opposition also wanted to cut the Alberta Transportation Safety Board by \$121,000 and given that the Wildrose Party has been asking for due process for those caught violating the .05 legislation, is he still committed to that process?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the Wildrose has actually complained and been soft on our impaired driving legislation. They ask for due process, and then they try to cut the very budget that provides the due process that they claim is important. Alberta's Transportation Safety Board not only does this, but they also provide that important channel of appeals for seniors and other medically at-risk Albertans that are in danger of losing their licence. They say they care, and then they go to cut off the appeal process. What else is the opposition not telling Albertans about what they do? They're on both sides of . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms Notley: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order, Edmonton-Strathcona, at 2:16.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Compensation for Pharmacy Services

(continued)

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's meddling in the generic drugs market has threatened the viability of pharmacies across Alberta. Unlike sectors that are simply facing a freeze, front-line local pharmacies are suffering drastic cuts. Last July this government hit rural pharmacies with harsh cuts, but this government's fiscal mismanagement just keeps on going. Now front lines are being targeted again. To the Minister of Health: when will this government stop meddling in the industry, forcing local pharmacies out of business and leaving rural Alberta without care?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, this government has followed a path that we've seen across Canada in the last few years whereby generic drug prices have been reduced. While this benefits very much the prices we pay as government for government-sponsored programs, it also benefits employers who provide jobs to Albertans along with benefit packages that they value very much. It also benefits Albertans who pay out of pocket. We are the only jurisdiction in the country to provide over \$90 million in transition funding to support pharmacists in the pursuit of the new model they designed to pay for their . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it is estimated that the net loss is \$100,000 per pharmacist and \$400,000 per pharmacy, instead of pronouncing sentence on rural pharmacies, doesn't the minister think this issue should have been dealt with head-on and in consultation with the front-line pharmacists?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, the new pharmacy services framework and the transition funds that we have been providing have been the result of discussions with Alberta pharmacists over the last three years. The hon. member makes a dangerous generalization in the figures that he quoted. The impact of generic price reduction varies widely among pharmacists depending upon the size of the store they practise in and their affiliation and their involvement in other retail activities. What is important here is that we are supporting Alberta pharmacists in the transition to a new professional services model that recognizes them to provide the services they are trained to provide to Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is dangerous is losing our rural pharmacies.

Given that this government has failed to address the outdated reimbursement model, will this government at least commit to meet with me and front-line pharmacists in Lacombe-Ponoka to work on a funding model that lets pharmacies operate as viable businesses and ensures my constituents and all Albertans still have access to the care they need?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horne: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the hon. member is aware that we have a \$15.6 million transition fund directly designed to support rural and independent pharmacies across the province.

In addition to that, we have an implementation advisory committee, which is meeting this week, consulting with pharmacists about transitional issues as the generic drug prices continue to

lower in Alberta and across the country. Mr. Speaker, Alberta pharmacists are directly involved in analyzing the impact of this decision and in developing the solutions to address it.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

CCSVI Treatment

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of my constituents in St. Albert, as is all too common in our province, suffer from multiple sclerosis. This terrible condition robs people of their mobility in the prime of their life. Many in the MS community perceive an innovation developed by Dr. Zamboni as groundbreaking treatment. My question is to the Minister of Health. Under the Alberta multiple sclerosis initiative has the province observed any efficacy of Dr. Zamboni's treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, also known as CCSVI?

2:20

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. Multiple sclerosis is an important issue, particularly in western Canada in the more northern climates. As he has said, we have an observational study in progress now, known as TAMSI, that began in 2011. It is designed to gather information and to improve understanding of the treatment for CCSVI. There are still many unanswered questions regarding the potential linkages between CCSVI and MS. There have been some preliminary results released. At this point they primarily describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that other provinces have partnered in large international studies as part of their fight against multiple sclerosis, has Alberta entered into any partnerships involving population-wide studies of this condition, including Dr. Zamboni's CCSVI treatment?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Horne: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the multiple sclerosis clinic at the Foothills hospital in Calgary is involved with the Canadian multiple sclerosis monitoring system, which is a national registry for patients with MS. Our role in Alberta has been, as I said, to design and implement the TAMSI study, an observational study. We have made our data available to other clinical researchers around Canada and around the world. I think we're making a very significant contribution to the investigation of the effectiveness of CCSVI.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. member, your final supplemental.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to learn of this initiative that the province is involved with, but given that this province is funding a monitoring study of the efficacy of CCSVI, will the province consider funding standardized treatment to a limited group of Albertans to ensure a universal standard of care and to increase the quality of the data gathered?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, as I think the hon. member knows, there are a number of clinical trials that are being sponsored in Canada

and internationally on this procedure. What I can commit to the hon. member is that we'll continue to monitor the results of our own observational study and continue to look at the evidence from research studies around the world. Based on that evidence, we would make a decision about the potential for sponsoring future clinical trials.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Urogynecology Wait Times

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Jane Schulz is an Edmonton surgeon and medical teacher at the University of Alberta. She has expressed growing outrage with delays in women's urinary and gynecologic surgery for five years. Her patients have their womb or bladder or rectum hanging from their vagina, they lose urinary or bowel control, and they're in constant pain. They wait two to three years to see Dr. Schulz and six to 12 months for surgery. Three women this year died of preventable infectious urinary disease due to delays in treatment. To the minister: what have you done to solve this problem over the past year?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. He and I have discussed the issue in the past. I've also met Dr. Schulz and one of her colleagues myself. These wait times are too long. I think it's the result of a number of issues, including the difficulty in recruiting physicians in this very specialized area. Part of the good news is that two additional urogynecologists have been recruited in Calgary, and that will bring the number there to five. AHS is continuing to try to recruit a similar specialist in Edmonton. It is very much needed.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given what Dr. Schulz calls, quote, a toxic climate for doctors in Alberta, end quote, and assuming you find more resources from somewhere, how will you attract specialists to Edmonton and Alberta?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is where the hon. member and I part ways. It is completely inaccurate and inappropriate to suggest that the climate in this province is anything but conducive to and supportive of attracting the best and brightest physicians in the world. Not only is compensation 14 per cent above the national average in this province and not only do we have some of the best hospitals that will be found anywhere in North America, including the new south Calgary health campus, we have some of the finest research facilities in the world. It is that climate, which is the product of decades of investment in this province, that has attracted the best.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, this is one of many areas in women's health care that's being neglected in this province. When will this government put women's health care foremost in our health care system?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we already do have a very strong commitment to women's health. One needs to look no further than the Lois Hole hospital for women at the site of the Royal Alexandra to see that evidence. The hon. member is a physician, and he certainly is correct that more does need to be done

in the area of women's health. Recruitment in very specialized areas such as urogynecology continues to be a priority. We will continue to stand up for women who need access to these services and do our utmost to reduce the waiting times.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Summer Temporary Employment Program

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has broken yet another promise by axing the community spirit grants, which were funded entirely by lottery revenues. Rather than supporting nonprofits, she's cut funding to 2,100 groups, including food banks, community leagues, and women's shelters. The list of groups affected is 420 pages long. Will the Minister of Culture explain how community organizations can survive a \$15 million blow at the same time as this PC government throws \$200 million into new VLTs?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, the community spirit donation program: as the minister that was a really tough decision to make, as all ministers did. At the end of the day for me, we know that there are other programs available in my department, the community facility enhancement program and the community initiatives program to name a couple, which are constantly oversubscribed. I guess that for me it's working with nonprofits to enable them to have people work in their sector on a longer term basis rather than a short-term basis. We are working with the nonprofit sector.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, I started an online petition two days ago, and given that over 500 people have already signed it, calling for the minister to reinstate the STEP program, and given that letters continue to pour into my office, providing tangible proof of how successful this program has been and continues to be, to the Minister of Human Services: will you admit that you've made a mistake by cutting a program that has touched so many lives and restore funding immediately?

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

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that virtually every dollar that's spent in government, taxpayers' dollars, touches people's lives. If you're going to balance the budget and if you're going to make the best use of the public resources, you have to make tough decisions. The STEP program was one of those tough decisions. When we look at a program like that, we have to look and say: is it achieving the outcomes that we need to achieve? The reality is that there are other programs for students who need to get jobs in the summer. There is a good job market for students now, so the purpose for which that program was set up is no longer there. However, there is a need on the not-for-profit side, and we've committed to working with the not-for-profit organizations to make sure that those organizations . . .

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Penny-wise, pound-foolish. Given that not a single community group has been consulted by any minister about a replacement for STEP and given that organizations like iHuman and the Boys & Girls Clubs are grap-

pling with mean-spirited cuts to both the STEP program and the community spirit grants, how can the Minister of Culture possibly defend this devastating double blow to Alberta's community organizations?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are among the most generous in all of Canada. We know that the current taxable credit portion that we have is one of the most generous in Canada. That will continue to be available. I guess that for me ensuring that all dollars are focused on addressing the greatest need is what I'm going to be looking for. I look at the student SCIP program, the serving communities internship program. That program was undersubscribed when we began it; now it's oversubscribed. So I look forward to working on that program and getting more students employed.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Water Supply in Southern Alberta

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, as we prepare to head back to our constituencies, I need to get some answers for the residents of Highwood, and I hope that the environment minister can help me out. As with many things in southern Alberta, it's related to water. In Okotoks we're facing a water crisis. The town is being forced to buy a water licence, at a cost of about a million dollars, from an oil company or an irrigation district to obtain rights to water for their growing needs. As I understand it, it's the only community in the province being forced to pay private industry to get water for their residents. Can the environment minister explain why?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to answer this question. I've had the opportunity to meet with the council of Airdrie and the manager of Airdrie on numerous occasions. In fact, in Okotoks we've had good conversations about this. We're looking at a water conversation . . . [interjection] Quite frankly, I was there. I don't remember seeing the hon. member there.

We've had lots of discussion about this. We are working with Okotoks and all communities in southern Alberta with regard to important issues on water, and that's one of the important things that will come out of the discussions.

2:30

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, not only is the town of Okotoks facing a huge bill for water; it is also one of the communities hard hit by education tax increases, around 17 per cent for this community, which is \$1.6 million. Since the province is taking \$1.6 million more out of Okotoks and they need a million dollars for the licence, can't we just call it square and have the province assume the cost of the water licence for the town?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I just said, we are having the discussion across the province in 20 communities about water, the importance of water, sharing water for communities, particularly in the south, where we have a basin that is closed. That will be continuing until the end of the month. Albertans have

a chance to give us input. We have talked with Okotoks. We have talked with other communities. You will see that with regard to water, as we committed to Albertans in these discussions, we are gathering input first, hearing what Albertans have to say in their communities, listening to Albertans first before we make any policy decisions.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Hon. member, your final supplemental.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, there are different water issues in High River. Former MLA George Groeneveld's flood mitigation report called for a plan to help 66 communities that are at risk for flooding. When will the government provide a detailed, comprehensive priority list of flood mitigation plans so that I can tell High River where it is that they stand on the list?

