



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

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Monday, April 15, 2013

Issue 45

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC),
 Government Whip

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 61

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

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| Donovan | Quadri |
| Dorward | Rogers |
| Eggen | Rowe |
| Hehr | Sarich |
| Luan | Strankman |
| McDonald | Xiao |

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

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| Anderson |
| Casey |
| Dorward |
| Eggen |
| Kubinec |
| Sandhu |
| Sherman |

Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

Chair: Mr. Allen
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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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| Cusanelli | Leskiw |
| DeLong | Notley |
| Fraser | Pedersen |
| Fritz | Swann |
| Goudreau | Towle |
| Jablonski | Wilson |
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| Brown | Rogers |
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| Eggen | |

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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| Jansen | Sandhu |
| Kennedy-Glans | Saskiw |
| Kubinec | Towle |
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| Bilous | Kubinec |
| Blakeman | Lemke |
| Calahasen | Sandhu |
| Casey | Stier |
| Fenske | Webber |

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 15, 2013

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon, hon. members and guests.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, let us be thankful for the opportunity we have been given to help improve the lives of others, and let us count among our blessings the freedoms and the responsibilities that accompany that opportunity. Amen.

Please remain standing, hon. members, for the singing of our national anthem led by Mr. Paul Lorieau, and I invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Thank you, members. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of 12 students who geographically represent Alberta from Calgary right up to Grimshaw. While that would seem a little bit unusual, what is not unusual is that they have enrolled themselves in the School of Hope home-schooling program, which my two sons graduated from. I'm very pleased to have them here today along with seven parent leaders and their teacher, Mrs. Johnston MacMillan. I had the opportunity to meet with these students. They're anywhere from grade 4 to grade 7. They informed me that they've enjoyed their visit to the Legislature very much and that it beats a day at home. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Egen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 23 members of l'école St. Angela elementary school. They are a grade 6 class that will be here for the whole week as part of the School at the Legislature, and they are here with their teacher, Luke Wasik. If I could have them all stand, please, and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Hughes: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of students with three teachers from Webber Academy. Webber Academy houses students from kindergarten through to

grade 12 and is located in the scenic and historic constituency of Calgary-West. They are seated in both the members' and the public galleries. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly one of the most courageous individuals I've ever met along with her loyal family and friends. I'd ask them to rise and remain standing as I introduce them. First, Dani Polsom. She has been in the news a lot lately. She tragically was abused for eight years and then had her case dropped because of Crown and system delays. It is her courage that has resulted in the government's recommendations, just released on Friday, which should help ensure that what our system did to her doesn't happen again.

Also with Dani is her mother and biggest cheerleader, Alison Jones. Then we have several family members: Kevin Hughes, Alison's boyfriend; Lance Edwards-Hampton, Dani's boyfriend; Andy Jones, Alison's brother; Beverley Jones, Alison's sister; Kristopher Polsom, Dani's twin brother; David Jones, Alison's nephew; and friends Lois Jones; Karen MacDonald, another wonderful victims' advocate; and Angie Milley-Lowe.

They are here today with a document that I will table after question period urging the government to make some important changes to justice legislation. I'd ask them to rise if they haven't already and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark and leader of the Liberal opposition.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Jon and his wife, Evelyn, who have travelled to Edmonton from Shellbrook, Saskatchewan, to advocate for Jon's brother Paul Siebert, who is a 55-year resident of Michener Centre. Accompanying them is Jon's brother James Siebert and his wife, Ann, as well as their daughters Melody and Joy.

Paul, who is now 60 years old, was 17 months old when he was diagnosed with encephalitis. He suffered brain damage and began having up to 24 seizures a day, and it affected his sensory abilities. Paul's parents, Abe and Cornelia Siebert, lived 30 miles away from town with their family, and without the care of nurses they cared for Paul around the clock and even took turns sleeping with him in his bed. Paul was five when Michener Centre opened their doors to him, and he has lived there happily and safely for the last 55 years. Mr. Speaker, Paul's mother, Cornelia, was so touched by her son's life that she felt compelled to write the story of Paul. She wrote a book titled *Over the Wall* with Paul, that I will table later today. Please join me in giving Jon and Evelyn Siebert and James, Ann, Melody, and Joy the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly as they ask us to keep the Michener Centre open for Paul.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very honoured to rise today and introduce to you and through you a very special guest who personifies the very meaning of community service and dedication to others. Bettylyn Baker, a teacher and certified Irlen screener, has travelled to be here today to show her support for my private member's bill, Bill 204, the Irlen Syndrome Testing Act. Bettylyn is a teacher who very frequently encounters and

