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The 28th Legislature
First Session

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Wednesday, April 10, 2013

Issue 43

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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Progressive Conservative: 61

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

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Calahasen	Sandhu
Casey	Stier
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 10, 2013

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Let us pray. Guide us all, Dear Lord, in our speech, in our thought, and in our action and also in the positions we take and the decisions we make, all of which affect the people we represent and serve. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm thrilled today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Mr. Ilias Kremmydas, consul general of the Hellenic Republic in Vancouver. I would like to welcome Mr. Kremmydas to Alberta on his official visit. The consul general joins us today to learn about what our great province has to offer and to explore new opportunities for collaboration between Greece and Alberta. I was pleased to have the opportunity to host a luncheon in honour of his visit, and I hope this marks the first of many visits to our province. Mr. Kremmydas is seated in your gallery to watch our proceedings. I would ask everyone to give him our warm traditional welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's not very often I get nervous when I'm about to do an introduction in this House. I'm especially a bit nervous doing this introduction because I'm introducing my parents first. I'm nervous because we don't take enough opportunity to thank our parents, so I want to take this opportunity to thank them for helping me be the man I am: my father, Baljinder Singh Bhullar; and my mother, the dear Sukhviri Kaur Bhullar, who is a tremendous human being of great grace, simplicity, and strength. I'd ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. I guess now all members can talk to them if you don't like my conduct in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, we had Vaisakhi celebrations today in the Alberta Legislature, and it's my esteemed pleasure to introduce – and I'm going to list everybody and then will ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly – first of all, this year's speaker on behalf of the Sikh community, Major Harpal Singh Mandahar, who is with the PPCLI here in Edmonton. Accompanying him are Captain Dave Peabody and Warrant Officer Chris Durette.

I would also like to introduce Mr. Baljinder Singh Sandhu, the general secretary of the Dashmesh Culture Centre in Calgary. Many members of his congregation are here with us as well. Mr. Sukhdev Singh Khaira is president of the Dashmesh Culture Centre seniors' organization, and again many members of his organization are joining us here as well. Mr. Chanchal Singh Bajwa, president of Inca Senior Citizens Society: welcome to you and your members. Mr. Rachhpal Singh Boparai, president of the South Asian Canadian Association: welcome, sir, to you and your

members. Mr. Sewa Singh Premi of the Indian ex-servicemen association: welcome to you and all of your members. Two dear friends are here representing the Canadian Sikh Network, people I grew up with, a man that encouraged me to play football and turn into this vast, broad character than I am today, Mr. Amritpal Singh Kundan, and Karmjit Khamba. I'd ask them all to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a great day, and you were part of the celebration. I've got about three introductions to do, so you've got to bear with me. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you several members from the Sikh community who are celebrating Vaisakhi outside in the rotunda. I will ask them to stand as I call their names: Mr. Surinder Singh Hoonjan, president, from Gurdwara Mill Woods; Mr. Zora Singh Grewal, president, Gurdwara Nanaksar; Mr. Jagdev Singh Dhillon; and I think Mr. Lothy is sitting up there.

From the Sikh Federation: Kulmit Singh, president – I think he's gone – and Jasbir Singh, spokesman. We've got Siri Guru Nanak, Sikh Gurdwara; Mr. Pal Singh Purewal; Inderjit Singh Kundan; Joginder Singh Pannu, ex-president, northeastern recreation society, which is in my constituency; Bir Singh Chouhan; Kamwarjit Singh Grewal; Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha; Mehar Singh Gill, president; Mrs. Sra and Mr. Jagjit Gill, ex-president, from Singh Sabha, sitting right up in the front there. They are seated in the members' gallery, public gallery, and your gallery, Mr. Speaker, so please give a round of applause to all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and to the House, my wife, Kamal Sandhu. She's put up with me for the last 29 years. She's here somewhere. She's worked so hard to raise our three children. All have become accountants. My younger brother always said that I'm younger. I'm not a young guy anymore. My daughter has become a nurse. My youngest is still in university.

Along with them, I've got a friend, Naib Sidhu, sitting in the members' gallery – please rise – and Kalwinder Toor, Inderjit Mullanpur, Sunny Briach, Mr. Power, Mr. Hothi, Bobby Gill, and Amerjit Dhaliwal. I will say, you know, that they're all my constituents and all my friends. They helped me out for the last two elections. Please give a round of applause to all my guests.

Mr. Speaker, I've got another introduction. I'm pleased to introduce to you several other members of the Sikh Edmonton Khalsa school, their teachers. I think the students are all gone. Dr. Kamaljit Gill, Kamaljit Kalar, and principals Surinder Hothi and Mrs. Deol. They've done a wonderful job to do *O Canada*, the national anthem, for the Sikhs, so please give them a round of applause.

I'm going to sit down. I may have one more.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you some additional members from the Sikh community Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha, which is, of course, located in my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie. I'd ask them to rise as I call their names: Mr. Mehar Singh Gill, the current president; Perminder Singh Khubar, the immediate past president; and Sukhjit Kaur Sra, the general secretary. I'd ask these guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

For my second introduction I would like to introduce to you and through you Mr. Jaswinder Singh Dhillon, my PC association

president. Please rise. Joining him today is one of my board members, Mr. Sukhdarshan Singh Pannu; also, editor-in-chief of *Des Pardes Times*, Mr. Gurbhalinder Singh Sandhu; and, of course, a very good friend, Jasvinder Singh Binder. At this time I ask all of my guests, as they've risen, to please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

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

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am also pleased to introduce to you and through you many more guests from our Sikh community who are here from Calgary and from Edmonton for our Vaisakhi celebration. I would also like to thank them all for the love and support that they have given me during my elections and even after the elections. They are seated in both the members' and the public galleries, and I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Lakh, lakh wadania to all of our guests who were here for Vaisakhi. Thank you.

Now I'll recognize the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 56 incredibly smart students from the St. Augustine school in Ponoka, part of the town of Ponoka and the Lacombe-Ponoka constituency. With them are their fantastic teachers, Mr. Ken Hackett and Mrs. Sharon Hackett, and parent helpers Mr. Bernie Green, Mrs. Susan Bussiere, Mrs. Jennifer Parker, Ms Candace Coubrough, Mr. Romeo Mandanas, and Mrs. Rhonda Meredith. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you my guest, Melissa Whitney, my constituency assistant for Highwood in my Okotoks office. Now, I'm very fortunate to have Melissa on my team. She brings compassion and a wealth of knowledge to my office. If you notice that she looks a little bit like me, you won't be the first one who's observed that. She gets that a lot.

I would also like to introduce Melissa's mother, Rosemary Stevenson, as well as her two younger sisters, Jill and Hannah Stevenson. Now, both girls have been home-schooled throughout their entire school journey. A decision to move to Alberta several years ago was made in part because of the support Alberta gives to parents as they choose the educational model that best fits the needs of their children. Jill and Hannah are both excited to be able to see Alberta politics in action. I would like to now ask Melissa, Rosemary, Jill, and Hannah to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Wellness.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to introduce an inspirational leader in the work being done to reduce the burden of hypertension, or high blood pressure, in Alberta. This past Sunday, April 7, was World Health Day, and this year's focus was on high blood pressure, which is the leading risk factor for stroke, heart attacks, heart failure, aneurysms, peripheral arterial disease and is a cause of chronic kidney disease as well. Even a moderate elevation of blood pressure is associated with a shortened life expectancy, and early identification and management of high blood pressure is critical.

That's where Dr. Richard Lewanczuk comes in. He's not only one of Alberta's leading hypertension researchers; he's also a very well-respected clinician in the area of chronic disease management. Dr. Lewanczuk has authored over 100 published articles on hypertension and is currently looking for genetic factors that lead to hypertension. In this portfolio with Alberta Health Services he oversees delivery of both primary care and community care in the province. He is seated in the public gallery. I would ask our guest to rise, and I invite all members to give him a very warm welcome.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two individual introductions today. The first one I'd like to do is to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Susan Wright. Susan is a lawyer from Calgary. We won't hold that against her. She, in fact, is VP of legal for a Calgary pipeline company. She has her own blog commentary, susanonthesoapbox.com, which is very interesting reading. She is here as a citizen who is very interested in how we do business here. Please join me in welcoming Susan Wright.