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

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs this falls under my department. We've been working very hard with the federal government. They wind up covering a significant portion. The larger the disaster is, the more needs to be relieved to the communities. They cover a larger and larger portion, and they had announced quite a while ago that they want to work with the provinces on disaster mitigation because they realize an investment up front will save money down the road for repairs. So we're going to continue to work with our provincial partners and the federal government to work on the mitigation of flooding.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-North West, followed by Calgary-Shaw.

New School Construction Priorities

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 300 people in my constituency came together at a freezing cold rally on Family Day to raise awareness about the dire need for a new middle school in Calgary-North West. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Since our school board is changing its method for school ranking, calling it dated, will the minister take into account that a dated ranking system booted us out of the number 2 spot for a middle school?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, when we get the priority list from the school boards, we consider three things on our end. One is health and safety – we've got schools with mould in the walls or the roof is falling off or a flood has come through – we look at the enrolment pressures, and we make sure that school boards have exhausted all possible partnerships with other local groups: postsecondary, health, municipalities. Those are the things we do to weigh the projects against each other across the province. We rely on the school boards to take the data that they've got to give us their priority lists, and as they change those, of course, we take that into consideration.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Jansen: My next question to the same minister: when school boards move a school from priority 1 or 2 down to a lower priority on the list like Calgary-North West, which moved from number 2 to number 7, will the minister consider this when making funding decisions for new schools?

Mr. J. Johnson: Of course, Mr. Speaker, we will. We put a lot of weight into what the local school boards put forward in terms of their priority list. It's not the only thing we look at, but certainly they need the ability to change their capital list from year to year because communities evolve and grow and demographics change, and that's why they submit annual capital lists. They do change from year to year, and then we respond to those changes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Hon. member, your final supplemental.

Ms Jansen: My final question to the same minister. When can my constituents, who have already waited 14 years for a middle school, expect a new school announcement for Calgary-North West?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the hon. member because she's been a strong advocate for her community as well as others, the Member for Calgary-South East, particularly in the Calgary area, where we have some growth pressures. I understand that a lot of these communities and parents are anxious to learn about their school projects right across the province, and I'm looking forward to being able to announce these projects once we get through the budget. They are contingent on the budget, so I call on all members of this House to support us in getting this budget passed so we can get these schools built.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by Edmonton-Riverview.

Transition of Michener Centre Residents

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard the minister defend his decision to slam the doors of the Michener Centre shut, even saying that it was, and I quote, an unacceptable situation. Well, on that we can agree. It's unacceptable that this minister is kicking people out of their homes, and it's unacceptable that this minister feels helpless to do anything about it. The Michener Centre is also a support system for many patients that require stabilization before returning to community living, and losing this service will be a detriment to the social fabric of our province. Why is this government again targeting the front lines for cuts instead of the bloated bureaucracy?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. associate minister for disabilities.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. member had been paying attention to the budget discussion – and if he attends the estimates, he'll learn a little bit more – we actually have made administrative cuts across the board.

The closure of the Michener Centre is about care for the vulnerable people that are in there, and it's going to improve. We've got a significant body of evidence that's been gathered across North America. We have our own evidence right here in Alberta, and we're making the right move for putting the patients first.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Wilson: Given that the hard-working staff at the Michener Centre not only provide a home to these vulnerable Albertans but also provide a transitional facility for many individuals that have been stabilized, how can this government justify shutting down this essential front-line service while continuing to support man-

agers managing managers managing managers at all levels of government?

Mr. Oberle: An easy thing to say, Mr. Speaker, that across the board we've got so many managers and all this administrative overhead. The fact that it's not true doesn't seem to matter to that hon. member.

If the member knew anything about transition, then he would understand how inadequate this facility is for the transition of patients. That is one of the reasons we're moving to a better model.

Mr. Wilson: Given that the Albertans who have been cared for at the Michener Centre are still going to require the care and support of the community and given that the Michener Centre was a safe place for these Albertans and not a homeless shelter or a psych ward, are there going to be supports available for these individuals once they have been kicked out of their homes, or is this minister just going to make them fend for themselves?

Mr. Oberle: You know, Mr. Speaker, that is so ridiculous that it almost doesn't deserve an answer. The opposition there would have Albertans believe that we're just going to turn people out onto the street and put them on a waiting list for new homes. The facility doesn't even close until every single resident in there has got a care plan prepared and is moved into an appropriate setting. They're going to get all the supports they need and more.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Support for Postsecondary Education

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. William Butler Yeats said, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." Given that the universities have significant cuts to their operating budgets instead of the modest increases they were expecting and now have been told that they are being given a mandate letter, to the Deputy Premier and Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education: how are these mandate letters going to account for cuts and preserve the fire of learning and research in Alberta's postsecondary institutions?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one is in any way proclaiming that having a 7 per cent decrease in funding is not going to be challenging, but what I am telling all presidents and chairs – and we tend to agree on this – is that we will tackle this challenge together not only as individual schools but as Campus Alberta, and we will be finding efficiencies, duplications, and any other efficiencies that can be found within the entire system. The mandate letters, on the other hand, are being written in collaboration with each school and with student bodies.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Young: Given that there will be no tuition increase for students, can the Deputy Premier educate me on how these cuts will not result in cuts to student programs or increases in noninstructional fees charged to students?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, we will discuss this in more detail when we go over the estimates for this particular ministry. However, I will tell you this. I made a commitment, the Premier

has made a commitment that we will not be increasing tuitions as a result of this budget. The reason is this: we have also been very clear that we will not be balancing the budget on the backs of students. We will be finding efficiencies in administration, we will be finding efficiencies in relationships between all 26 schools, and we will be encouraging all schools to follow the lead of the government of Alberta on salary increases.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member. Final supplemental.

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we expect our universities and colleges to serve as cornerstones of Alberta's knowledge economy and the drivers of innovation, how can we expect to attract and retain the brightest minds with these cuts? Will these budget cuts result in a brain drain?

2:40

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, in this case the Beatles were right. It's not always that money can buy you love. As a matter of fact, the way to attract the best researchers, the way to develop clusters of innovation, the way to develop research and then commercialize it is to develop a climate for that research to occur in the first place. We will be fostering a climate of research and innovation and commercialization by identifying our areas of strength, by having our institutions collaborate with each other, and as a matter of fact, reaching nationally and internationally. Both Alberta and Canada can do much, much better on that front.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Transportation Project Priorities

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans just don't trust this government. The Minister of Transportation claims that a prioritized list of transportation projects is available online. We went online, and the list he's talking about isn't prioritized and is just tentative. So we FOIPed it and found out a priority list does exist, but it will not be made public. In estimates the minister went back on his claims, saying that, quote, I don't have a top five, and there is no definitive list. To the Minister of Transportation. It's time to be honest with Albertans. Where is the prioritized list, or do you just not have a plan?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question, particularly because he doesn't seem to get the answer though he's been given it before. The list is on the website. He was told at estimates last night that projects are either funded or unfunded. He has the answer. Albertans that want the answer seem to get it. It seems the hon. member is the only Albertan that doesn't know where the list is.

Mr. Barnes: To the minister: given that you have already deferred many important projects like highway 881 and given that your government is known for making political announcements, will you explain to Albertans the criteria you use to prioritize projects, if you use any at all?

Mr. McIver: Again, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member already knows we use a variety of criteria: safety, development, traffic, what's there. You know what? Whatever we're building is 25 per cent more than the opposition would be by their own plans. We're doing our best. We don't like deferring any projects, but the fact is

that this government is building Alberta. We're delivering. That's why they chose us in April. We're actually moving the province forward with the infrastructure that Albertans are going to depend upon.

Mr. Barnes: The list is just by highway number.

To the minister again: given that like failed Liberal leader Stéphane Dion, you find it hard to make priorities, can you at least explain to Albertans why you refuse to release a prioritized list, or are you just going to respond by saying that it's just not easy to make priorities?

Mr. McIver: I hope the hon. member gives his regards to his good friend Stéphane.

Mr. Speaker, again, the list is on the website. It seems the opposition are the only ones that don't know where it is. All other Albertans can find it on the Alberta Transportation website. [interjections]

We're building Alberta. We're moving it into the future. [interjections] People would have to wait a lot longer for their infrastructure if they had made the other choice in April. We're proud of this Premier and this government, that are building . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjections]

Wow. It must be Thursday afternoon.

Hon. members, I want to thank you for your co-operation. We got through 16 sets of questions and answers.

Hon. members, might we revert briefly to the introduction of guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

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

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly 14 students, at least, and two professors from King's University College, Dr. John Hiemstra, a professor of political science, and Dr. Michael De Moor, professor of social philosophy. They lead a new course at King's in the politics, history, and economics program. These 14 students are engaged in various aspects of public life through multiple field trips this semester, including a recent visit to my constituency office. Today they observed question period and now will witness House proceedings in order to gain a deeper understanding of how our actions shape public life. The guests are seated in the gallery. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three of my constituents from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. Maria Richard, Cameron Needham, and Graham Anderson came to Edmonton today to protest this government's handling of the pharmacy issues in Alberta. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't really know whether my guests are still here. They were the grade 9 class from the Stirling school, home of the 1A girls provincial champions and the 1A boys bronze winners. This is a school where 12 of my 13 children were well launched on their roads to success as citizens, spouses, parents, professionals, and entrepreneurs.

Are they in fact here? They were here, anyway, with their teachers Mike Fletcher, Morgan Schaufele, Ingeborg Pot, and parents Ryan and Ty Stef. In absentia, I guess, just please give them the warm welcome.

Members' Statements

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

French Quarter and Area Business Revitalization Zone

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton-Gold Bar is blessed with a significant francophone community, one that I have been privileged to live in and around for 50 of the last 60 years. Recently the city of Edmonton approved the French Quarter revitalization zone, located in the Bonnie Doon area. The first executive director is Mr. Jean Johnson. La Cité, located on 91st Street, is a thriving, active cultural and community centre. Businesses, cultural organizations, health organizations, a theatre, a library, a restaurant, and food service: it's all there, over 30 organizations.