thoroughly understands the many hurdles that come with Irlen syndrome. She was the first teacher to bring Irlen's to my attention, and for that I'm grateful. She's had the opportunity to change the lives of many people, and I'm grateful for the work she has done with all of the children in whose lives she has made a difference. Bettylyn, you have risen, and I'd ask the Assembly to give you the warm traditional welcome.

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

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this august Assembly doctors Ross and Eleanor Wein. These two are long-time Albertans who have been involved as postsecondary educators in Alberta. They have a new passion now, and it's trying to establish the international wellness and nature lodge out at Coyote Lake. This lodge is similar to a lodge that we see down in Kananaskis Country called William Watson Lodge, which was established by Premier Lougheed, and many people with disabilities have enjoyed that for the past 25 years. What they see is a need for one in the Edmonton area. I'm very impressed by these two individuals in their passion for this, and I know they're working with the Minister of Infrastructure to try and get some things handled in this regard. I have every confidence that they will be successful, and I look forward myself to going there at some point in time in the future. If they could rise, and let's give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40 Members' Statements

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

Ultimate Ascent Robotics Competition

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, April 6, I took off my MLA hat for the day and was a proud mom and spectator at the Ultimate Ascent robotics competition. This competition included 30 teams from North, Central, and South America. For the first time the high school regional competition was held in Calgary.

Both of my sons have been part of Team 1482, representing Bishop Grandin high school, one of the pioneer teams from western Canada. Joining them on the field was the rookie team from Henry Wise Wood high school, also in Calgary-Glenmore. What was really exciting was that the robots we were watching were built by the high school students themselves. In early January robotics teams all around the world received the same kit consisting of basic drive mechanisms and programming boards. Then for the next six weeks team members designed and built their robot.

During the competition robots begin by operating independently to shoot Frisbees into goal boxes that are eight and 10 feet off the ground. Then the students step up and operate the robots. For the next two minutes robots are loading and shooting Frisbees across a field that is 27 by 54 feet in size. By the way, Mr. Speaker, did I also mention that there are six robots on the field at a time? The robots are placed into teams of three, where they work together to get as many Frisbees into the goals as possible. Interference, blocking, and checking of robots by robots is also allowed. This is a full-contact sport. As the clock is counting down, robots begin climbing a tripod to earn more points. The tripod is eight feet tall, and more points are awarded depending on how high the robot reaches.

FIRST Robotics would not have been a success without the participation of industry, mentors, parents, volunteers, school staff, and the use of school facilities. Their support and a grant from the Department of Culture had teenagers and adults working together, creating risk takers and students with initiative. It was a great day, Mr. Speaker.

Dani Polsom

Mr. Anderson: To look at Dani Polsom for the first time, one would likely just see a smart young woman with a magnetic personality and a contagious smile, but there is so much more to her than that. You see, Dani was sexually abused hundreds of times over eight years by someone in a position of trust. When Dani was able to report what had occurred, she was revictimized, this time by Alberta's justice system, which allowed her case to be dropped because of three years of Crown and court delays.

Now, Dani could have done what most would have justifiably done in her case. She could have kept her identity secret and hoped that time would slowly make the pain fade away. But she didn't. Although she understood that her abuser would never be punished for what he had done, she decided that no other person who had suffered at the hands of a child molester should have to be revictimized in the justice system. Not only would she speak out about this; she would fight and win a court application to have her identity become public. She wanted victims to have a face, not some shadowy figure with a distorted voice on a television news story because, as she rightly states, she and every victim like her have absolutely nothing to be ashamed of.

On Friday Alberta Justice released a report on Dani's case, including recommendations to ensure that what the justice system did to Dani will never happen to another. These are good first steps. Like so many heroes, Dani will never meet the victims she has saved. It's impossible to know who would have had their abuser go unpunished had Dani's reforms not been implemented, but that's just another reason why Dani is a true hero. She has given up her privacy, anonymity, and freedom to not talk about her abuse for the welfare of those she will never meet.