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker, is Dr. PearlAnn Reichwein. Now, Dr. Reichwein – there she is, standing – is a historian and professor at the University of Alberta, and she attends the Legislature today also as a concerned citizen. She wanted to come down and see how we're all doing this. She is particularly concerned that the government uphold strong public postsecondary institutions and that that not be compromised, that we do uphold that tradition of funding and independence and institutional autonomy. Please join me in welcoming Dr. PearlAnn Reichwein.

The Speaker: Are there any others? Edmonton-Manning, do you have another one?

Mr. Sandhu: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Quickly, please.

Mr. Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you these members of the play *Jija Ji NRI* last weekend, a very educational drama. They're from India. I don't know where they're seated now, but I can say that Gurchet Singh Chitarkar and the dance groups are downstairs, the two groups, the Punjabi Folk Dance Academy and the Punjabi Heritage Foundation. I see the youth sitting in the gallery up there. Wherever you are, please rise and receive the warm welcome.

Members' Statements

Hospital Parking for Veterans

Mr. Anderson: Yesterday we honoured and remembered the ultimate sacrifice of those 3,600 Canadian veterans who died and 7,000 who were injured doing what no other Allied army could do, conquering the critical enemy stronghold of Vimy Ridge during World War I. Many historians say that this victory was the actual moment when Canada turned from colony into country.

Imagine the utter disgust and betrayal veterans must feel today with their government and its most incompetently managed agency, Alberta Health Services. Not only did we learn yesterday that AHS has made the outrageous decision to end the practice of allowing veterans and their families free parking at hospitals so they can visit or be visited by loved ones; we also learned that a senior vice-president at AHS, making hundreds of thousands of dollars in salary and undeserved bonuses, when asked about the

idea to end free parking for veterans, said, and I quote: why is this one group more worthy than others? Unquote. One has to wonder what kind of fantasy world one lives in who has the audacity to ask such a mind-numbing and ignorant statement.

Well, let me help this vice-president of God only knows what to understand what makes veterans different and more worthy of such small tokens of our appreciation such as free parking. It's because they sat in mud and blood and rain through thousands of cold nights for us. It's because they watched their friends have their limbs blown off, literally, right in front of their eyes. It's because they were willing to leave their beloved families behind and die for us so we wouldn't have to salute a swastika one day, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that clears it up for this AHS vice-president and some of the other thoughtless individuals who had a hand in this stupidity. Hopefully, it helps our own Health minister to stop his bumbling and get this ungrateful and morally reprehensible policy reversed today lest he forget what we owe our heroes.

Oral Question Period

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

Hospital Parking for Veterans

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the list of mistakes made by this Health minister keeps on growing. His latest blunder involves veterans, the men and women who fought for our freedoms. The Calgary poppy fund buys annual passes from Alberta Health Services so that veterans don't have to pay exorbitant parking fees when they go in for treatment. AHS is cancelling those passes, and when asked why, the response from an AHS VP is: why is this one group more worthy than others? Let me ask the minister. Veterans want to know: what's his answer to that question?

1:50

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government needs no reminding from the Official Opposition about the important role and status of veterans in our society. The former Calgary health region had a practice of selling annual parking passes to the Royal Canadian Legion's poppy fund. That policy has been revisited not with respect to veterans but with respect to all special parking passes. Compassionate parking passes continue to be available to veterans and to others who require them. This is an issue of concern. This is the explanation for the change, and I believe it's the right decision.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, this is stinginess at its worst. AHS officials seem to believe that veterans might be lending these passes to regular civilians. They're worried about potential abuses of the passes, that veterans are in effect cheating. Wow. It's not a giveaway. The Calgary poppy fund has spent close to a quarter-million dollars on these passes since 2006. Can the minister defend this mistreatment of those who defended our country?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I will certainly be looking into the quotation that was referenced by the hon. member opposite earlier today. What I will tell you is that Alberta Health Services takes seriously the need to provide free parking on a compassionate basis to many people across the province, veterans among them. This change in policy, while perhaps misinterpreted or misrepresented by members opposite, is an attempt to extend that same consideration to veterans and others who need compassionate parking. We'll continue to support that.

Ms Smith: If we've misinterpreted, I welcome the opportunity for the Health minister to correct it today.

It is another tax, Mr. Speaker, on the men and women who have served and fought for Canada. Now, the Premier promised no new taxes, but we see different adjustments, increases, fees, charges, and program changes that really mean that citizens are paying more money to government. Will the minister clarify, immediately order AHS to reverse this decision, and continue to sell parking passes to Calgary veterans?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is where the hon. member crosses the line from raising a very legitimate question about an item that was in the news earlier this week to partisanship over taxation policy. There's no connection between the two. It's cheap, and it's unbecoming, and it's quite frankly reprehensible to do so. I've explained the policy change that Alberta Health Services has made. Compassionate parking passes continue to be available not just in Calgary but across the province to veterans and others.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, for your second main set of questions.

Prescription Drug Coverage

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Health minister has botched parking, Carmangay, Michener, expense claims, political donations, doctor negotiations, and executive bonuses, and now it's generic drugs. We asked about a number of delisted drugs earlier this week, and he said that everything was okay. But – oops – penicillin was left off the list of approved drugs. Alberta Health scrambled and put it back but at a price nearly three times higher than before. Now they're scrambling again because a dozen more medications were delisted without replacements. How many more mistakes are there?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition continues to be on the wrong side of this issue. We spent yesterday, in response to various questions, explaining the process for drug price listing and procurement in Alberta. As we said yesterday and as will continue to be the case, we set prices on a monthly basis. Companies have an opportunity to respond to those prices, and where they are not able to meet the prices, we have the opportunity to substitute alternate drugs. The only side to be on in this case is the side of Albertans. This province is leading the way in being a price-maker, not a price-taker, when it comes to drug prices, as the hon. member would lead us to believe.

Ms Smith: If only that were the case, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the minister said that we were undermining confidence in the health care system. No, we're not. We're pointing out a lack of confidence in this minister. The undermining is being done by the minister himself with blunder after blunder, excuse after excuse. When will the minister admit that he made a mistake, consult with pharmacists, and finally get this program right?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. leader doesn't want to talk about the interests of taxpayers, that's certainly up to her. I'm quite prepared to talk about the interests of pharmacists because we have considered and provided that. Today we announced an additional \$40 million in support for pharmacists in connection with the transition of the price from 35 to 18 per cent. That's in addition to the \$95 million we've already provided. What does the

hon. member think that pharmacists won't find supportive about that initiative?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the rushed announcement today proves the minister got it wrong, as we've been saying all along. Pharmacists already rejected the proposal when he put it forward to them last week, and the minister didn't even have the decency to let them know that he was announcing this today. When is the minister going to start listening to the pharmacists and stop acting as if he knows best?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, to further enlighten the hon. member, first of all, the government of Alberta does not negotiate pharmacy prices directly with pharmacists, and that's the situation across the country. Pharmacist associations across Alberta work with government. They act as a body that we consult with when we're looking at changes in the system. We have in fact been consulting with RxA throughout, and I met with the president as recently as Monday. They are aware of these changes. It may not be everything that pharmacists are hoping for in terms of transition support, but it is the best that we are able to do, and we are proud to offer that assistance.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. Third main set of questions.

Ms Smith: I guess we'll find out with their day of action tomorrow, won't we, Minister?

Carbon Tax

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, it's been hard to get a clear answer on the carbon tax, so I'll try again. Now, the Premier promised there would be no tax increases, the Environment minister proposed jacking up the carbon tax from \$15 a tonne to \$40, the Energy minister says, "Well, something has to be done," but he's unwilling to go as far as \$40, and all the while the Deputy Premier says that he doesn't know anything about any carbon tax increase. Simple question: will the government raise the current carbon tax from \$15 a tonne to \$40 a tonne? Yes or no?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, another Chicken Little. We've been dealing with them for about the last year or so, and none of their predictions ever pan out in reality. I can tell you this. We are committed to a policy that is in place right now where we will be diverting dollars into a fund for studying and improving our environmental performance. I know, Mr. Speaker, you made a ruling yesterday that I can no longer refer to them as climate change deniers, but we will continue our environmentally friendly practice, earning our social licence to sell our product throughout the world and promoting our industry throughout the world, unlike them, Chicken Little style.