Across the street from La Cité is the University of Alberta's Campus Saint-Jean, which sports a new cafeteria, Mr. Speaker, and I would encourage you to stop by. Campus Saint-Jean issues the only French-language degrees west of Winnipeg. They offer seven undergraduate degree programs and two master's programs.

Mr. Speaker, the number of Albertans that speak French in all of our communities is growing along with our population. Some of these folks are from African countries, but new Albertans are coming from the whole world and other parts of Canada.

I can't help but mention the great work done in my constituency by the Greater North central school board, Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord. They operate three great schools in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to represent the good folks of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and I'm very thankful for the French culture that is in my home constituency.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

World Water Day

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. When I was growing up, there was lots of water to fish in, swim, canoe, drink, water gardens, wash your car, heat houses, sprinkle lawns, cool turbines, irrigate crops. With the exception of southern Alberta the idea of us running out of water was laughable. Now we need to have a World Water Day to urge us to think about water, and that day is tomorrow, March 22.

Here are some of my thoughts on water. I'd like to see water defined as a common good or a public good. In that way, we would provide leadership on future policy about who gets it and how water gets used. This would make privatization and sale of water licences or FITFIR obsolete ideas. It would require that headwaters, lakes, and river runs would have their unique ecology protected. I'd like to see the government stop approaching ground-water and surface water as though the two are not connected. I'd like to see the government get ahead of the problems and test the

water, fingerprint it in areas where development may affect or change it.

2:50

I'd like to see grey water usage made common, have grey water used to water lawns, golf courses, gardens, used in car washes. I'd like to be able to use grey water produced in my household and to have the rainwater be integrated into the system. I'd like to see strict polluter-pay legislation in place in Alberta, especially as it affects water, ice, and snow. I'd like to see conventional oil and gas and oil sands man up – if it was women, it would be done – and significantly reduce their water usage. Water used for deep well injection or for in situ extraction and SAGD is permanently removed from the hydrologic cycle. I'd like to see us choose to grow trees, plants, and food that need less water to survive.

That's what I'd like to see on Water Day. My name is Laurie Blakeman, and I'm an Alberta Liberal.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by Calgary-Hawkwood.

Child Sexual Assault Services

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government understands the commitment to supporting victims of sexual abuse and their families. As has been said already today, everyone in this House wants to provide the best supports for Albertans who have survived sexual abuse. That is our shared goal. It's our shared compassion for the vulnerable. Alberta's programs and delivery partners achieve results in the prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse. The government of Alberta provides over \$18 million in funding for these areas.

Centres like the Zebra Child Protection Centre in Edmonton and the brand new Child Advocacy Centre in Calgary offer a community of professionals and provide front-line support for children who have been abused. These centres represent major partners coming together to provide compassion through services that will ensure these tragic cases of abuse receive the best quality treatment possible. Police services, child and family services authorities, Alberta Health Services, and the Crown prosecutors' office collaborate to put our children first. These are child-centred environments that nurture the abused child and use all the wisdom of partnerships to heal our most vulnerable and commit to justice being done.

I want Albertans to know that this government has committed \$1.8 million annually to nine sexual assault centres to support victims of sexual violence. We have established over \$6 million for supports of the child sexual exploitation program, including counselling, in-home supports, and outreach for children who have been sexually exploited through prostitution. Approximately \$10 million per year is spent regionally on counselling services and placement for victims of sexual abuse and their families.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, Albertans chose a government that makes vulnerable Albertans a priority. We do not give . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Poverty Reduction Strategy

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former social worker I understand that poverty is a complex social issue that affects everyone, and so do the members of this government caucus. That is why we are committed to developing a provincial strategy to

reduce poverty in Alberta, particularly to eliminate child poverty. The new Alberta social policy framework guided us to work in such a way that we will strive to reduce inequality, protect the vulnerable, and promote dignity and inclusion. Under the same framework it calls for us to work in partnership with communities to develop local solutions and also apply research and best practices from other jurisdictions to guide our work in Alberta.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, oppositions have risen in this House and painted a rather gloomy picture about Alberta's poverty reduction strategy in Budget 2013. To set the record straight, I would like to share some numbers and facts to help Albertans know the real picture. Budget 2013 includes a 4.4 per cent increase in funding for AISH, \$5.5 million more in funding for persons with developmental disabilities, \$16 million more in funding for child protection, a \$7 million increase for foster care to keep our children safe, 6,300 new affordable housing units over the next two years, and \$6.7 million more in funding for child care subsidies.

Mr. Speaker, every Albertan deserves the opportunity to live in dignity, reach their potential, and give back to the community. What Budget 2013 has delivered is a tough but responsible change that protects the most vulnerable Albertans while making some very difficult decisions to keep our spending within our means. It is a budget with a balanced and responsible approach to move Alberta forward. I believe that is what Albertans elected this government for.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Compensation for Pharmacy Services

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pharmacists are here in Edmonton today to draw attention to this government's mismanagement of drug pricing and the negative effect upcoming changes will have on the viability of local pharmacies. My office in Strathmore-Brooks has received many e-mails and questions about this matter, and I would like to share some of what I have learned with the Assembly.

In a letter from the president of the Alberta Pharmacists' Association I was informed of the devastating consequences mandatory changes to drug prices will have on local pharmacies. He wrote:

The Alberta Pharmacists' Association has heard from many pharmacists that are deeply concerned for their patients and for their profession. This cut is so severe and quick, it will be impossible for many community pharmacies to ensure the sustainability of their practice.

Traditionally, the revenue earned through generic drugs has benefited government as they have been able to chronically underfund pharmacy services . . . When cost of living increases are factored in, pharmacists are actually paid less for drug dispensing than they were in 1991. This change coupled with an underfunded model means pharmacists will not be able to provide the level of care that Albertans have become accustomed to and the health system will suffer as patient needs are off-loaded to other care providers or go unmet.

Pharmacists have expressed their commitment to keep prices low to benefit the consumer, but they also want government to reinvest their savings into pharmacies that have been underfunded for some time.

Mr. Speaker, pharmacists are sounding the alarm, and the government isn't listening. Patient care will be impacted. This government needs to get its priorities straight and do whatever it takes to keep pharmacies viable so they can deliver the care

patients need. This was echoed loud and clear today by the nearly 300 pharmacists that gathered on our steps to ask this province to do the thing it refuses to do, listen.

Let's not turn this into another attack on Alberta's front-line workers. The government should reverse course on these changes before it's too late.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I notice that the clock is upon us. I'm wondering if the Government House Leader would like to rise.

Mr. Hancock: I would be delighted, Mr. Speaker, to rise and ask for unanimous consent of the House to waive the provisions of Standing Order 7(7) and allow the Routine to proceed past 3 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: I recognize the for next member's statement the Member for Calgary-Fort.

Calgary Francophone History

Mr. Cao: Merci, M. le Président. Last week I attended and spoke at the launch of a francophone television program called *Hello-Bonjour Calgary*. This privilege highlighted for me the rich history of French culture in the city of Calgary. The facts of history can be hidden by what we have become accustomed to in our current society and Calgary's modern landscape.

The long history of French-speaking people in Calgary began with the pioneers who contributed to the early development of the land we call home today. There is a neighbourhood in Calgary's inner city that originated as Notre-Dame-de-la-Paix, a Catholic mission, and it was for a time the incorporated village of Rouleauville. Starting in 1872, Father Scollen and Father Lacombe obtained two quarter sections of land for a mission district to ensure a strong French-speaking Catholic community would thrive. After obtaining the rest of the land that's now called the Mission community, the area was incorporated in 1899 as the village of Rouleauville after Charles Rouleau.

Despite Father Lacombe's desire to preserve the French language and culture, Rouleauville slowly came to become more and more English in character. In 1907 the village was annexed to the city of Calgary. As a result, all the French names of the streets were replaced by the Calgary street-numbering system that we have today.

Francophones still continue to flock to Calgary from many parts of the world to begin their lives as Canadians and Albertans. Mr. Speaker, indeed, from these humble historical roots I heard in the news today that Calgary is now ranked the top livable city in Canada, and out of the top 10 livable cities in Canada, Alberta has six.

Merci beaucoup, M. le Président.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

3:00

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 207 Human Tissue and Organ Donation Amendment Act, 2013

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 207, the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Amendment Act, 2013.

Bill 207 would establish a corporation in Alberta to be known as the Alberta organ and tissue donation agency. The agency's objective would be to plan, promote, co-ordinate, and support activities relating to the donation of human organs and tissues for transplant and activities relating to the education and research in connection with the donation of organs and tissues.

In addition, the agency would educate the public regarding matters related to organ and tissue donation, would facilitate the provision of such education by others, and advise the Minister of Health on matters relating to the donation of organs and tissues. The Alberta organ and tissue donation agency would co-ordinate and support the work of designated facilities in connection with donation and transplant and also manage the procurement, distribution, and delivery of organs and tissues. It would be responsible for establishing and managing waiting lists for the transplant of organs and tissues and would establish and manage a system to fairly allocate organs and tissues that are available.

In addition, the Alberta organ and tissue donation agency would be responsible for establishing and managing the Alberta organ and tissue donation registry. This registry would establish information-sharing agreements with relevant agencies consistent with the freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 207 would advance the government's commitment to building Alberta by creating an innovative tissue and organ donation agency, and it will have a positive impact on organ and tissue donor rates. It will save the lives of many.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 207 read a first time]

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

Bill 14 RCMP Health Coverage Statutes Amendment Act, 2013

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the RCMP Health Coverage Statutes Amendment Act, 2013.

Mr. Speaker, the act proposes amendments to two acts, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act and the Alberta Health Insurance Premiums Act. It should also address changes in the 2012 federal budget to provincial health coverage by the federal government to the RCMP members. It will now fall on the respective provinces and territories to provide health coverage to RCMP members for basic health services, sir. This bill makes the adjustments necessary to provide health coverage to RCMP members under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act.

I look forward to the debate. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of an e-mail my constituency office received from a constituent, Ms Tracey Bert. Ms Bert works at the Mount Royal University and is disheartened to learn about the proposed \$147 million in budget cuts coming to postsecondary education. Ms Bert feels that the government has made a decision that is not in the best interests of Albertans when we need to be investing in, not cutting, postsecondary education funding.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Is there someone on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood? The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table four post-card submissions that Albertans made during our broken-promises budget tour. To give you an example of what Albertans are saying, Muriel Stanley Venne from Edmonton believes that taxes should be raised for corporations and the wealthiest Albertans.