Dani, thank you not only for being the driving force behind these needed reforms but for showing us all what courage, sacrifice, and love truly are.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Irlen Syndrome

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Irlen syndrome is a real disorder that requires our attention in this Legislature if we are to help children and adults who suffer from this disability. Irlen syndrome is a neurological impairment which adversely affects one's ability to read by causing word distortions to appear on paper.

Because of Irlen's reading becomes a struggle and causes children to have difficulties in school. They complain of tiredness or headaches after reading. They complain that the print is blurry and the words dance or jiggle on the paper. They rub their eyes after reading for a while. They often lose their patience when reading aloud, and they often misread short words. Some are suspected of having ADHD, and parents are told that Ritalin might help.

If a teacher or a parent suspects that a child may have scotopic sensitivity syndrome, or Irlen's, then they should take the steps to help a child. The impact of this condition is devastating.

Today's theme is literacy, and no one needs to say how important literacy is to the success and happiness of every Albertan. Teachers work very hard to ensure that students are reading to their very best levels at grade 3. Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have a duty to all children in Alberta. If we can address the problem of Irlen syndrome and help children with this disability to become all that they can be, then we had better not miss the opportunity today, right now, right here in this Legislature.

I will be asking all members of the Legislature to review Bill 204, the Irlen Syndrome Testing Act, and to support the passing of this bill. Addressing Irlen syndrome in our schools will go a long way in helping all Albertans to achieve their dreams.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Northland School Division Literacy Initiative

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Literacy is not a luxury, it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens." That's quoting President Clinton, and that is what Northland school division is doing as a result of their division-wide literacy initiative, which was implemented at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year.

According to Literacy Alberta 40 per cent of adult Albertans and 35 per cent of working-age Albertans do not have basic literacy skills. That's why I'm so proud of Northland school division for tackling literacy in their schools so that we minimize the high percentage of illiteracy in our present-day world.

They will do this by implementing a sustained emphasis on reading, writing, language development, and comprehension. All of the schools in the division schedule two hours of daily literacy programming during which educators help students become stronger readers. Because the Northland school division has up to a 98 per cent aboriginal population, there is a strong emphasis on using First Nation, Métis, and Inuit material in these activities, including works of both fiction and nonfiction, as well as a major focus on oral language and reading in various forms across the curriculum. It also places a focus on community and family engagement with a number of advanced activities such as the celebration of Family Literacy Day. Although it is in its first year, early results indicate student progress and community engagement.

I have high hopes for Northland school division and its students and its community that all schools will continue to celebrate student growth and highlight the importance of literacy so that Northland school division students can also be successful. Exactly like Dr. Seuss says: "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

Congratulations to the trustees, to the superintendent, to the principals, and to all the teachers and the communities that have been involved.

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

Scotiabank Calgary Marathon

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak about the 49th annual Scotiabank Calgary Marathon happening on May 26 from the Calgary Stampede grounds. Celebrating its 50th anniversary in June 2014, the Scotiabank Calgary Marathon has the distinction of being Canada's longest running marathon.

When the race first took place on August 10, 1963, there were 19 runners. This year approximately 30,000 competitors, volunteers, and onlookers are expected to take part. Events like this attract people to experience Alberta, boosting our global profile and our economy.

The Calgary marathon offers a full marathon, a half marathon, a five- or 10-kilometre family walk or run as well as a children's marathon and offers an opportunity for participants of all ages to achieve goals, enjoy the outdoors, and be active.

The event also gives competitors the opportunity to raise money for local and national charities by racing on behalf of a worthy cause of their choice. Known as the Charity Challenge, participants represent over 70 charities, and last year the Charity Challenge raised \$738,000. This year the goal is \$750,000.

1:50

I'm delighted to share with you that I'll be partaking in the 10-kilometre run in order to raise funds for the Sonshine community service, a nonprofit residential shelter in my constituency that is committed to helping young women and their families escape situations of domestic violence and rebuild their lives. In addition, I would like to thank the hon. members for Calgary-Lougheed, Calgary-South East, and Calgary-North West for agreeing to also participate.

Also, I'm extremely proud and honoured to have been chosen as the first honorary chair for the event as I fundamentally believe that events like the Scotiabank Calgary Marathon help bring communities together in the spirit of service and charity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition for the first main set of questions.