Ms Smith: Well there's another word that ends in "ier" that I can't use in this Legislature either.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you why Albertans don't trust this Premier or her government. Asked yesterday about this widely reported 40/40 carbon tax plan, she said this: 40/40 isn't a number that we've in any way landed on or proposed. Well, call in the RCMP because someone obviously snuck an extra slide into the Environment minister's presentation to industry. Someone's not telling the truth. Who is it?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how I can be any more clear. We are, we have been, and we will continue to be working

hand in hand with industry, with Prime Minister Harper and the federal government. We will continue our commitment to striking the right balance between environmental responsibility, something they don't know much about, and making sure that our products get to the market and that we have the social licence, the social licence not only domestically but internationally, to sell our product. Unfortunately, this kind of rhetoric is not helping any.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the investment marketplace is sensitive to signals from government. If the messages are consistent, confidence rises and businesses invest higher. If the messages are all over the map and change daily depending on the minister answering the questions, then confidence is eroded. That's why we see job losses like we did in March. When will this government get its story straight and come clean on how much they are increasing the carbon tax?

Mr. Hughes: Mr. Speaker, this government is deeply committed to ensuring that we get our products to market. The most fundamental security and stability that we could provide to producers in this province is secure access to global markets to get world price. I can tell you as somebody who in my previous life has been active in the capital markets that I understand the importance of stability. I understand, this government understands the importance of ensuring that we have access to markets for the products from this very province.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Climate Change Initiatives

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On Monday I asked about carbon levies high enough to transform behaviour, and the response was not about reducing greenhouse gases, not about incentives to change; it was about money. To the Minister of Energy: if it's all about the access to markets – and I assume that means someone buying Alberta's oil – why is the government failing to deal with the most common concern holding people back, and that is that this government has failed to take action to reduce greenhouse gases and failed to monitor and enforce a polluter-pays policy?

2:00

Mr. Hughes: Well, Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta, actually, is a leader on this continent in terms of what we have done to be responsible environmental stewards and finding that right balance between development, economic health, and environmental responsibilities, and that is where we continue to work.

Ms Blakeman: I think that's where you're failing.

I'll go to the Treasurer this time. Can the government justify why they collect a pitifully low carbon levy, bringing in \$70 million a year, and then hand out \$1.4 billion to most of the same companies to encourage carbon capture and storage, which is trying to stuff that same carbon underground? Why isn't it used, as the Liberals have suggested, for municipal public transit and green energy projects?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the hon. member is quite aware, given the fact that we're in the middle of estimates, that there have been a number of estimates done on the infrastructure file. I believe Energy's have already been done. She would know that GreenTRIP funding is already going to our

municipalities for some very significant transportation initiatives, including in her home city of Edmonton.

In terms of the technology we have taken a very innovative approach, different than other jurisdictions, taking industry money to help solve industry problems in greenhouse gas emissions. The \$1.4 billion number is not a one-year number; it's a number over a number of years.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I will give the government credit if it implements a 40/40, a 40 per cent reduction or pay \$40 a tonne, but I have every confidence they will cave in to industry. Will the Minister of Energy be backing his colleague on the 40/40 or CAPP on their 20/20 or some other number altogether? Which will it be?

Mr. Hughes: Mr. Speaker, this minister will back the Minister of ESRD and the people of Alberta in the interest of Albertans and looking after their interests.

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

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I guess that if he's backing the minister of environment, that means he's not backing the Premier.

Funding for Long-term Care

Mr. Mason: This PC government cannot be trusted to look after Alberta seniors, and the Minister of Health doesn't know his facts. Yesterday the minister denied that AHS will be slashing \$52 million from next year's budget for nursing homes that accommodate frail seniors, but AHS documents say otherwise. Will the minister set the record straight, admit that he misspoke, and restore funding for our most vulnerable citizens?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, as we discussed yesterday, Alberta Health Services is not cutting funding for long-term care. In fact, in a letter submitted to the *Calgary Herald*, which I'll table later today, Alberta Health Services reports that it will be increasing spending as follows: long-term care by 4.4 per cent, or \$39 million; community-based care by 9.9 per cent; and home care by 4.4 per cent. We are not seeing a reduction in these very, very important resources to support our seniors. To suggest the contrary is simply not true.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a couple of documents as well: Alberta Health Services' health and business plan 2012-2015, indicating that \$971 million is budgeted for continuing care and supports, and the AHS backgrounder from just a couple of days ago, where the number is \$919 million.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Mason: I am allowed a preamble, so just shut up.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister misleading Albertans about the cuts to long-term care, including the cuts that are taking place right now in Strathmore?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's certainly strong language. I think that if the hon. member checks, he will be prepared to admit that the difference between the actual amount spent by Alberta Health Services last year on long-term care and the amount that they have budgeted to spend next year on long-term care represents an increase of 4.4 per cent.

Mr. Mason: Well, I suppose we could argue about numbers all day, but here are the facts. Here's what's actually happening on the ground. The government promised during the election that seniors living in care facilities would have access to 24-hour nursing care, but today we hear that medically fragile seniors in Calgary are being moved into facilities without any nursing care of any kind, and in Strathmore they're closing 23 long-term care beds. Will the Minister of Health admit that the AHS budget is yet another broken promise to seniors and is a 100 per cent cut to the credibility of this PC government?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that with respect to an argument about numbers the hon. member began this accounting exercise yesterday, and he's welcome to do so, and I'll continue to respond with the facts. But to suggest that we're doing anything less in terms of putting a focus and an emphasis on providing appropriate continuing care for all seniors, including long-term care, is very far from the truth. In the case of Strathmore, for example, residents are being moved out of the hospital, where they're currently receiving long-term care, to a new facility in the community which includes 82 additional beds. That sounds like a pretty good fact.

Allyson McConnell Sentencing

Mr. Saskiw: I'm now going to quote verbatim from the McConnell family's statement so that you, Minister, can answer their questions. To quote the family,

we fear that if Allyson . . . McConnell is deported to Australia, we will never see her face justice for the horror and terror she inflicted on two innocent babies before killing them . . . If the Alberta Government was having problems why did they not appeal to the Federal Government for assistance sooner? Why wait until just days before it is too late? . . . Nothing will bring the boys back, but we would like to see justice and common sense prevail.

Answer their questions, Minister.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, I'm going to recognize you, and I want you to begin by clarifying whether this matter is now sub judice and therefore not allowed to be pursued in a certain way, or is it otherwise?

Mr. Denis: Further to your comments, Mr. Speaker, the actual judgment was pronounced in April 2012, and our department immediately launched an appeal subsequent to the judgment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that under your watch, Minister, there was a five-month delay as the Crown asked the court for extensions of time when every single day mattered, will you finally own up to your incredible failure, apologize, and make sure the innocent victims and their family get to see justice?

Mr. Denis: Mr. Speaker, as we've said time and time again, there was no such delay. The appeal was filed immediately. We're dealing in a matter of two dead children here and their grieving family. Surely, this member would join me in recognizing that this is not time to politicize this issue.

Mr. Saskiw: It's their questions, Minister.

Given that you, instead of doing your job by ensuring that Allyson McConnell never left the province in the first place, are now potentially interfering in the judicial process by telling the courts what to do and giving defence lawyers another legal

defence, what next debacle should Albertans expect from this out-of-touch, liberal, soft-on-crime Justice minister?

Mr. Denis: Again, Mr. Speaker, this appears to be some sort of a pattern here because last week this member was arguing that we didn't interfere. Now he's suggesting that we do interfere. I have nothing new to say here. The appeal will continue, and I will not stop until justice is served.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm going to review this matter when the House adjourns today, and I'll let you know whether or not it's in order to proceed with any further questions tomorrow, depending on how they're crafted.

Meanwhile the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Prescription Drug Coverage

(continued)

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the budget was introduced, we have heard absolutely nothing but fearmongering from the opposition about the impact of reducing generic drug prices, this from the same critics who only last fall were accusing this government of pandering to pharmacists by paying them to deliver new services. My question is to the Minister of Health. Since we know that pharmacies are a critical health service, what is being done to continue to ensure that pharmacists are compensated appropriately for the valuable work they provide?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a great deal being done to support pharmacists in the transition to lower generic drug prices in Alberta. Earlier today we were pleased to issue a news release detailing additional support for pharmacists. It includes extension of a one-dollar addition to the dispensing fee for the next year that will apply to both public and private plans across the province. It includes expansion of the criteria for eligibility for the rural remote pharmacy grant. That will provide additional funds to rural and remote pharmacies to allow them to hire additional staff.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that members on the other side of the House are trying to cause confusion and fear among Albertans about the availability of needed medication, can the Minister of Health explain how he can ensure Albertans will have access to the drugs they require and will benefit from the lowered prices?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is true that for too long Alberta has paid a higher price than the rest of the world for generic drugs, and that, of course, is unacceptable. For example, the current price in Alberta for the antidepressant drug citalopram is 27 cents per pill. In the United States it's 3 cents, and in New Zealand it's 2 cents. That is a 1,250 per cent difference that the opposition thinks Alberta taxpayers should fund.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the opposition has repeatedly tried to undermine public confidence in health care, how will you protect this important public service from their extreme ideology that would see our public system dismantled?