Similarly, John Johansen believes that replacing the flat tax with a progressive tax structure should be a priority for this government. Submissions like these are proof that the PC government is completely out of touch with the true priorities of everyday Albertans.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of one of many e-mails we received about this PC government's cancellation of the STEP program. Sara Coumantarakis writes about how STEP helped make the green shack program a reality and hurt the McCauley neighbourhood in the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre. She asks, "Is scrapping this program a money saver or are we just deferring a cost which will show up later when kids who do not have enough constructive activities and good role models in the summer end up needing much more costly interventions?"

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today, one from the CEO of Value Invest, which is a pharmacy, and the other is from the CEO of Value Drug Mart. These are letters that, hopefully, the Minister of Health will take the time to read and listen to the concerns on what's happened with the pharmacies out in the rural area.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have quite a few tablings. The first is an e-mail dated March 20 from a Sandi Bow from Lac La Biche. She's very concerned about the government of Alberta's irresponsible plan with respect to medevac. I have the requisite copies.

The second is an e-mail dated March 19 from Roxanne Suvak from St. Paul, who as well is concerned about the government's irresponsible plan with respect to pharmacy.

The third is an e-mail dated March 20 from Jeff Pedersen from Elk Point. Again, he's concerned about the reckless plan with respect to pharmacy funding.

The fourth is an e-mail dated March 21 from Natara Cardinal from Kikino. She is also concerned about the proposed cuts to pharmacy funding.

The next is a fax dated March 12 from Lillian Palmer from Vilna, who is also concerned about the cuts to her pharmacy because she knows that's going to affect services in that area.

The next is an e-mail dated March 15 from a pharmacist in Vilna illustrating to the government the impacts that their cuts will have on her pharmacy.

The next is an e-mail dated March 18 from Lesley Rebryna from the St. Paul & District Co-op Pharmacy. She's again outlining the problems with the government's proposed cuts to pharmacy.

Finally, an e-mail dated March 12 from Hope Ainsworth from St. Paul, who also is concerned about the pharmacy cuts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today. One is from Zak Murakami, a pharmacist from Barnwell, Alberta, expressing concern for the province's nursing homes as a result of the recent and future cuts to pharmacy revenues.

An e-mail from Magrath pharmacist Arlen Bennett, who's been forced to lay off staff and says that fees for services are not remunerative.

A letter about pharmacy from Kathy Schow of Cardston expressing her concerns.

And a letter from Lance Miller dated today to the hon. Minister of Service Alberta, copied to me, with regard to Alberta registries. We've talked about that, perhaps examining the possibility of a two-tiered pay system for rural versus urban registries.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, I might remind you that the requisite numbers are required with all tablings.

The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter hand-delivered to me today by Ms Jennifer Fookes on the issues within the pharmacies in Alberta. I have the required number of copies here.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

3:10

Ms Notley: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I have since had the documents provided to me that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood wished to have me table on his behalf. I'm tabling the appropriate number of copies of a memo from the acting manager/director of the Public Affairs Bureau to bureau staff directing them to use overtly political messaging in all the supposedly nonpartisan government communications that they produce. Accompanying the memo is an example of a government of Alberta press release where this language was used. There are many more examples that exist. This memo represents the cynical attempt by this PC government to use public money in an effort to improve their chances at re-election.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: We had two points of order raised. We had a point of order at 2:12 by the Member for Airdrie, and I believe the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona rose at 2:17. At this time we'll deal with the point of order from Airdrie.

The Official Opposition Deputy House Leader.

Point of Order

Allegations against Members

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j):

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

What I'm referring to specifically is the Minister of Transportation's comments that somehow the Wildrose opposition would want to sacrifice the safety of Albertans. I think every single Member of this Legislative Assembly would agree that not one of us would ever want to sacrifice the safety of Albertans.

Of course, our party has taken very clear stances. In the last election we campaigned on five provincial checkstop teams to ensure that drunk drivers were kept off the road. We had a policy in the Balanced Budget and Savings Act to put more front-line police officers on our roads to increase enforcement. We proposed electronic monitoring of sex offenders and other criminals. We of course deplored the cancelling of the safer communities fund, and we do believe that vandals and other individuals should be convicted on their first and second offences. I think all of us, regardless of political stripe, would agree that not one of us wants to intentionally sacrifice the safety of Albertans. We are all here, every single one of us, to ensure that the public safety and security of Albertans is maintained.

Of course, not only is that statement by the hon. Minister of Transportation not true, but it also is unparliamentary language according to the standing orders, and I'd request that he simply correct his statement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll recognize the Deputy Government House Leader and Minister of Transportation in response.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the hon. member needs to understand is that the reference that I made was to an amendment made by the Wildrose Party last night requesting that the government cut funding in areas where we actually provide safety for Albertans. The motive expected, frankly, is a logical extension of the actions of the Wildrose Party in their attempts, through wanting the budget to be amended, to reduce the funding to provide safety for Albertans. It's actually a logical conclusion to what the opposition party put in writing and delivered and put on the record last night when we were doing estimates. Under the category that the truth is an absolute defence, they actually made amendments last evening. I was just drawing what is, frankly, a fairly logical conclusion to an end result of what the opposition party was doing.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Edmonton-Centre, did you wish to participate?

Ms Blakeman: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I hadn't intended to, but I have to say that the words given by the Minister of Transportation compelled me to my feet. I really am quite interested in how the minister could – I mean, I know he did make the argument. I just

am seeking the logic in it. When he says that 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member," is not in play here and when he then goes on to describe that, in his opinion, what a member of the Official Opposition put in an amendment, which I'm presuming failed, to an estimates debate last night is a logical extension of their attitude towards the safety of Albertans – I mean, Mr. Speaker, please. You've got to come up to speed if you're going to argue this stuff. Of course that's the exact definition of it, saying, "makes allegations against another Member." That's exactly what happened.

Allegations that some member or all members of the Official Opposition – and I note that the new game the government is playing now is to just say "the opposition," as though all parties were somehow involved in this and not specifying whether they're talking about the Official Opposition or the Liberal opposition. No. It's just all opposition. Of course he meant to, and that's exactly what he did, which was to impute a false or unavowed motive and to make allegations against the member and, further, against the whole caucus. Now, it only counts if you do it against the member, and it's specific to the member.

Honestly, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what was going on, and that was the purpose of it. All I heard all day today in question period was the government members getting up and slugging the people that were asking the questions. There's no other way to put it. You know, it was slugging all opposition members without being specific, and it seemed to particularly focus on the intellectual capacity of the people that are in this House.

Now, you know, Mr. Speaker, this is a hard job. I believe everybody works hard in here, and I also believe you don't get here if you're truly missing or a little shy on intellectual capacity. I'm sick of it. I mean, honest to goodness, you guys have got all kinds of help. You've got assistants, you're the government, you can make stuff happen, and you have to get up in this House and be that thin skinned? Get a life.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I caution you. Just a reminder that a point of order is not really an opportunity to continue debate, and we seem to have some of that.

I'm going to recognize one more speaker. I had intended to cut it off here, but I'm going to recognize one more speaker for a short point, and then I'm going to make a ruling.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I raised a point of order last night at the very committee meeting this hon. minister is speaking of. That point of order was upheld for the same type of language.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, thank you, hon. members. I certainly appreciate the clarifications. I want to emphasize clarifications because I think the deputy House leader from the opposition did a very credible job of outlining what seems to be the position of his caucus in relation to this matter. It's certainly expected that there will be on an ongoing basis differences of opinion between where people come from on different points. The exchange started from a response, and I want to be clear. The point of order was raised by the Official Opposition in response to an answer from the minister to a question from the Official Opposition.

I'm of the opinion that the exchange that we just had has provided us a glorious opportunity to clarify the positions of the various caucuses, and as such I think we have no point of order on this.

I'd like to move on to the next one, which was raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. Would you please proceed, hon. member.

Point of Order Offending the Practices of the Assembly

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I rise under 23(b), (h), (i), (j), and (l) of the standing orders, and I rise in reference to the exchange that has just been the subject of the previous discussion. In so doing, I rise to talk about the whole exchange between not only the minister but also the government member who asked the question. The reason I do that is because what appeared to happen, to me, was that there was questioning and answering that was going on that essentially the foundation or the heart of which was about actions taken by the opposition. What happened was that they were asking each other for questions and answers about issues that essentially revolved around actions taken by the opposition.

3:20

Now, the citations that I want to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker. First of all, under 23 is simply that a member will be called to order if the member

- (b) speaks to matters other than
- (i) the question under discussion . . .

and also

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

and then the typical (h), (i), and (j), which is where you're essentially insulting and imputing bad motives and creating discord.

What I want to start by bringing to your attention, Mr. Speaker, is on page 4 of *Beauchesne's*. It talks about the purpose of question period. I quote when I say:

Similarly, the whole concept of the parliamentary Question Period depends on the tradition that the Cabinet . . .

The cabinet.

. . . is willing to submit its conduct of public affairs to the scrutiny of the Opposition on a regular basis.

The next thing that I'd like to read from, Mr. Speaker, is on page 121, paragraph 410.

In 1986 the Speaker put forth further views in light of more recent conditions and precedents. It was observed that . . .

Then I jump to section (5).

- (5) The primary purpose of the Question Period is the seeking of information and calling the Government to account.

Also, section 10:

- (10) The subject matter of questions must be within the collective responsibility of the Government or the individual responsibilities of Ministers.

What we had here were questions and answers that were not about the conduct of the government, Mr. Speaker, but were about the conduct of the opposition. I would suggest, based on this precedent, that they in fact breach the precedent and the practice of this House.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you are probably aware that there has been a long-standing debate in this House about the fact that the government uses its authority and its majority to insist upon the relatively uncommon practice of taking up question period by asking itself questions, by giving their backbenchers the opportunity to ask their ministers questions. Whenever opposition House leaders raise that and say, "Gee, is that really the right use of question period?" we are told with the greatest of sincerity by the Government House Leader that backbench members also need to be able to hold the ministers to account in the question period setting on behalf of their constituents. That's the argument we always get.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I suspect that you know and certainly anyone who watches this Assembly knows that that practice has essentially devolved into a process whereby the backbencher will read the first paragraph of the press release, the minister will then read back the second paragraph of the press release, the backbencher will then read the third paragraph of the press release, and so on, and so on in order to promote a particular policy of the government. So it's already straying from the purpose of question period as outlined by precedent and by *Beauchesne's*. That's already a bit of a problem. Nonetheless, that seems to be something that has happened in this Assembly for a very, very long time.