Alberta Health Services Executive Expenses

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we have evidence which points to a scandal that combines two of the most troubling aspects of the mess in health care, exorbitant expenses and queue-jumping. Documents we will table today show that a former Capital health region executive spent more than \$7,000 for a visit to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, submitted the bill, and was reimbursed by Capital health. To the associate minister for Health: is this another example of the lax approach to managing expenses, or was this actually a workaround to avoid lengthy wait times here at home?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, another drive-by smear campaign. The member of the opposition is making innuendos that are suggesting that something unbecoming has happened. Frankly, she had withdrawn those innuendos just a few minutes after she made them initially, so she isn't even sure whether what she's saying is factual or not. But let me tell you one thing. This government is committed to working hard to making sure that we have one of the best health care systems possible, and if you don't believe me, tune into your best news network today at 2:30, and you will see how.

Ms Smith: I haven't withdrawn anything, Mr. Speaker. I'm asking questions for clarification. That's what the Official Opposition does.

I'd like to get some answers because we need proof, not just lame talking points. Will the associate minister for Health assure Albertans that this practice has been stopped and that the government will take every effort to ensure that this money is paid back?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health Services officials and Alberta Health officials travel extensively to other, allied clinics to make sure that we acquire the best practices possible, so travel for executives of both Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services is not unusual. What is unusual is to see somebody's travel expenses, which very well probably are legitimate, and to make innuendos without any factual basis for it.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier could clear things up by answering the questions here today. He's chosen not to.

We have made freedom of information requests for the expenses of 93 health executives, and we're still waiting for 42 of them to be released. Several of these executives are fighting our requests. If the minister was sincere about wanting to clean things up, then he would simply agree to the request, that we've made multiple times. Will he release all of the expenses for all of the executives for all of the health regions going back to 2005?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, in this province we have very clear legislation relative to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and any and all parties can request information. If that information can be released relative to the legislation, they will receive it. As she indicated, they have already received a large portion of what they requested, and if the rest can be released, it will be released. There's nothing to hide, but to draw conclusions on documents that you haven't yet received is simply irresponsible and wrong.

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

Ms Smith: If there's nothing to hide, we have no reason to know why it is they're not releasing them because, Mr. Speaker, expense account abuse does exist in the health regions. That much is clear.

Health Services Preferential Access

Ms Smith: The changes to the rules don't erase years of lavish overspending, but this case points out a situation that's even more serious than just wasting money. It appears that this Capital health executive jumped the queue by going outside of the country for treatment and having taxpayers pay for it. This apparent queue-jumping must be investigated. Will the Premier extend and expand the Vertes inquiry to look at this case and any others that may come to light?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, once the documents are released on this FOIP request and if indeed there is any behaviour that's unbecoming, it will be dealt with. We just had a queue-jumping inquiry, a very extensive queue-jumping inquiry, and what did they come up with by way of evidence? Nothing. So why would we now draw conclusions on documents that have not yet been released, that they haven't had a chance to see? They've already prejudged the outcome having not even received the documents.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier isn't listening. The documents have been released. We released them to the media today, and we will be tabling them today, and we'd sure like some answers on this.

Albertans must be forgiven for wondering about the state of our health care system because when executives who run the public system go to private clinics to get treatment that they can't get from the public system that they run, doesn't the minister see that that is an accountability problem?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, if that was the case, it would be a problem, and if there was a problem, we would deal with that problem.

The problem with the opposition is that they don't know whether there is a problem. They imagine a problem, they allege there to be a problem, and they want us to deal with it. We have the managing of health care at stake, and we have making sure that Albertans get the best health care possible at stake, not dealing with their imaginary problems.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, it appears the Deputy Premier wasn't properly briefed today. Maybe he'll answer the questions tomorrow because this is an issue of fairness.