The Speaker: Are you rising on a point of order, Airdrie?

Mr. Anderson: A point of order. Sure.

The Speaker: Okay. A point of order has been noted at 2:11.

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I will say that the government will do is that we will continue to seek the lowest prices that we possibly can for generic drugs and, in fact, for all drugs that are listed in our drug benefit list. For far too long Alberta and Canada have been price-takers instead of price-makers when it comes to drug prices. We successfully introduced an 18 per cent price mark last month on a pan-Canadian basis, working with our colleagues in other provinces. We'll continue to do the same in the interests of patients and taxpayers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

Michener Centre Closure

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The impending closure of the Michener Centre has been, simply put, poorly communicated, and the minister has left many questions unanswered. The minister's solution to these unanswered questions has often been the \$10 million in capital he has to create new facilities to house the patients that are being removed from their homes. Can the minister clarify just how much of this \$10 million will actually directly support the residents from Michener?

Mr. Oberle: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do have a \$10 million fund set aside if we need to create additional capacity. I can't say right now whether we do need to create additional capacity. I'm informed that we have capacity out there. Whether we do or not depends on individual care plans, individual destinations developed with the individual, with the families, with the guardians, and with PDD staff. When those plans are done, I'll be able to speak more fully on that matter. If we need capacity, we'll be able to develop it.

Mr. Wilson: It's good to see there's a plan, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister clarify how much of the \$10 million will be required to cover the severance packages for the upwards of 400 staff that may lose their jobs?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, I also don't know how many staff are going to be affected by this move. We're going to absorb some into the department, some into AHS. Some will transition to the service sector. Some will retire. So I can't speak to that right now. I have a fund that will cover the expected cost.

Mr. Wilson: Given that the closure of the Michener Centre will free up hundreds of acres of prime real estate in Red Deer, can the Minister of Infrastructure tell us what the estimated value of this land is today and what the plans are for this site once the facility closes?

Mr. Drysdale: Mr. Speaker, the policy is that when another government agency is no longer requiring property or buildings in the government, they turn it over to Infrastructure for disposal. That hasn't been done yet, so until Infrastructure has it turned over to them from the other department, we won't be dealing with it until it's ours.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Shaftesbury Ferry

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last fall the Shaftesbury

ferry, also called the Tangent ferry, which acts as a vital link across the Peace River for people in my riding, was again pulled out of service due to transmission problems. When this ferry is out of commission, this is a massive inconvenience for people, causing over 160 kilometres of detour. The ferry is old, and repair parts are not always available. Every year there seems to be a reason for it not being in the water. My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Will you commit the funds required to have this ferry provide stable and predictable service?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a priority of our government to make sure the transportation system is available for Albertans. The hon. member has raised a legitimate concern. About a month before the ferry was scheduled to shut down last year, there was a mechanical failure that couldn't be fixed in that amount of time, but I am happy to report to the hon. member that over the winter people have done a lot of work. The ferry is ready and waiting to go, and when the river is able to accept traffic, then the ferry is ready to provide for that.

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the province is currently studying options for crossings of the Peace River, including two ferries and ice bridges, what consultation will this government have with local residents, businesses, and officials before any long-term changes are put in place?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a good question because we are looking at making some changes, as the hon. member said. I want to ensure the hon. member that we will be talking to the local municipalities and other interested parties that we can identify or certainly to ones that come forward to us because we recognize that when we make changes to the transportation network, it can affect different people in different ways. As this Premier has committed to, we will listen to Albertans and, after so doing, take action which we believe is in their best interests.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given the vital nature and the location of this ferry, will the minister inform the House of what plans are in place to ensure that if the ferry requires maintenance or is out of commission, something is and will be done to reduce the massive detour this causes?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member I will say that we have a maintenance contractor in place with a responsibility to keep the ferry working. We also understand that it's not new, so we are monitoring it closely. I appreciate hearing from the hon. member, and I want him to know that we don't take this lightly. We will be working hard to keep it in service because, as he's pointed out, it's an important piece of infrastructure for Albertans, and the mobility of Albertans is a high priority of our ministry.

Hospital Parking for Veterans

(continued)

Mr. Hehr: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this Legislature we marked the Battle of Vimy Ridge, where almost a century ago our troops faced trial by fire and triumphed but not before 3,598 Canadians died. Many Albertans died that day, and more have served in our military over the history of our great nation, putting themselves in harm's way to protect our freedoms. And how does Alberta Health Services thank them? By cutting parking passes discounted to veterans getting medical treatment. To the Minister of Health: why are you insulting our veterans just to save a couple of shekels?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, this question has been asked and answered already today. I'll say again to this hon. member, as I did to the previous questioner, that this is not taking away from veterans. This is a policy change at AHS which is intended to provide a broader range of compassionate parking passes to all people, including veterans, who require that assistance.

Mr. Hehr: Can the minister not see why the public is outraged at the cancellation of these discounted parking passes for our veterans when the cost of this program is less than the bonus given to the AHS CEO this year?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can certainly agree that the interests of veterans are uppermost on the minds of every member of this House and all Albertans, but to attempt to take this issue and somehow politicize it, to suggest that veterans have been excluded in some way from the opportunity to receive parking passes on a compassionate basis is not true. The policy is clear. Veterans are included. Anything to the contrary is simply cheap political tactics.

Mr. Hehr: Well, given that Alberta Health Services has their head buried somewhere where the sun does not shine if they deem it acceptable to cut passes for veterans getting medical treatment, my hope is that the minister doesn't. Will you direct Alberta Health Services to reinstate those passes to veterans and their families, who deserve our respect and gratitude for their service to our community?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, as a result of this policy change, veterans are no worse off than they were prior, in the previous policy under the Calgary health region. In fact, the passes to which the hon. member refers were only available in the former Calgary health region. They were not available across Alberta. It is true they were available to veterans. Now they are available to veterans and others who require the support and assistance of this type, that they so richly deserve.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by Chestermere-Rocky View.

2:20

Secondary Ticket Sales

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Alberta getting a ticket to your favourite concert is about as likely as getting struck by lightning. Tickets to events sell out in minutes. Prices on resale sites are double, triple, or quadruple the price, and secondary sellers are making a fortune. With zero legislation to stop scalpers and protect consumers, ticket buyers are handcuffed, frustrated, and broke. To the Minister of Service Alberta: will this minister

admit that the lack of legislation abandons consumer protection and safeguards scalpers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an issue that we take very, very seriously. The fact is that a few jurisdictions have brought forth some regulatory changes in this area, and they've found that they're actually not working. One of the biggest reasons for the unavailability of tickets is bots, the use of computer technology that purchases all the available tickets online. Now, this is something that requires cross-jurisdictional co-operation to work, and we're working on it.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, given that other provinces like Manitoba have actually done something to protect their constituents and given that Service Alberta has already spent four years reviewing, considering, contemplating, monitoring, consulting, and studying this issue, to the same minister: why won't he stand up, start doing his job, and protect Albertans for a change?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would invite the member to consult with his fellow NDP colleagues in Manitoba, and he'll find that what they did is actually not leading to any changes. It's not protecting consumers any more. On this side of the House we like bringing forth changes that actually affect the lives of everyday Albertans. We don't like to stay up in la-la land. We don't like to have just ideological principles, far on the right on one side, far on the left on the other side. Pragmatic, real-world solutions right here.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Far out to lunch on that side. Given that not every Albertan is a Tory MLA who receives complimentary tickets to premier events and given that Albertans are forced to pay an arm and a leg to attend concerts in this province, to the same minister: why do Albertans have to leave the province to be able to afford tickets to see Mumford & Sons?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, here's the deal. This legislative Chamber is a fine avenue of theatre. What we have coming from that side of the House is nothing more than the cheapest imitation of Broadway one can find in Alberta. This is a ticket that every Albertan can get. All they have to do is tune in to channel 13 in Calgary, and they can see some of the wildest acting imaginable coming from that part of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, if the minister has tickets to Seger, I'll take them, by the way.