That being said, when that, then, devolves yet again into a process where the backbencher asks the minister about why the opposition is so bad and then the minister responds with a question about why the opposition is so bad, that just takes it to a whole new level of abusing the time that all members of this House are supposed to enjoy in question period to fulfill that one primary responsibility, which is to hold not the opposition to account, Mr. Speaker, but to hold the government to account.

When you go beyond that, Mr. Speaker, and simply look at rules of basic fairness, when one person decides to accuse another or critique another – and we can use whatever language because certainly sometimes the opposition becomes more than simply inquiring, and the opposition itself will move on to sort of a little bit more of an accusatory mode when we're asking questions – the fundamental characteristic of that exchange is that both parties get a voice. If the opposition decides to be somewhat accusatory in their question of the cabinet minister in their efforts to hold the government or that minister to account, the fact of the matter is that that minister gets to then defend himself. He has every right to get up and answer.

When the government abuses this tradition in this House of their ability to ask themselves questions and one of them gets up and accuses the opposition of something and then the other one gets up and accuses the opposition of something but we have a set of rules here which prohibit the victim of those accusations from actually engaging in the debate and defending themselves, well, then – you know what, Mr. Speaker? – we get right down to 23(h), (i), and (j). No person in their right mind wouldn't forgive the opposition for becoming disruptive in the House if they have to sit by and listen to an exchange between government members about why the opposition is so bad.

That is what happened in that series of questions. It abuses the process, and it abuses the precedents that have been set in parliamentary settings across the country. That is why *Beauchesne's* sets out very clearly what the role of question period is. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you rule that this is, in fact, a breach of our rules and that you direct the government members and the ministers and indeed all members of this House to keep their questions focused on those which are meant to be the subject of question period, which are those matters which are in the control of the minister and the government, not the opposition members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Minister of Transportation and Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member left, I think, one thing out which is pertinent to the discussion that she started. What she left out is that private members on the government side also have the right to hold the government to account. They also have the right to question ministers about their motives. They also have the right to find out what the minister's

actions might be, what affect it might have on Albertans. What we saw earlier in the question period was exactly that in action.

What we saw in the questions – and I’m paraphrasing a little bit here – referred not to allegations but to actual proposed amendments to the estimates put on the record by the opposition. The one question talked about the opposition suggesting a cut of \$1.7 million to strategic services. The question that he asked me was: if we were to go ahead with that change, would that change our commitment to keep the infrastructure safe for Albertans? That’s a legitimate question, to ask a Minister of Transportation about what that would be and to get an evaluation on what the government action might be and how it might affect Albertans.

Another question was not about an allegation but an actual amendment put on the record by the opposition of a \$1.4 million cut to traffic safety services. The question was how that will affect the safety of motorists on our highways, a legitimate question, holding the government to account and finding out how it would affect Albertans if the opposition amendment to reduce the funding to the traffic safety services by that much would happen. That’s a legitimate example, Mr. Speaker, of the private member holding the government and the Ministry of Transportation to account based not on an allegation but based on a proposed amendment to the estimates that’s on the record.

Another question was proposed on the record about a reduction to the Alberta Transportation Safety Board. He would hold the government to account, and he actually challenged the ministry and said: you are committed to that .05 legislation in the process. He said: are you still committed to that? That’s a legitimate challenging of the government, a legitimate challenging of the minister, a legitimate use of question period, to challenge the government, challenge the minister by saying: what’s your opinion on this, and how will that change actions?

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don’t think there’s any legitimate call for a challenge here because this was question period working, frankly, as it was designed to work and as it properly ought to work.

3:30

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

I’ll recognize the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by Edmonton-Centre, and then we will deal with the point of order.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it’s maybe an appropriate time to – I know the member is new to arguing points of order and looking at these standing orders, but he clearly simply doesn’t know what’s in there. This is a very straightforward one. I will support the point of order under 23(1), which states that it’s a point of order to introduce “any matter in debate that offends the practices and [procedures] of the Assembly.”

Mr. Speaker, I’d refer you to numerous supportive passages in *Beauchesne’s*. First, I’d refer you to page 123, paragraph 418, which states, “The Speaker has stated, ‘Hon. Members may not realize it but questions are actually put to the Government.’” Of course, what we saw with the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was that he was referencing the opposition.

The other section is on page 121, paragraph 410, subparagraph (5). “The primary purpose of the Question Period is the seeking of information and calling the Government to account.” So it’s not calling the opposition to account; it’s calling the government to account. Unfortunately, the question from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was talking about opposition comments and so forth. Clearly, that isn’t allowed under *Beauchesne’s*.

The other section I would refer you to, Mr. Speaker, is page 122, subparagraph (10), which states, “The subject matter of questions must be within the collective responsibility of the Government or the individual responsibilities of Ministers.” Of course, something that the opposition is talking about is clearly not within the collective responsibility of the government. To rule otherwise I think would just create a mockery of the Assembly, where a government member could just ask questions about what an opposition member had said at some other point. That is not the purpose of question period. We saw that the member from the New Democratic Party caucus had indicated that the reason for question period is to hold the government to account. Here we have a government MLA, the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, commenting on what the opposition has said, and it’s simply not allowed under our rules of practice. I think it sets a dangerous precedent if you do not rule in favour of this, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of remedy what is called for under the standing orders is that you call the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to account and to order for violating the standing orders and our parliamentary procedures and precedents under *Beauchesne*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, to start from the beginning, what we have here is a violation of most of the basic principles of the way we operate or we understand question period to operate. For starters, it is to hold the government accountable, which a number of people have said. It’s not there to critique the actions of members of the opposition. It’s to hold the government accountable. It’s not to be hypothetical. Now, the hypothetical turns up in a number of different places. I think it’s in Standing Order 23. It’s definitely in *Beauchesne’s* 409, where it says:

A brief question seeking information about an important matter of some urgency which falls within the administrative responsibility of the government . . .

(1) It must be a question, not an expression of an opinion, representation, argumentation, nor debate.

It goes on to talk about how it should be brief.

Then in 409(4) it says, “It ought to be on an important matter, and not be frivolous.” I think that question violated that. It ought to be urgent. There must be some present value in seeking the information through question period. We’re discussing an amendment that someone brought before a committee in an estimates debate that won’t even be voted on for another month. What’s the urgency in that?

What was asked of the minister was not calling them to account. It was an opinion on this amendment that was introduced in a committee the previous night. It wasn’t asked for how the government was actually rolling out a program. It was their opinion of an amendment. I mean, for heaven’s sake, Mr. Speaker.

On page 426 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* again it talks about: “The subject matter . . . [has to] fall within the collective responsibility of the Government,” which it did, “or the individual responsibility” of its minister, which it did. It should “seek information,” not ask an opinion or talk about a hypothetical what-if: “What if the sky fell? Would somebody get hurt?” Gee, that’s a perfect example of a hypothetical question. I’ve been called on that before by the Speaker, but what we saw here this afternoon fits right into that. It should not “be a statement, representation, argument or an expression of opinion.” We had all of those things in that exchange that happened here.

Whether you want to look at page 426 in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, you want to look at 409 in *Beauchesne*, you want to look at the various references that my colleague previously brought up, or you want to go back and look at Standing Order 23, you are going to get the same series of limitations about how we conduct question period.

What happened here this afternoon should not have happened, and I hope it never happens again. I ask the Speaker to rule thusly.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

I have listened intently. I do appreciate that a number of members have participated, and I acknowledge that others have indicated the desire to do so. As I've mentioned, a point of order really should not be an opportunity to continue debate. As I recall the discussion, certainly, I take very seriously the reference to Standing Order 23(b) and the question of whether something should be related.

I have to caution you, though, hon. members on both sides, on the nature of question period, the questions and the answers. For the short time that I've sat in the chair, and certainly I've sat in this Assembly for some number of years, I would say to you that if everything was ruled out of order that strayed from the intent of where a question ought to be going in terms of seeking answers on related topics – also, it suggests that questions ought to be seeking answers based on policy – I think a lot of questions could be ruled out of order on a regular basis. Frankly, I would doubt if we would get very much accomplished in this House.

It seems to me that what we're talking about here is some clarification in terms of the language that was used and whether it focused on a particular caucus or individual. I do have the Blues, and based on some of the answers I recall – and it is here in the Blues – the minister was responding to policy in terms of what certain cuts might do if they occurred. I'm of the opinion that this isn't a point of order. This, again, is clarification. [interjections]

Hon. members, we're going back to the constituency for a two-week break. I would ask all members on both sides of the House to take some time – maybe it wouldn't hurt – to just get a refresher on our standing orders. Certainly, some of the members that spoke eloquently quoted from *Beauchesne* and other places. It certainly might help us all if we became a little more familiar with those conventions that are commonly used in this House so that, hopefully, the next time we gather, we won't have this type of, I would say, disagreement.

I believe there is no point of order, and we will proceed.

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 13(2).

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

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

Ms Blakeman: Yes. Under Standing Order 13(2) I can ask the Speaker to explain his ruling. I'm puzzled as to why the Speaker has not addressed the question of being hypothetical. There is no mention made of that. He just talks about it as being a point of clarification. Could he share with me why he made that particular . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I'm just going to be brief, hon. member. You are entitled under the standing orders to ask for clarification. Hypothetical: I think you used the word that describes this. There's a lot of hypothetical back and forth from both sides, and quite often hypothetical, hon. member, leads to interpretations.

Interpretations and sometimes the language used in the interpretation from either side can lead to language that – well, I don't know if "offends" would be the right word, but it certainly gets somebody going in terms of how a response refers to that individual or that caucus. Hence, we have the back and forth in terms of what is clarified, what is the position of a caucus, whether it be specific to something that transpired recently or refers to the party's position as a globally known fact or asserted facts.

So, hon. member, I think this matter has been dealt with enough, and we will move on. Thank you very much. [interjection] Hon. member, we're going to move on, please.

3:40

Ms Blakeman: I'm sorry. There's nothing in our standing orders that says that you can only ask a 13(2) once, so I'm going to ask again for clarification.

He was very general and talked a lot about back and forth at different times. This was a very specific question I'm asking about a very specific point of order on an exchange between the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and the Minister of Transportation, not a bunch of other general stuff. So I still didn't get the answer to the hypothetical that was involved in that series of questions. Just that one. That's all.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I attempted to answer your request. The matter is closed.

Orders of the Day

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Finance.