Many other Albertans sometimes need out-of-province treatment, too, but they have trouble getting reimbursed by AHS – and we'll hear about one of those cases a little bit later in question period – yet health executives jump to the front of the line, they buy expensive private care, and then they submit the bills to the taxpayer for immediate payment. Now, that's not fair, Minister, is it?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, any Albertan that needs to travel outside of the province or outside of the country for treatment that isn't otherwise available in this province or within Canada can, and there is a medical committee that makes the decision of whether it is a bona fide treatment that would be justified. These will not be political decisions like the opposition would do right now. These are medical decisions made by medical professionals, so if an individual needs to travel outside of the province, that decision is made on a medical basis.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Access to Justice

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, by now we all know about the case of Dani Polsom, who was sexually abused repeatedly for over eight years only to have Alberta's justice system drop her case because of three years of Crown and court delays. The Ministry of Justice has now announced several reforms that it says will guarantee that victims of sexual violence in our province will never have their cases dropped again due to Crown and system delays. Some of these changes will take time and money. To the Justice minister: have you set a hard deadline by which these recommendations must all be implemented?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost, I think we all should go and thank the victim in this particular case for her courage and determination in bringing this matter forward. I also want to thank Greg Lepp, our associate deputy minister, for authoring this report. I've committed that within 90 days we'll be making a further statement as to what progress we can make as well as what part of the recommendations we want to act upon immediately. I recognize that some also deal with other levels of government like the federal government, and we will handle that as well.

Mr. Anderson: These recommendations if implemented – and we will follow up to make sure they are implemented – are a good start, but, Justice Minister, they do not go far enough. Given that your own government's safe communities task force recommended back in 2007 that the government should annually publish the number of cases that were stayed or dropped due to system delays and given that such a reform would improve accountability and give the Justice minister a gauge to measure progress by, will the Justice minister implement this long-overdue reform immediately?

Mr. Denis: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, we will go forward, and within 90 days we will make a further correspondence to everyone in this House, including this particular member, about where we want to go on the report itself. Just so everybody knows, the report talks about enhancing the use of precharge consultation with the police, enhanced education of Crowns in prosecuting sexual assaults, expanding the court case management program, and, as well, continuing to advocate for the elimination of preliminary inquiries, which on average delay each trial by 26 weeks.

Mr. Anderson: You didn't answer the question. That wasn't part of one of the recommendations made in that report. You need to implement that.

Mr. Speaker, given that the Crown initially did not support Dani's request that she be allowed to speak publicly about her victimization and identify herself, not the accused but herself, and given that victims of sexual abuse should never be forced to refrain from talking about their abuse or system failures such as this, will the Justice minister undertake to alter the policies or laws necessary to grant victims over 18 the right to waive media bans pertaining to their ability to identify themselves and to speak publicly about their victimization?

2:00

Mr. Denis: Mr. Speaker, in this particular instance our prosecutions branch did not oppose the victim's request to lift the publication ban. At that point in time we also have to consult with the police as well as the prosecution to see if this is possible. One of my concerns is that by following this member's request, we may inadvertently identify other people if we actually go that far.

Again, within 90 days we're going to be back with this particular item to discuss this further, and I thank this member for his comments.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Alberta Liberal opposition, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Alberta Health Services Executive Expenses (continued)

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order for regular Albertans to get out-of-country health care coverage for medically necessary care not available in Alberta, the standard procedure is to apply to Alberta Health, where a special medical panel approves coverage of the care, travel, accommodation, et cetera. However, in this one instance the region approved these expenses and covered the costs without following standard procedure. To the Premier: was this standard practice in the health region, or was this just an isolated incident?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you to the leader of the Liberal Party for clarifying for the members of the Wildrose Party how the system actually works because he said exactly what I

said. There's a medical decision made if an Albertan needs to travel outside of the province or outside of the country for medical treatment. However, if there was an irregularity, which I am not insinuating there was – the opposition is insinuating that there was – that matter will be reviewed and dealt with. But at this point in time we have no information on which to base such a conclusion that there was an impropriety of any kind.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker. I don't think he heard the question.