Funding for Postsecondary Education

Mr. McAllister: When news of Campus Alberta's mandate letters broke, the minister of advanced education bragged about being the, quote, maestro who would finally be able to get all 26 postsecondary institutions singing from the same song sheet. Well, now that his plan is being universally shredded by schools, students, professors, mayors, pretty much anybody with a pulse, he is backing off, saying that it's been in the works for 11 years. To the maestro – pardon me – the minister of advanced ed: which is it? Are you going to own up to the centralization plan, or are

you going to slough it off because you know it's a recipe for disaster?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, I tabled documents in the House yesterday showing that Campus Alberta was developed by 26 participating schools some 11 years ago and that they have been participating in meetings to build Campus Alberta up until this year, January of 2013. There is nothing new in this, and they all know about it. As a matter of fact, all postsecondary institutions have been encouraging this government to set up a framework where they can better collaborate, find administrative efficiencies, and improve the experience for students.

Mr. McAllister: Thank you, Minister. And to that point, to the same minister: if this centralization plan was indeed the government's plan all along, since 2002, as you say, why on earth did it take 11 years to get to this point, why are postsecondary institutions caught off guard, and why didn't you just campaign on it?

Mr. Lukaszuk: The only person caught off guard, I imagine, is this member, Mr. Speaker. I find it rather unusual that a party that is running campaigns and continues to profess slashing and burning would not encourage our postsecondary institutions to look inside of their administration, find efficiencies, make sure that our students' tuition doesn't rise anywhere, make sure that the cost to taxpayers doesn't rise anywhere but focus instead on raising the quality of education that we provide to our kids.

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, given that hundreds of students were apparently caught off guard today as they crashed the Premier's office in Calgary to voice their anger over the centralization plan, given the disastrous results of your centralization plans in primary care, ambulance services, and land planning, will you please reconsider your decision to appoint yourself maestro and let our 26 postsecondary institutions conduct their own music?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the Wildrose has covered every ministry. They want to balance the budget, and they don't want to pass any debt on to the next generation, but they will refuse any program adjustment in any ministry on this side of the House. [interjections] Well, there is no magic. The fact is that we will continue to focus on students. As minister of advanced education, as professors and administrators education is not for us. It's for young students, and we will be focusing on our students. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Airdrie, hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, and a few others over here, please, that's enough, okay? I'm going to institute a new rule tomorrow, and here's how it's going to sound. If I see you heckling over the line, interrupting your own leaders, perhaps, or other members – and the same goes for this side – I'm not going to bother putting you onto a vocal list. I'm just going to not recognize you at all. I'm going to start that tomorrow. So, please, let's have some respect for process, let's have some respect for this Assembly, and for heaven's sake let's have some decency and respect for each other.

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

Transition of Michener Centre Residents

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the government has decided to close Michener Centre in Red Deer-North, as we've heard earlier today. There are still 230 residents with developmental disabilities that call Michener their home; 105 will remain, and 125 will be moved to other homes in the community. Some of the 125 residents are medically fragile and have lived there all their lives, some for over 50 years. They are happy, and they are thriving. To the Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities: where will we be able to find safe and suitable homes with specially trained caregivers for 125 persons with developmental disabilities . . .

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Mr. Oberle: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. I answered a similar question just before. I'm informed that there are suitable homes. Obviously, we have to work with AHS, with service providers. We may have to develop capacity. I've got \$10 million earmarked to do that if necessary. Not all of the homes will be in the Red Deer area. Not all of the families are actually from Red Deer. We are now going to work with every individual, with their caregivers, their families, their guardians to develop individualized care plans that determine the care that they need, the supports that they need, and the destination that they're going to.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you for the response. I do appreciate that you're answering these questions more than once because they are very important questions.

So with the long waiting list for long-term care, how long will our PDD seniors have to wait to get into the right care facility with staff who are specially trained for those with complex needs like developmental disabilities and Alzheimer's.

Mr. Oberle: Again, Mr. Speaker, working in partnership with AHS, we expect that there will be facilities available right away. Some of our staff will transition into Alberta Health Services; some will transition into other places in our department. I expect that will happen right away. Obviously, I need to stress that nobody – absolutely nobody – will be moved from that facility until there's a care plan in place, appropriate supports that are supported by the family are in place, and an appropriate destination is identified for them.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Minister. I'll hold you to that.

Will the specially designed dental clinic at Michener Centre, on the south side, called Marwayne dental clinic, that provides adequate space for wheelchairs and other disability equipment and has specially designed dental chairs and equipment for people with developmental disabilities and that serves all PDD clients who choose to go there, be allowed to remain open?

2:30

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, my immediate concern is the development of care plans and the transition of the residents of the Michener Centre. We will look at the future of Michener's dental services and other services there – physical therapy, nursing – alongside the needs of the individuals that remain at the Michener Centre in the group home setting and the individuals in the community, and we'll determine the future of those facilities. That planning is under way right now.

Funding for Private Schools

Mr. Donovan: Mr. Speaker, five years ago this government agreed to fund a portion of maintenance and operation of independent schools. I support both independent and public schools as important educational choices in Alberta. Budget 2013 cancelled this support and put independent schools in Little Bow and across Alberta in jeopardy. One school in my riding has a \$600,000 shortfall now. To the Minister of Education: why does this government think it's okay to treat independent schools as secondary to institutes by yanking important support which will inevitably hurt our students?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, this is a great example of the balance that we try to strike in here every day. We have one side of the House that wants us to increase funding, and we have the other side of the House over here that wants us to cut funding to private schools. On this pragmatic side of the House what we're doing is that we're supporting choice. We are funding those private schools. We are supporting those private schools. But one thing we don't support with the private schools is the capital. We fund the instruction. We had to make some tough choices this year to make sure that for every new student coming into those schools, their instructional dollars were there and we could fund those kids. That's where we're focusing our dollars.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The problem with that is that you cut it with zero consultation. Why has this government deliberately undermined independent school operations with no consultation?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, we talk to the independent schools all the time. There were some very difficult choices to be made in this budget, and we made those choices along with school boards, along with the independent schools association, and along with the ATA, the ASBA, CASS, and ASBOA. All those groups came together in a room with me and my staff to help us with some of those choices, but they were not easy choices, and everyone has some impact.

The one thing we should note is that the overall funding to private schools went up, not down. If we want to look at one envelope – there are about 20 different envelopes of funding for school boards – you'll always be able to pick one that went down.

Mr. Donovan: Mr. Speaker, they're not running three different sets of books like our government is right now.

To the same minister: can I explain to my constituents why this government has decided to pick winners and losers between public and independent schools?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, that's not true at all. I think this is a great example, again, of the conditional policies of the Wildrose, which some of their members found out about in the last policy conference here. They want us to cut and balance the budget on the condition that it doesn't affect their constituencies. They don't want us to take on any debt, but apparently if that debt is for schools or projects in their constituencies, then they're the first to line up for the photo ops. On this side of the House we're investing in families and communities. We've got one policy, one direction for this province, and the Premier is leading that.

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, Calgary parents are fortunate to have a great deal of choice when it comes to education. Public, separate,

francophone, charter, and private schools are all available to address the unique learning needs of Calgary kids. However, some parents in my constituency are concerned that budget cuts to private schools might limit some of those choices. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Why have private schools like Janus Academy, which is designed for special needs, been singled out and their plant and operation funds eliminated in the provincial budget?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, no school boards or schools got singled out in this budget. One of the things that we tried to go to great efforts to do was to make sure that all school boards and all schools were treated fairly. But at the end of the day it's about the students. We need to put the students first. We need to make sure that for every student that walks in the door and for those new students walking in the door, those instructional dollars are there. Like I've said, we've had to make some tough choices to live within our means and accommodate the 11,000 more students we're going to have next year and make sure the instructional dollars are there for them.

Ms Jansen: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education: are these private schools that support special-needs kids seeing the same kind of increases as public schools for inclusive education?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the private schools do a fantastic job, and the Janus Academy is one of those great examples. It's a great school in Calgary that supports kids with autism. But they are funded differently than the other schools. They don't receive inclusion funding like the public school boards do. They're funded specifically for the needs of that particular child. In Budget 2013 those dollars are still there and those incremental dollars for those new students coming in the building are there.