Mr. Saskiw: Standing Order 13(2).

The Deputy Speaker: We just recognized the hon. Associate Minister of Finance, hon. member. [interjections] Hon. members, please. This matter: we've debated it for some amount of time. The hon. member asked for a clarification twice on the same matter. I have to the best of my ability provided a clarification. If you are seeking a clarification on the same matter, hon. member, we have dealt with that, and we're moving on.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 13

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2013

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Finance.

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 13, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2013.

As you very well know, Mr. Speaker, this bill is necessary to keep the wheels of government moving while we debate the budget that was delivered for the 2013-14 fiscal year for the government of Alberta. We do appreciate the comments from all members so far in debate.

With that, I move to adjourn debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

Sitting Times during Main Estimates Debate

29. Mr. Campbell moved on behalf of Mr. Hancock:
- A. On Monday afternoons during the period that the 2013-14 main estimates stand referred to the legislative policy committees, the Assembly stands adjourned at 6 p.m.;
 - B. Notwithstanding Standing Order 59.03(4)(b), following completion of consideration of the main estimates by the legislative policy committees
 - (i) on April 22, 2013, or
 - (ii) on such other date of which the Government House Leader has provided written notice to House leaders and tabled in the Assembly,
 the Assembly shall reconvene in Committee of Supply at 9:30 p.m., at which time the committees shall report, and voting on the main estimates shall proceed.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, this motion is debatable. I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, this motion is basically the set-up motion to allow for the votes at the end of our estimates debates. According to what the government has done and much against what the House leaders on the opposition side thought we'd agreed to, we have had estimates debates in various departments run concurrently, two of them on Monday night. We've had four a day on Wednesday – two in the morning, afternoon, evening – and then the rest of the days we've just had two. Those are the good days. We just have one in the afternoon and one at night. This is to bring together at the end of it all the vote.

So what's been allowed to happen is that amendments could be put on the floor during the estimates debates, which, by the way, all take place in a legislative policy committee. They don't take place in the Assembly anymore, where you can get people coming to watch us and to sit up in the gallery. Now they take place over in the Annex in a lovely renovated room with a very good speaker system and a nice place for *Hansard*. It's not a great place to be sitting. There are maybe a dozen seats, and if there are any reporters that are interested or, frankly, any staff that want to come along, they're often in the back. I sometimes get up and talk about having the sports fans that are really interested in stuff that have come along. God bless them. You know, I really appreciate the fact that somebody is that keen on something that they would come.

But, you know, does it have that same kind of ease of access? Do you feel as comfortable? Not quite. You're kind of squeezing by – "Excuse me, pardon me; excuse me, pardon me" – to get into the room and get to your seat, so we don't get as many members of the public coming to watch what we're doing in the debates there. I think that's a real shame because the whole point of why we're doing a debate is so that the public can see what we're doing and understand and get through to us and be able to ask some of the questions that they want to ask.

Mr. Campbell: It's standing room only.

Ms Blakeman: The Minister of Aboriginal Relations is quite exercised that there are only a few people in the gallery at the moment, but frankly we're not debating the estimates at the moment, and that's what I'm speaking of.

Mr. Campbell: We're actually not debating anything.

Ms Blakeman: No, we're debating a change and a clarification in the standing orders at the end of the estimates, which is what I'm talking about, which take place in the legislative policy committees.

The Deputy Speaker: Through the chair, hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Sorry, but you know how they provoke me, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate you talking through me. If others might allow this member to have the floor, it would be much appreciated.

Ms Blakeman: Yes. It would be a lot faster, too, but, you know, we're here all afternoon.

What it's allowing for is the completion and the calling of the votes for that because we don't have any votes in the actual committee. They all come at the end of the final debates, which I think will be the Ministry of Culture and another one on that last Monday night. Again, they're concurrent on the Monday night. Unfortunately, I can't get to the second one because I'm the critic in the first one. I can't be in two places at the same time, but I'm working on it. Then we will all gather together in Committee of Supply and vote on everything, and that's what this motion is setting up.

I'm curious. I think what this is is just a little wee bit of a correction. In the standing orders as they previously existed, under 59.03 it was assumed that it would start on Thursday afternoon, so it said to start at 5 o'clock. We had a change in the standing orders that the Government House Leader brought in right when we started session here that changed that section and allowed that it would happen one hour before the normal adjournment hour as set out in our standing orders, so that would have meant 5 o'clock on the nights we adjourn at 6 and that kind of thing. It says, "9 p.m. if the vote is scheduled for an evening sitting." I think there was a wee bit of a mistake, and this is just a correction on the mistake calling for us to meet in Committee of Supply in the Assembly, so we're back in here at 9:30.

I am a little curious, though. It specifies the date, April 22, which was in the calendar that was duly publicized by the Clerk, as he is required to do, and tabled by the Government House Leader. But then it says, "or on such other date of which the Government House Leader has provided written notice to the House leaders and tabled in the Assembly," then we would all get together and do this. I'm really curious about why we would need to have another date. What kind of a stopgap is this? I'm just curious about why they'd need to put that in because – you know what? – I've never seen this government not have a reason for doing that kind of thing, so I'm sure there's a reason. I would love to hear from the deputy government House leaders what that reason is to have to give themselves the out of a second date when we'd already agreed on the first one.

Frankly, this is going to have to be changed again. I mean, next year we're not going to be guaranteed to finish on April 22. Maybe that's why they want that second one. We're going to limp along with that April 22 in there forever while we use the second bit, maybe. I don't know. I look forward to it.

Thanks.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise to speak to this motion. As the Member for Edmonton-Centre aptly pointed out, the reason why we're having to deal with this motion at this point is because it follows from a series of changes that the Government House Leader brought in two and a half weeks ago, and there was a bit of a drafting error when that was sort of rammed through this Assembly, so it has to be changed. Then, of course, what it does is that it sets out the process for voting on estimates.

3:50

There are two reasons why our caucus is opposed to this motion and will be voting against it. The first reason is, frankly, that this is attached to the previous changes to the standing orders that the House leader brought through. Our caucus was very much opposed to those standing orders at the very outset because those standing orders allowed for the government to change the process by which we debate the budget in this Legislature and to do so in a way that limited public participation, to do so in a way that limited opposition participation, and to do so in a way that just sort of rammed the budget through as fast as they possibly could under cover of night as quickly as they possibly could. It did so in a way that undermined the ability of the opposition to truly and properly prepare and research for it because of the schedule that was put together.

I specifically remember that when the House leader brought forward this standing order, he said: "Oh, yes. Well, this new set of rules gives us the ability to call committee in the morning and to have up to six committees a day. It gives us that ability, but we'll never use it because, you know, it would only be in emergency situations that we would use it." Literally two or three days later out comes the schedule that has Wednesday morning every week being used to debate budget.

For instance, the next time that we're back, I start at 8 in the morning debating Human Services budgets, a place where there's been something like \$250 million worth of cuts. I start at 8 in the morning, go through the morning, then we go into question period. Then we come out of question period, go back into debating that budget, and then in the evening we go directly into advanced education, for which I am also the critic, where this government has taken about \$180 million out of the budget. Do you think that might be a bit of a busy day?

Now, that's not the way it was done before, but under this new Premier that's the way things are done now. We use our majority as aggressively and as brutally as we can in order to get our way as quickly as we can in order to scurry away from the Legislature as quietly as we can.

This is attached to that, Mr. Speaker. Not only did we disagree with it when it came forward, but also we really are not of the view that the House leader has followed through on the assurances or discussions that had previously occurred with the opposition House leaders, and we believe that the government has adopted a number of other strategies to actually quite significantly reduce the amount of time that the opposition has in these debates to deal with these very significant changes and budget problems.

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

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we'll pause your speech right there. The Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities rose on a point of order. Citation, hon. minister?

Point of Order Main Estimates Consideration Allegations against a Member

Mr. Oberle: Yes. Under 23(h), (i), and (j), Mr. Speaker. The member doth protest too much, but let me say this. First of all, for the member to suggest that the government is somehow passing a budget under cover of darkness – notice the words – implying that somehow we're being secretive about a budget that is being debated fully both here and in committee in *Hansard*, is just absolutely unacceptable.

She also just finished saying, Mr. Speaker, that we're now somehow debating for fewer hours after in the previous sentence just having explained how she has to sit here all day and do Human Services, which is now six hours, where previously it would have been three.

I'm astounded that this member, who just rose a few minutes ago in full outrage at what the government had to say about their party and their stance, now comes up with these gems about the government somehow being secretive. The proceedings of this Legislature and our committees are recorded in *Hansard* and televised when we're in this Legislature. The member has absolutely nothing to complain about.

Furthermore, the current opportunity is not an opportunity to debate the budget. It's an opportunity to debate the motion.

Mr. Speaker, in her last sentence she implied that somehow the Government House Leader has reneged on a commitment that he made in some previous cloudy process.

Some Hon. Members: He did.

Mr. Oberle: Well, then they'd better table some information that accuses the Government House Leader and some evidence that, in fact, that's true; otherwise, you cannot stand in this House and make allegations about a member, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, thank you, hon. minister.

I'm going to give the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona an opportunity to maybe clarify your comments.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I will respond to the point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, to respond and in your response to clarify your comments, possibly.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, assuming for the moment that you have not already made a decision before you've even heard my representations on the issue – we'll just assume that – let me just outline my response to the three points made by the member. [interjections]

Well, the Speaker started out by suggesting . . . [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, through the chair. You have the floor.

Ms Notley: The Speaker started out by suggesting that I should offer up some remedy as a result of the point of order being raised, and one would assume that the remedy ought not be suggested until both sides of the story have been considered.

First of all, yes, I did indeed use the phrase that it was under cover of darkness because, in fact, as a result of all of these committees now being conducted in the Annex through the legislative policy committees, none of those committees are broadcast through audiovisual.

An Hon. Member: Live streamed audio.

Ms Blakeman: Audio only.

Ms Notley: Audio only.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, please.

Ms Notley: People are not allowed to watch the budget debate anymore, and that is a change, so I believe it is a reasonable conclusion to suggest that the government has limited the degree to which people can see the debate. As a result of moving it away from a place where there is audiovisual coverage of the debate, it is reasonable to assume that they anticipated that fewer people would see it; hence, the phrase “under cover of darkness” is completely appropriate.

In terms of the second point, Mr. Speaker, made by the member, the fact of the matter is that we have not overall had more hours of time dedicated to budget debate in this Legislature. Far from it. Certain ministries have been given more time, but in return for every one of those ministries getting more time, we have had to accept less time for other ministries.