Ms Jansen: Finally, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: just for clarity's sake if the plant and operation funding had to be cut, how is it the private schools overall are seeing an increase in funding? Was a new program added?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the member is right, and she's been a great advocate for the schools in her constituency. There were envelopes of funding that were adjusted, there were envelopes of funding that were eliminated, but overall funding to private schools went up. That's because we're going to fund every new student that comes in the system, and because there are more students projected to be in those private schools next year, those private schools will have more money next year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Alberta Health Services Budget

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The latest quarterly performance report from AHS paints a disturbing picture of a bloated health care system that is failing patients from one corner of the province to the other. In central Alberta in 2005 61 per cent of patients were admitted from the ER within the wait time standard of eight hours. Today it's a pitiful 43 per cent. But, even worse, in that same time health care spending has exploded by \$7 billion, a 65 per cent increase. Minister, why are my constituents paying more and waiting longer for health care while you just keep producing ever-more pitiful results?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the hon. member knows we'll

have an opportunity to go through the detailed Health budget in the estimates process. What I will say that is most interesting is the propensity of the member opposite and his colleagues to commensurately complain about changes in health care funding, growth this year of 3 per cent compared to an average of 9 per cent over the last year, and at the same time complain about performance in his own constituency. The fact is that we have an increase of over 5 per cent in emergency department visits in this province over the last year. Our staff are doing an excellent job in meeting those needs, and we have plans in place to serve people in the community.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Fox: Minister, your performance is unacceptable.

Again to the Health minister: given that patients in B.C. wait five months for cornea transplants and in Alberta wait two years, five times longer, what is the government going to do about the 700 people on the cornea transplant waiting list who are slowly going blind, waiting years for the proper care that they deserve?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a complex issue that is felt across the country. The hon. member is correct that wait times for cornea transplants are far too long. We are looking at opportunities both to source corneas outside the province and also, more importantly, to encourage Albertans through the work of one of my colleagues to donate organs and tissue to make them available for this very important purpose.

Mr. Fox: To the minister again: given the health care spending is way up and results are way down, what are the consequences for your executives that are sucking up hundreds of millions of dollars in expenses and bonuses, leaving patients to suffer on such long waiting lists?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member should know anything about the Alberta Health Services proposed budget for 2013-14, he should know that AHS has already announced they have eliminated pay at risk, they have already announced they intend to reduce management positions by 10 per cent over the next three years, and they have already announced that they are freezing the budget line for management salaries. That's the kind of leadership Albertans are looking for, it's the kind of leadership I as minister am looking for, and they should be recognized for providing that leadership.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, before we proceed with Members' Statements, could we have your permission to revert to two brief introductions?

[Unanimous consent granted]

2:40 Introduction of Guests (continued)

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

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Staff Sergeant Rein Tonowski, who oversees 911 and police dispatch, and Kim Pudde, 911 supervisor for the Edmonton Police Service. As heads of Edmonton's 911 call centre they and their staff are the first point of contact for any Edmontonian who dials 911 in an emergency. I know this service is something that we cannot take for granted, and I'm grateful Staff Sergeant Tonowski and Ms Pudde are here today to thank them and their colleagues

across Alberta for their tireless contributions to public safety and to have them here as we introduce this legislation that will bolster 911 service in our province. I would ask them to rise again and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, are your guests here now?

Mr. Young: My guests have departed, but I would like to acknowledge them.

The Speaker: For the record.

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of seniors from the West End Christian Reform Church, affectionately known as West of 60. They were seated in the members' gallery, and I would like the guests to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore for her member's statement.

International Day against Bullying, Discrimination, Homophobia and Transphobia

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the Day of Pink, the annual International Day against Bullying, Discrimination, Homophobia and Transphobia in schools and communities. On this day communities across the world unite in celebrating diversity and raising awareness to prevent bullying. Last year over 8 million people participated. This year I suspect it will be even more.

The Day of Pink was inspired by an incident that took place in a Nova Scotia high school in 2007, when a student had to endure name-calling and threats of violence simply because he chose to wear a pink shirt on the first day of grade 9. Unfortunately, it was probably not the only bullying that happened in schools that day except in this case, Mr. Speaker, two students who witnessed the bullying decided to take action, purchased pink shirts, and distributed them to other students. The following morning the school foyer was a sea of students wearing pink. The message was clear. Bullying can be stopped when bystanders take action. We can say loudly and clearly that bullying in any form, anywhere is unacceptable.

I am proud that in Alberta we have a new Education Act that contains some of the most effective and proactive antibullying legislation in the country, an act that clearly states that everyone has a role to play in promoting healthy relationships and preventing bullying. The government has also developed the website bullyfreealberta.ca to help children, youth, and adults learn about bullying and how to stop it. There is also a 24-hour helpline connecting to community-based supports and resources to help young people dealing with bullying when it happens because no one should have to endure being bullied.

I am proud to wear pink today along with my fellow MLAs and to stand up against bullying. Together we can build a world without bullying.

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

Private Health Care Services

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The release of

the Alberta Health Services 2013 budget and the March 2013 performance standards are graphic depictions of what broken promises from this PC government mean to the front lines of our health care system. This PC government has shown time and time again that they can't be trusted to stand up for Albertans. In fact, they've repeatedly supported for-profit privatization or moves towards two-tier, American-style health care.

This PC government's encouragement of private health clinics such as Helios and Copeman means that regular Albertans don't receive the care that they deserve in a timely way. This was the revelation that came out of the queue-jumping inquiry, but it wasn't a revelation to Alberta's New Democrats, Mr. Speaker. We've always said that this government's experimentation with privatization would lead to serious problems in our health care system.

This ongoing experimentation is all too evident in seniors' care. Instead of encouraging affordable and accessible care, the government routinely closes public long-term care facilities only to replace them with for-profit continuing care. We see it again this week, Mr. Speaker, in the AHS budget, which cuts \$52 million from long-term care. Over 1,200 seniors are already waiting for long-term care and acute-care beds in the community. If a government can't manage to protect and strengthen our health care system, if they break their promises and cry poor instead of providing stable funding, that just means the government has failed Albertans.

Alberta's New Democrats know that we can strengthen our health care system. We should be reducing emergency room wait times and freeing up expensive acute-care hospital beds by expanding home care and long-term care and increasing the number of mental health care beds. Instead of cutting seniors' drug benefits, we would be giving seniors a break on prescription drugs by capping their copayments at \$25 a month. We need to make sure that every Albertan has access to a family doctor.

Health care is the most important priority for Albertans, Mr. Speaker. It's just too bad that it's not a priority that's shared by this government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by Sherwood Park.

Vaisakhi Day

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki fateh. It's my great pleasure to rise today and speak about our Vaisakhi Day celebration that took place today in the Legislature. On behalf of our Sikh community we want to thank you and all MLAs past and present, including the hon. Ken Kowalski, Speaker, and former Premier Ed Stelmach. They were here at our first Vaisakhi celebration.

Today marks the 314th anniversary of the celebration of Khalsa by Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, which formalizes the Sikh community and protects the important principles of truth, justice, and equality. Vaisakhi also reminds us of our responsibility to our families, to our society, and to each other. This second aspect is that the farmers cut their crops and celebrate harvest season, which I know, Mr. Speaker, you witnessed in 2003 on your first visit to Punjab, India. The harvest season begins with the Vaisakhi celebration, and our farmers are happy to greet crops.

Today members of the Sikh communities in Edmonton and Calgary came together to celebrate with us. They are all very proud Canadians. The Nagar Kirtan celebration is coming on May 19, 2013. You know that the communities gather and walk from one Sikh temple to another in the Mill Woods area. Our Sikh

community is hoping that the participation will be around 20,000 people so they can raise money for the food bank and other good causes.

More good news: our Premier is going to be part of the celebration as well as you, Mr. Speaker. You are always there with the community. I hope more Canadians will join us and understand the community. The Sikh communities are proud to say that they are Canadian. Thanks, Canada. You give us a lot. God bless our country, Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park, followed by Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Development of Pipeline Infrastructure

Ms Olesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to express my solidarity with our Premier's mission to support development of pipeline infrastructure in the United States. My constituency is a hub of pipelines and petrochemical processing. We have lived side by side with petroleum infrastructure for over 60 years, and we are proud of the companies that bring our natural resources to market.

Pipelines have criss-crossed our province, this country, and all of North America for a long time now and have proven safe and effective compared to just about any other mode of transport. Today the technology is better than it has ever been and will continue to improve going forward.

I applaud those who are concerned about our environment and celebrate the advances in technology that are reducing emissions in the processing and use of petroleum. I'm also pleased to note the long list of alternative electrical generating facilities that are gradually displacing coal generation in this province.

Mr. Speaker, our environmental commitments past, present, and future clearly show that we are the world's most environmentally responsible energy supplier. Alberta is the first place in North America to require by law all large industry across all sectors to take action to curb greenhouse gases. We have a \$15 per tonne price on carbon for those who do not meet legislated limits, and we direct it to a clean technology fund that is sitting now at \$312 million.

Alberta is a province of advancement, and I will continue to support responsible energy development in this province.

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

2:50 Compensation for Pharmacy Services

Mr. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, this government keeps telling Albertans that the changes made to the pharmaceutical services and the price changes of generic drugs will not affect rural pharmacies. The facts tell that story differently. Tomorrow the owners of pharmacies in the towns of Rimbey, Rocky Mountain House, and Sundre will close their doors for two hours to protest this government's mismanagement of generic drugs and the government's refusal to consult with pharmacists. Dictating is not consulting, and today's rejection of this government's announcement makes that clear.

Pharmacists and staff at these pharmacies will stand outside their locked doors and greet customers to explain how this government's policies are seriously jeopardizing access to pharmacy services in these communities. Perhaps this government doesn't get it. If rural pharmacies close, it will leave rural Albertans without access to this critical component of patient care. Rural

pharmacists are only asking this government to consult with them, in effect to listen. As one of the pharmacists put it in this week's *Rimbey Review*: "We need to get the government's attention. They certainly have shown little interest in our profession and the services we provide."

Mr. Speaker, these protests are against this government's refusal to give pharmacists the time of day regarding these changes. This heavy-handed approach to this problem is destabilizing pharmacies across the province, and it has already caused at least one pharmacy in rural Alberta to close its doors. I support the pharmacists and the goals of this protest. This is serious stuff, and this government needs to stop marginalizing rural pharmacies and pretending there's no problem. The owners of the pharmacies don't take this temporary closure of their doors lightly, and neither should this government.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 15 Emergency 911 Act

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 15, Emergency 911 Act. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

The intent of this legislation is to improve 911 services by supporting local 911 call centres so they can continue providing Albertans with effective service today and in the future. The act will help address challenges facing Alberta's 911 call centres in several ways. It will allow for the creation of province-wide standards, processes, and procedures in collaboration with stakeholders. It will establish consistent liability protections for people involved with 911 services. It will support 911 centres' efforts to integrate next generation 911 technology like GPS and texting, and it will introduce penalties for frivolous or vexatious 911 calls. Very importantly, it will ensure equity amongst phone users in contributing to the cost of 911 services.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to speaking more about the benefits of this legislation. I'm confident it will result in improved 911 services for Albertans. I am proud to table Bill 15, the Emergency 911 Act, and move that this bill be read for a first time.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a first time]

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

Bill 16 Victims Statutes Amendment Act, 2013

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Justice continues to put victims first and maintain public security. Accordingly, I am pleased to rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 16, the Victims Statutes Amendment Act, 2013. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

The bill would simplify the financial benefits application process for victims of crime; honour victims of crime by giving them more options for how to present their case to the Criminal Injuries Review Board, otherwise known as CIRB; and strengthen the protection of their confidential information. Bill 16 also

touches on victims' restitution as it relates to the civil forfeiture office.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will ensure a process to respond to the forfeiture action on items gained through illegal activity. At the same time it will help prevent baseless and frivolous legal actions that would delay the forfeiture process and continue turning bad money into good by using the proceeds of crime to support victims. This legislation will ensure victims of crime in Alberta continue to be treated with dignity and respect and criminals are held financially accountable for their actions.

I therefore move first reading of Bill 16. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a letter from Denis Melrose, who is the owner-operator of a pharmacy, and he outlines the recent changes and the devastation that will happen both to his pharmacy and to others.

The second letter is, frankly, the best letter I've received from a constituent in my five years in the office. It's from Amanda J. Laurans. She is a single mother who adopted two special-needs children from foster care in Calgary. She has a great deal of difficulty with finding daycare. She notes, and I quote: "The burden of childcare is commonly primarily arranged and executed by the working mothers. The \$100/month taxable child payments from the federal government do not cover one tenth of regular daycare expenses in Calgary." She looks at it closely, and she comes to the conclusion that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. It's important to just get on with the tabling, please. We're going to tighten this up a little bit as well.

Mr. Hehr: It wasn't that long.

The Speaker: That's okay.

Anyone else? I have the hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by the Minister of Health.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the requisite copies of a letter sent to me and also to the Premier about the education system and the independent schools. Janny and Joop Harthoorn from Coaldale sent it. They're also grandparents down there. They're very concerned about the fact that the money was pulled for plant operations and maintenance as a trade-off a number of years ago, and they feel that maybe the Education minister should revisit this.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter to the editor written by Chris Mazurkewich, chief operating officer of Alberta Health Services, confirming the increases to long-term care and continuing care budgets in the 2013-14 proposed AHS budget. This letter corrects information incorrectly reported by media on Monday.

Mr. Speaker, I have a second tabling. It is the appropriate number of copies of price comparisons of the top 20 generic ingredients paid for by the government of Alberta versus ingredient costs in the United States and New Zealand. This is

prepared by the University of British Columbia's Centre for Health Services and Policy Research.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present six tablings. I have the requisite copies. Now, the first is from Darryl Hutchings, a neighbour of mine in Stirling, concerned with Human Services reducing the number and scope of agencies such as the Support, Hope, Opportunity & Progress in Stirling programs for persons with developmental disabilities.

I also have a letter from a man who is concerned about his son's future. He's in pharmacy right now here at the U of A. He's concerned about what he's seeing, and he's written me a letter about that.

Thirdly, three letters from the Fisher family, who run a pharmacy in Magrath, concerned about . . .

The Speaker: I'm sorry to interrupt, hon. member, but I'm obliged to because it's 3 o'clock. I'll let you proceed if we get unanimous consent to go beyond 3 o'clock for the Routine. The Government House Leader has indicated a necessity to rise at this time. I'll ask you to take your seat, and I'll come back and recognize you if the opportunity provides itself.

3:00

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to waive Standing Order 7(7) and allow us to complete the Routine.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I'll ask one question. Does anybody object to what the hon. Government House Leader is proposing?

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Accordingly, we will continue with the Routine.

Hon. member, please continue with your presentation.

Mr. Bikman: I'll be brief. Three letters from the Fisher family. Pharmacists are concerned about what's been happening. Contrary to what we've been told, they are concerned.

Finally, an epistle from Deanna Walker, concerned with the South Saskatchewan regional plan.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Human Services, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a letter written from myself to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View responding to written questions 24 and 25, and even though Written Question 16 was rejected, we have made the effort to try and provide the information which was essentially requested in the question even though the question wasn't worded in a way in which we could accept it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to put forward the requisite copies of an article by the CBC news dated April 7,

2013, in which the McConnell family questions the Justice minister's actions in the case.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Two tablings today. First, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a petition which calls on the government to take immediate action to reverse the many cuts in the 2013 budget which will negatively affect seniors. Some examples on the petition include the property tax assistance grant and the seniors' drug benefit. Today I'm tabling 63 signatures. Thank you.

Secondly, I'd like to table 50 more copies of e-mail submissions that Albertans have sent to the Premier and copied me on. These are just some of the many hundreds of these e-mails that my office has received. They call on the Premier to honour her government's promise to Albertans not to evict some of Alberta's most vulnerable citizens from their home in Red Deer's Michener Centre.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others?

If not, I would like to take an opportunity to table five copies of a report by the Child and Youth Advocate, who is an officer of this Legislature, copies that were provided to my office yesterday, entitled Youth Aging out of Care: Special Report. Copies of this particular tabling will also be provided to each of you as members of the House.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Johnson, Minister of Education, school jurisdictions' audited financial statements for the year ended August 31, 2011, sections 1, 2, and 3.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I think we can proceed to points of order. I believe, hon. Member for Airdrie, you had a point of order, and I would ask you to give the citation and proceed with it now.

Point of Order

Questions by Government Members

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, thank you. The citation is 23(1), in particular, "introduces any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly." I don't think we need to spend much time on it. You did rule on this when the House leader for the Liberals, the Member for Edmonton-Centre, rose on an identical point of order, and that is that, again, referring to the Member for Banff-Cochrane, he used his question in order to attack the policies and ask clarification from the government minister on the policies of the opposition, in this case the Official Opposition.

Of course, that's not a proper use of questioning in question period. You've ruled on this very clearly in the past. You know, question period is a valuable time. I know the government side is very preoccupied with the Official Opposition right now given certain things going on, polling and so forth. I would use that time that they have over there to question their ministers on issues that matter to Albertans, not to misuse question period in that way.