Moreover, just arbitrarily, completely outside of the terms of agreement that were discussed between the House leaders, the government chairs of committees have adopted a process whereby they’ve come up with a new way to distribute questions in these committees between government members and opposition members. The practical effect of that is to reduce the amount of time that opposition members have in the longer committees by about one hour. So, indeed, there is a complete factual foundation to the statement that I made there.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the House leaders had a conversation about this issue, and it is our view that that was not the intention at the time that we had that discussion. Now that is what is happening, so it is completely reasonable for the opposition House leaders to conclude that an understanding that we thought we had with the Government House Leader has not been fulfilled.

That is the foundation for each of the statements that I made that were objected to by the member opposite, so as a result of my providing a solid foundation for each of those statements, there is no ground for this particular point of order.

Are people getting a little heated? Yes. Are the rules being changed? Yes. Is the government using its majority to change those rules? Yes. Is the quality and the opportunity for opposition participation in debate being changed as a result? Yes. But are we allowed to talk about that in this Legislature when we’re discussing a motion about the standing orders that guide that very issue? I would expect, Mr. Speaker, that the answer to that in any reasonable setting would also be yes.

Thank you.

4:00

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

I’m going to recognize two more speakers, the members for Edmonton-Centre and Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, one of the points that the member opposite raised was disagreeing with the phrase “under cover of darkness.” With respect to the member more than 50 per cent of the debates that are taking place for estimates are in fact taking place at night, in the dark. She is absolutely accurate that most of them are taking place under the cover of darkness. I know this seems small and amusing, but you know that the specificity of language in this place is really important. We have three debates in the afternoon, and we have four at night, so

more of the debates are actually happening under cover of darkness. She is absolutely accurate.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m honoured to stand to speak to the point of order from the member opposite. I think the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona’s phrase was “cover of darkness.” Well, I think all the facts would state that that simply is the case. We’ve had situations where, you know, the government has decided to run concurrent sessions for budget estimates, where the public or other third parties cannot watch or listen to budget estimates if they were so inclined. We felt that was a very important aspect of accountability but also openness and transparency.

We’ve had a situation, of course, where in the throne speech the Premier campaigned on openness and transparency, but we’ve seen absolutely nothing in that regard, and this has followed through to budget estimates. We’ve seen instances where, you know, the government is talking about there being a balanced operating budget, which is clearly not true.

We’ve seen situations with time allocation in the last session under Bill 7, where instead of being open and transparent, we saw . . .

Mr. Campbell: On the point. We’re not discussing the budget right now.

Mr. Saskiw: Am I supposed to talk to him, or do I talk to you?

The Deputy Speaker: No, you talk to me. Please carry on on the point, hon. member.

Mr. Saskiw: Okay. Sorry. I wasn’t sure because he was speaking. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, please, and others, can the member finish the point?

Mr. Saskiw: I don’t know. He’s saying something.

The Deputy Speaker: Through the chair, please.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to be on point, now that I’m aware that I have to speak through you and that members shouldn’t be talking . . . [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Please.

Mr. Saskiw: Mr. Speaker, you know, we want to get on to the important business of the day here, and I just want to get my point across. I know there are some important government bills that they want to speak on, and of course we still have to speak to Government Motion 29. It’s just important that we get these points of order out.

The whole thrust of the argument from the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona is on just a lack of transparency. Cover of darkness is simply another term for that. I think that if you look at all of the actions of this Premier, of the Government House Leader – limiting debate, time allocation, concurrent sessions for budget estimates – the fact is that she was referencing why Government Motion 29B(ii) would put in: “on such other date of which the Government House Leader has provided written notice.” Why not specify the date on which the government is going to take the

action? That is simply another instance of a lack of transparency, a lack of accountability.

Mr. Speaker, you know, if you hear the statements that the members opposite make about the opposition, is “cover of darkness” seriously what is going to – what is his argument is here? Let’s see here. It’s going to create disorder saying that something has come under the cover of darkness. I didn’t hear everyone yelling and screaming. It was just this one member opposite. He apparently has some problem with the statement. Not everyone here does. Everyone was just listening to her argument on Government Motion 29. There was no disorder created, just one member who for some reason got upset.

It’s unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, I think, that the member opposite is wasting government time here. I suggest that there is absolutely no point of order and that there isn’t even a need for clarification in this circumstance.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, the nature of this place, this House, is such that we have what is, unfortunately, by its nature an adversarial relationship. We have comments made by one side. They’re refuted by the other. And opinions. Obviously, people interpret what others say. Of course, things don’t always come out as they’re intended, or maybe what is intended has different meanings to different people.

I did suspect that the Member for Edmonton-Centre might have an opportunity to help us along that path, and I think she eloquently did that. I don’t find that there’s a point of order. I see a difference of opinion here. Clarification has been given, and I would ask that we continue.

You were speaking, hon. member. If you would continue, please. Thank you.

Debate Continued

Ms Notley: Thank you very much. Yes, I was speaking about the connection of this motion to the overall standing orders and what their impact has been on the discussion of the budget through the estimates process and that passing this motion effectively facilitates a continuation of that process, a process which – and we’ve had some discussion now, not enough but some – you know, demonstrates the shortcomings that all Albertans have had to tolerate with respect to the full and transparent discussion of this most recent budget.

Now, another element of this motion, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that it does talk about this idea of us all having to come back on April 22, 2013, in the evening, interestingly, at 9:30 – it’s typically dark at that point; I’m just throwing that out there – to vote on the estimates. The concern I have with that April 22 being in there as opposed to simply, for instance, just having “on such date as the Government House Leader proposes,” is that implicit in that is the notion that the government is going to continue on with this very, very intense schedule of debating the estimates.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when you have concurrent estimates debates going on in almost every setting, what happens is that not only do we, as I mentioned before, miss the opportunity just to watch it, the way people would be watching us right now, but also when it happens two at the same time, people can’t watch both. The fact of the matter is that certain ministries impact other ministries. When this whole notion of concurrent debates developed, even that was introduced to the opposition House leaders as an exception to the rule, that we wouldn’t really want to make a habit of having one ministry be debated at exactly the same time as another ministry because, really, how do you keep up with all

of that at the same time? Of course, these are very, very important debates.

Mr. Speaker, I have been contacted by numerous people within my constituency who have very significant concerns about elements of this budget. Of course, they come to me and say: well, can you raise this in the Legislature? And I say: “Well, you know, unfortunately, as things seem to be evolving, we have less and less of a voice in this Legislature notwithstanding that we doubled the number of seats in the last election. I’m unlikely going to be able to ask a question about that particular element of the budget in question period because, as I’ve already mentioned, we’re spending so much time listening to the government ask itself questions and yada, yada, yada. But here’s a place where I can have a good conversation with the minister about the budget and ask some specific questions in a slightly less adversarial setting so that sometimes we can have a really genuine exchange. You should come and watch that and listen to that, and you can hear a little bit more about what is planned for your particular program and your particular community or that thing that really worries you.”

But, Mr. Speaker, when we have a schedule where the debates are going on back to back, concurrently – they happen in the morning, they happen in the afternoon, and they happen in the evening – and the whole process is sort of wound down to, really, three weeks and one day I think is what we’re up to, then those Albertans who have significant concerns about the issues that we’ve talked about in this Legislature and many others will not get the opportunity to hear that debate and to be there with their MLA and e-mail their MLA and ask their MLA to ask a question of the minister about that particular element of the budget. They just will not get that opportunity.

4:10

The more condensed this budget debate is, the less opportunity Albertans have to participate in a meaningful discussion with their elected representatives about what this budget means to them and to their lives and to the lives of their kids and their families and their parents and their grandparents.

For instance, just now I have been e-mailing back and forth with an Albertan who is asking me about the specific cost implications of some of the cuts in Seniors and who really wants me to get the answer to: what are the actual cost implications of that? The difficulty is that the night the Health estimates is on, when I could potentially as the Seniors critic go and participate in that debate, is also the same night that I think Environment is on, Mr. Speaker, and I’m the lead critic for Environment. I’m not going to be able to be in two places at once even though I’m actually the critic for a subarea of Health.

You know, that’s what’s happening to opposition members and probably even some government members across this House, Mr. Speaker, because we are condensing this budget debate so intensely. That hurts all Albertans, and that hurts, as I’m often saying, the integrity of this Assembly, too. What we do here is actually important, and I think some of us here still believe that. It’s really important that we do it in a way that invites Albertans to be part of it, to listen to it, care about it, and believe that they have a voice.

So any motion like this one, that is designed to facilitate this really, really draconian, aggressive, and very directed strategy adopted by this government under this Premier, to shorten and make less accessible to Albertans the debate on this budget – this budget actually includes through its distribution of funds throughout the government, essentially, at least, well, I think we’re up to about 15 or 16 broken promises from the last election, you know, promises that Albertans obviously cared about because they voted for these guys. At the same time, now, those promises

are not coming to fruition, and we see that very clearly in this budget. Those very same Albertans are very interested in what's going on in this budget and how many of these promises will be broken again.

Mr. Speaker, by adopting this schedule, we do a disservice to Albertans and we do a disservice to the people who elected us. Supporting this motion effectively contributes to that disservice, and for that reason, certainly, our caucus has no intention of supporting this motion.

Thank you so much for giving me the time to put forward our position on this.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise here today to speak to Government Motion 29. It's pretty interesting stuff. I'm kind of living the dream.

Mr. Speaker, I have a bunch of concerns with this particular government motion. Of course, the first paragraph in it states:

- A. On Monday afternoons during the period that the 2013-14 main estimates stand referred to the legislative policy committees, the Assembly stands adjourned at 6 p.m.;

The second part is:

- B. Notwithstanding Standing Order 59.03(4)(b), following completion of consideration of the main estimates by the legislative policy committees
 - (i) on April 22, 2013, or
 - (ii) on such other date of which the Government House Leader has provided written notice to House leaders . . .

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 13 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2013 (continued)

[Adjourned debate March 21: Mr. Fawcett]

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt you, hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, but in accordance with Standing Order 64(5) the chair is required to put the question to the House on the appropriation bill on the Order Paper for third reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a third time]

Government Motions

Sitting Times during Main Estimates Debate (continued)

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just going back to Government Motion 29, of course we've seen with this new Premier that she's limited debate on budget estimates, limited the hours of debate, has had concurrent sessions, which makes it quite difficult for opposition parties to adequately scrutinize each and every dollar that the government spends. We in the Wildrose feel that spending taxpayer dollars wisely is of utmost importance and a priority, and it should be a priority. What we're seeing with the limiting of debate on budget estimates is, of course, that by doing that, the scrutiny simply isn't there. Instead of going line item by

line item and identifying potential either misallocation of funds, wasteful spending – those types of things are something that the opposition should be doing.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing with budget estimates – we saw, of course, during the election that the Premier promised balanced budgets. She said that no jurisdiction should ever go into debt, that it was such a bad thing. But subsequently she obviously broke all those promises. Albertans can't trust their government.