Obviously, they get the last word in question period on all questions. We don't get that. If they'd like the Official Opposition

leader to rise and answer their questions, we can arrange that if we can get unanimous consent. That would be great, but we can't do that. It's unparliamentary, and you've ruled on this before.

The Speaker: I'll recognize the deputy House leader in just a moment.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, send me a note as to when that ruling was made. I don't recall it vividly off the top of my head, but if you have it handy, I'd appreciate that.

In the meantime let's hear from the Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't able to hear what the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane was saying because of all the noise in the House, but I can suggest to you that as a private member the Member for Banff-Cochrane has the right to ask any minister any questions in this House. He asked the minister a question of grave concern to his constituents, and I don't see any point of order.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Airdrie, did you wish to clarify?

Mr. Anderson: Yes, I would like to clarify. It was actually not yourself that was in the chair at the time that that was made. My bad.

The Speaker: Thank you. It didn't ring a bell to me, but I will look up what the Deputy Speaker may have said or ruled at that time.

In the meantime I'm going to receive this in the following manner. We frequently have to be reminded what the purpose of question period is. To put it in the shortest, simplest terms, it is basically an opportunity for all private members, whether they are sitting on the government side or in the opposition benches, to hold the government to account. That is the fundamental purpose of question period.

However, we also understand that question period carries with it a lot of what we call cut and thrust. There will be times when government members feel compelled to return the favour and hold the opposition, perhaps, to account. We allow some of that because it is within their purview to answer in whatever way they want. There is nothing that outlaws them from doing that.

However, even though I haven't yet read what the Deputy Speaker said on this topic, let us be reminded that it is not often the case that government holds the opposition to account, but it is quite entertaining when it happens. So let us be mindful of that and receive today's point of order as a matter of clarification on that point, and if necessary, I will come back with more on it at a later time.

Was there a second point of order? There was no second point of order? Very well, then.

Statement by the Speaker

House Procedure

The Speaker: I would like to take a couple of minutes here to clarify a few things. First of all, I'm going to ask House leaders, if they would, please, to get together and discuss something that has been on my mind and on the minds of many members over the last several years but in this last year in particular, and that is with respect to the introduction of guests and what is an appropriate length of time for an introduction.

Now, there are days, as you well know, when we have many,

many guests who need to be introduced. Today, obviously, was one of those days, and we've had others. So in the interest of trying to get to all the people who have guests that they want to introduce, we should all be mindful and respectful of the time in this House and keep our introductions to a reasonable length of time. We don't have a set time for it. It leaves the Speaker sometimes in an awkward position when there is somebody being introduced on a particularly sensitive matter. We've had introductions of people who are here suffering from cancer or suffering from some other disability or some other serious problem, and it's very awkward to stand up and try and cut someone off, as it were. It's very awkward. Put yourself into the Speaker's role in that regard. I use that as one example. Then there are other occasions that require other forms of respect.

I would ask House leaders to please get together and talk about what they feel they would like to pass on to the Speaker and, in turn, to the House by way of an appropriate length of time for the introduction of guests.

The second thing I'd like to comment on is the rule of anticipation for questions in the House. Today, for example, we had a question that was asked with respect to Michener Centre. The question that was asked about Michener Centre dealt with some financial matters, and quite frankly the Speaker was distracted mildly during the time and missed it. I think it was Calgary-Shaw who was asking a question about something to do with \$10 million or something to that effect, and the question was answered by the appropriate minister. Then there was another question with respect, I think, to land values and so on.

Now, ordinarily those questions are very good questions, and they would be allowed. However, when you have estimates for that department or that issue on the same day, which is the case today, then those questions are what we call in anticipation. Because they deal with money matters and therefore they are a budget question, they are more appropriately phrased in the estimates debate, which will take place either at 3:30 or 7 today. Just be reminded of that. It's not going to cause the end of the world, but I will rule them out of order going forward when they happen on the day that that particular ministry is up for its review.

3:10

You will note, however, that shortly after that we had a question from Red Deer-North about Michener Centre as well. It dealt with planning and transition, but it didn't get into the financial side, which is what the budget estimates review is all about. A question like that about policy and planning would be allowed. It's not anticipation.

We also had another question asked with respect to centralized planning, and I forget which member asked it. That, too, is okay. As long as there's no money attached to it, it doesn't constitute a part of the budget estimates infraction with respect to anticipation.

A third point I'd like to talk about is what I introduced as a new ruling that I'm going to impose starting tomorrow. I want to tell you why I have imposed this. The chair is frequently at a dilemma in trying to help members be as effective as they can within the confines of the rules and, on the other hand, allowing the maximum latitude so that you can enjoy question period a little bit more than might otherwise be the case. I refer to certain stringent rules that we abide by and others where we give some flexibility.

There has always been some flexibility given for a little bit of joviality and a little bit of heckling and so on, and there are some members who are particularly good at this. Then there are other members who are particularly persistent and insistent and go on and on. Today I cited a couple of members because I had just had a little bit too much of it. When you interject constantly and I

count interjections 15 times, I think that's a little over the top, hon. members. Please. It applies to all sides because it happens from opposition and it happens from government members as well, government members on the front bench.

Please know that I'm not going to tolerate any of that tomorrow. I will allow a little bit of it as I see it going because there's no way that I want to sterilize the process. But by the same token, I can't risk it going past the breaking point where it results in disorder and disruption because that would be violating the rules. So that's that clarification.

The fourth point I want to mention is with regard to petitions, none of which were presented today. However, over the past few days we've had some problems with some of the petitions that have been presented in this House, so I want to instruct you this way. Starting tomorrow, if you have a petition to present, then I would appreciate it if you stood up and said the following words at the beginning of your petition presentation: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition that has been reviewed and approved by Parliamentary Counsel. If I do not hear those words at the outset, I will rule you out of order starting tomorrow.

Now, the reason for this is because sometimes items get tabled which we then have to reject. In this case we had some items rejected because they contained some profanities, which we could not accept or allow. Please, hon. members, check with Parliamentary Counsel. It doesn't take much. They are available, and you have their contact information. Make sure you get their stamp of approval so that we don't have that awkwardness take place.

The fifth point of interest that I'd like to comment on very briefly is the so-called McConnell case. I'm only commenting on this from the standpoint of what is or what isn't sub judice. I indicated I would be reviewing that matter, and I'm going to review it. There will be occasion when a question on a matter such as this, given the stage it's at, might be allowed, but you're treading on very fine lines there. Yes, I am aware of the rule that says: when in doubt, rule in favour of the debate proceeding. I'm well aware of that. I looked it up on Monday. I looked it up again today so that I would be fresh on it. Today I thought it was a little bit on the borderline, but I'm going to familiarize myself a little bit further. But be warned today that I have that on my radar.

The sixth and final thing I want to comment on today is tablings. The length of tablings, the subject of what gets tabled, and the particular vehicle that was used is of interest to the Speaker and should be of interest to you as well. Let me start with the latter, the nature of the material, or the vehicle. It can be so far e-mails or letters or books or magazines or reports. Sometimes we've had props and all kinds of different things tabled. Now, is that what Tabling Returns and Reports should be all about, or should it really be about tabling returns and reports, which you can look up and I can give you definitions of if you like?

Secondly, is the subject matter, and that leads into the length. There are times when some members have taken a great deal of time to introduce a tabling. In fact, there have been cases where people have tried to read the whole letter. You have heard it. You know what I'm talking about. Again, it's an awkward moment for the Speaker, any Speaker, when you're listening to someone table something that has like we heard today a very sensitive tone to it: a single mom who's trying to raise a family, and she's doing so with pennies and so on and so on. It's gut wrenching, and it's heartwarming, and you hate to stand up and try to cut someone off when they're talking about something as serious as that to that particular person and to their representative, presumably whom they contacted for some help.

So please can we just take this under advisement for right now that the length of your tablings, the nature of the tablings, and the

subject vehicle that you use for that tabling ought be primary in your concerns?

That having been said, I think we are now ready to adjourn the House for the day. Pursuant to Standing Order 7(7) the daily Routine has been concluded, and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House shall stand adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 so that the legislative policy committees can convene this afternoon and this evening for consideration of some particular main estimates. The afternoon will be comprised of

estimates in Families and Communities as they are listed under Human Services, and that will occur in committee room A. Tonight the Alberta's Economic Future agenda will consider the estimates for Enterprise and Advanced Education in committee room A.

Thank you for your kind attention.

[The Assembly adjourned at 3:16 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

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1001 Legislature Annex
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EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E4
Telephone: 780.427.1875