Mrs. Forsyth: Things have changed.

Mr. Saskiw: Yeah, things have changed. I mean, her trust polling numbers are going down the drain. I agree with the hon. member.

What happens here, Mr. Speaker, is that when you've broken so many promises, whether it's balanced budgets, whether it's indicating, of course, that you were going to be tough on crime but instead cutting and gutting all sorts of programs and initiatives that would ensure that the public is kept safe and secure, then one has to even more closely scrutinize the budget estimates in that particular process. That's why it's imperative that we as parliamentarians do everything within our power and prerogative to ensure that we have the processes in place to closely scrutinize each and every dollar throughout the budget estimates.

If the Premier wants to walk her talk on being open and transparent, perhaps she should ensure that the public is able to watch the debates on budget estimates. Part of being open and transparent, of course, is allowing the public to listen to open debates. How is a public member supposed to do that during concurrent sessions?

Mr. Speaker, what the government is doing with Government Motion 29 and what they've done, in fact, with all of the standing orders that they've put in place is to limit debate, limit openness, limit transparency. You can say in a throne speech that you want to do things differently, you want to have an open and transparent government. But if every single subsequent action does the complete opposite, hampers discussion, keeps things secret, has these cover-of-darkness type of things, those are the types of things that we do not want in our democracy.

What Government Motion 29 does is just a continuation of those types of procedures where government members and opposition members do not have the ability to fully debate and discuss budget estimates. Of course, in these so-called, as the Premier likes to say, tough economic times, we should be carefully scrutinizing every single dollar and penny.

Mr. Speaker, you look at Government Motion 29 and the fact that (ii) gives the discretion fully to the Government House Leader without any consultation. Of course, it states that the Government House Leader has to provide written notice to the other House leaders and that that written notice must be tabled in the Assembly in due course, but the government motion itself doesn't actually have consultation with other House leaders with respect to budget estimates. I think that's an ongoing process that we've seen, a complete lack of consultation.

4:20

We've seen this with the pharmacy industry. Now, after the fact, after they've made the changes, what's happening is that they've set up a committee where they're now going to consult pharmacists. Government Motion 29 is doing the same thing. It's not allowing for . . . [interjections] I'm just referring to B, which states that the Government House Leader just has to provide notice to the House leaders. That's the same as pharmacy. They just provided them notice that they're cutting and slashing their

programs, and they didn't look at the effects of those particular programs, Mr. Speaker.

I think that this is an indication of where the government isn't listening to Albertans. By having concurrent sessions, they're not allowing Albertans through this budget estimate to fully engage and participate and listen to the debates that are going on. Mr. Speaker, what is critically important at any time and one of the fundamental roles and responsibilities for parliamentarians is to ensure that every single dollar of taxpayer money – and it's not our money; it's taxpayer money – is spent wisely. Part of that is to ensure that there is careful scrutiny.

Of course, we have the Auditor General, who provides his determination in terms of whether the financial statements reflect generally accepted accounting principles. But in addition to the Auditor, who oftentimes, depending on the audit that he or she would perform, does a macro, ensures that the internal controls and the accounting systems are done – despite that, you actually also have to have a careful scrutiny of the budget estimates.

You know, this is very important because we've seen with this government that they've blown all sorts of spending. They're building a brand new MLA office next year with a garden rooftop, and I'm sure there'll be all sorts of fancy things there, an 80-person movie theatre or something like that. What I think is very important is that the public also gets to hear the priorities of the government. The priorities. Instead of properly funding pharmacy, instead of properly funding the front-line nurses, doctors, teachers, police officers, instead of spending it there, they've decided to spend it on a brand new MLA office.

I think if the public – and I think the public are going to become aware. I know they've delayed that project. I don't think the ribbon cutting will happen for some time. When the public becomes aware that they're spending all that money on these fancy, brand new MLA offices instead of spending it on the front lines, what I think are the priorities of Albertans, I think most Albertans would say: look, we need to fund our front-line teachers, doctors, nurses to ensure that all Albertans are getting the appropriate level of public services.

What's important with respect to Government Motion 29 is that we ensure that not only is the due diligence done on budget and estimates but that the whole process be open and transparent. Part of that process is allowing the public to fully engage and to fully listen to the debates so they can see for themselves what the priorities are. They can go through line item by line item and say: look, well, you know, the government has spent \$300 million for MLA offices where they could have spent, for example, more money on front-line enforcement or very important programs like the Be Brave Ranch."

Mr. Speaker, what we've seen is a continuation. We've seen words of openness and transparency, but we've seen actions of the government not being open, doing things under the cover of darkness. You know, it's important that we be open, transparent, shine a light on the government's actions, on the taxpayer monies that they're expending.

What I can say with respect to Government Motion 29 is just that I simply cannot support it in its current form. It provides too much discretion to one person, the Government House Leader. What should happen is that there be appropriate due consideration and consultation with all interested stakeholders and not simply allow the Government House Leader within his discretion to change the date. It states: "on such other date of which the Government House Leader has provided written notice." It should provide the ability for other House leaders and other individuals to have due consideration to consider the results of the completion of the consideration of the main estimates.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against Government Motion 29. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others? The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will make this quick. I know that some of my colleagues have spoken to a number of issues. I'm just going to go on record and make a bold prediction on the result of this Government Motion 29B.

(ii) on such other date of which the Government House Leader has provided written notice to House leaders and tabled in the Assembly,

the Assembly shall reconvene in Committee of Supply at 9:30 p.m., at which time the committees shall report, and voting on the main estimates shall proceed.

My bold prediction here – and I hope I'm proven wrong, Mr. Speaker. I truly do because if I'm right, it'll be a true shame, and it'll be, really, just another dagger in the heart of democracy in this province. My prediction is that the Government House Leader is going to provide written notice that we're going to be voting on the main estimates in this House previous to April 22. I'm just going to put that on record. Because, well, why else would he put it in there? Maybe there's something more pressing that the Government House Leader has to do.

You know, there have been other times when motions have been put on the Order Paper and the Assembly has been advised that there's no actual purpose for us to have it here unless we absolutely needed to in a crisis. As the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona mentioned earlier . . .

Ms Blakeman: Oh, like time allocation.

Mr. Wilson: Oh, yeah. Exactly. Time allocation.

We had the discussion about why we would ever need to meet and do estimates on a Wednesday or any morning, for that matter. And this is just part of the standing orders now in the event that we need to in an emergency situation meet and debate estimates in the morning. Well, lo and behold, as we've seen, our estimates schedule includes Wednesday mornings every single week, week in, week out.

It begs the question: why should we actually trust what the Government House Leader says when, you know, over and over again, we see that the intention isn't entirely transparent?

We look at the concurrent sessions as well. The hon. Government House Leader suggested that when he came up with a schedule, he would do everything in his power – his power – to ensure that we didn't have concurrent sessions and that that way the estimates would have the proper debate that they deserve.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. We're supposed to be grateful it only happens one night.

Mr. Wilson: Yeah.

Well, you know, it's happened. At the end of the day I must be left to feel that there was no emergency. There was no absolute reason that that had to happen, and really every time he goes back on his word like that, like time allocation on Bill 7 – we challenged him in the House that at some point in the fall he was going to invoke time allocation. He said: absolutely not; that's ridiculous. It wouldn't be on record because he said it while I was speaking, but I clearly remember him suggesting that that was not going to be his intention. A week later what do we have? A motion for time allocation on Bill 7.

It's pretty clear that, you know, the best indicator of future behaviour, Mr. Speaker, is past behaviour, and what we've seen from this Government House Leader is that there's always a reason why things are put on this Order Paper. So my prediction in this matter is that we're going to have a pretty heated debate one night before April 22.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others? The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Fox: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Nice and short. Well, what is this motion about? I believe this motion is basically about transparency. What is transparency? It is a basic tenet of a healthy democracy. It is what . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but it is 4:30. Under the standing orders the House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m. to Monday, April 8, at 1:30 p.m.]

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

Activity to March 21, 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)
Second Reading -- (Mar. 11 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- (Mar. 12 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- (Mar. 13 aft.), (Mar. 13 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 21 outside of House sitting)
- 12** **Fiscal Management Act (\$) (Horner)**
First Reading -- 1438 (Mar. 7 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- (Mar. 11 eve.), (Mar. 13 aft.), (Mar. 13 eve., adjourned)
- 13** **Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2013 (\$) (Horner)**
First Reading -- (Mar. 11 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- (Mar. 12 eve.), (Mar. 13 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- (Mar. 13 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1695-1700 (Mar. 21 aft.), (Mar. 21 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 21 outside of House sitting)
- 14** **RCMP Health Coverage Statutes Amendment Act, 2013 (VanderBurg)**
First Reading -- 1690 (Mar. 21 aft., passed)
- 201*** **Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act (Quest)**
First Reading -- 92 (May 30 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 291-301 (Oct. 29 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 716-22 (Nov. 19 aft., adjourned, amendments introduced and agreed to)
- 202** **Public Lands (Grasslands Preservation) Amendment Act, 2012 (Brown)**
First Reading -- 130 (May 31 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 501-13 (Nov. 5 aft., adjourned)
- 203** **Employment Standards (Compassionate Care Leave) Amendment Act, 2012 (Jeneroux)**
First Reading -- 473 (Nov. 1 aft., passed)
- 204** **Irlen Syndrome Testing Act (Jablonski)**
First Reading -- 968 (Nov. 22 aft., passed)

- 205 Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2012 (Calahasen)**
First Reading -- 1117 (Nov. 28 aft., passed)
- 206 Tobacco Reduction (Flavoured Tobacco Products) Amendment Act, 2012 (Fraser)**
First Reading -- 1350-51 (Dec. 6 aft., passed)
- 207 Human Tissue and Organ Donation Amendment Act, 2013 (Webber)**
First Reading -- 1690 (Mar. 21 aft., passed)
- 208 Seniors' Advocate Act (Towle)**
First Reading -- 1315 (Dec. 5 aft., passed)

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