The Helios quickie-colonoscopy issue is one thing in the public inquiry, but this one takes the cake: top-notch care at the world-renowned Mayo Clinic and an all-expenses-paid stay at the Marriott, including an in-house movie and even two bottles of Aquafina. It's like a special medical system they have set up for themselves and their senior executives. To the Premier: is this an isolated case, or is this one of the perks that goes with being one of the senior execs in AHS or one of these highly connected Albertans?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, if what the member is insinuating in any way resembles what happened, that person and others will be dealt with. What I'm saying is that at this point in time there is no evidence to suggest that. It is very possible that this individual went to that clinic for a meeting and actually was at a seminar for two or three days, hence the hotel and other charges. We don't know that. But if there is inconsistency with policy, it will be dealt with.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, this transitions perfectly into my next question. Dr. Chris Eagle originally ordered a forensic audit of all Capital health region executives, but the Premier had the board chair shut him down and just focus on Mr. Merali. But there are hundreds of executives. To the Premier: will you finally order the forensic audit of all senior execs, which Dr. Eagle called for in the first place, or do we just have to keep waiting for all these FOIPs?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, I explained already very clearly how information is released. It is released in accordance with the law, and that's how it will continue to be released and made available to those who request it. At this point we will be focusing on delivering the best possible care to Albertans. We will be moving forward, and we will be making sure that Albertans receive the care that they deserve. If they want to do smear campaigns, they're more than welcome to do so.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by Calgary-Shaw. Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview? The hon. Leader of the New Democrat opposition instead. Okay.

Mr. Mason: I didn't think I was heckling so much that I would be missed, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Budget

Mr. Mason: This government has been on the retreat in the past week, proving that Albertans can stand up to this government and make them keep their promises. They've retreated on pharmacist compensation, they've retreated on the veterans' parking pass, and they've retreated on their high-handed attempt to destroy academic independence in this province. But this government also made an absolutely disastrous \$147 million cut to our postsecondary institutions, Mr. Speaker. Will the Deputy Premier reverse it and keep his promise to Alberta students?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, before this member pounds his chest too much, Mr. Speaker, no retreat in this particular file has happened. As a matter of fact, I am pleased to report to you and to the Legislature that I had a meeting with all 26 presidents. The presidents agreed that there has to be a mandate letter. The presidents agreed that they have the capacity and the wherewithal to deal with the budget. Although it will be difficult, they will deal with the budget. They have simply asked of me what I used to ask of them when I was a university student, an extension. They need an extension to deal with the mandate letter a little longer. They have received it. They will respond by September 1.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier has ordered a charge to the rear.

Today Albertans affected by cuts to persons with disabilities gathered to express concern about a \$42 million cut to programs that allow persons with disabilities to live full lives. The past few weeks are proof that Albertans who stand up can force this callous PC government to back down and keep its promises. My question is to the associate minister. Will he do his job, stop breaking promises, and restore the funding that allows vulnerable Albertans to live with dignity?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member obviously didn't read the whole budget. We got, actually, an increase in the disability services budget. We're quite confident that we have the budget in place to do the job that we need to do. There have been within that budget some reallocations. We're working with service providers on that now.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, it's the same old practice of just moving money around within the department, but those cuts exist.

This PC government's broken-promises budget contains \$180 million of cuts to the seniors' drug benefit plan, meaning that thousands of seniors will be cut off their drug coverage. The province's seniors didn't know that they'd be paying out of pocket for this government's broken promises. Will the Deputy Premier back down, as he does on so many other things, and keep the PC promise to Alberta's vulnerable seniors?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Speaking of charges to the rear, the leader of the fourth party, Mr. Speaker, is wrong again. As a matter of fact, you can't win with these guys either way because if you don't listen, you're arrogant, and if you listen, you retreat. You can't get it right.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you one thing. We will continue listening to Albertans. We listened to Albertans during the last campaign, and that is why you have in this House what you have. Look at the numbers. We will continue listening to Albertans because that's how we arrive at the right decisions.

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

Servants Anonymous Society of Calgary

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the safe house operated by Servants Anonymous in Calgary, which supports women and their children escaping prostitution, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation, is closing because of this government's misplaced priorities. It is a terrible decision to eliminate support for a service that has directly assisted 176 women to exit the sex trade over the last four years. There's nothing else like it in Alberta, yet the Deputy Premier, apparently an expert on everything, says that there are other

services available that perform this exact same function. Really? Where are they, and what are their names?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member would like to know what actually is happening. What actually is happening is that under the safe communities task force there were pilot projects that were funded with one-time grants and short-term grants. That's the grant that's running out. Under Human Services we're working with all sorts of groups across the province to help vulnerable women with respect to shelters, to help women who have been victimized by sexual crimes and in a number of other areas. We will continue to do that, and we will continue to embed those good programs that work.

Mr. Wilson: Given that this is another case of the government telling us that they've had to make tough decisions when, really, all they've done is made cuts to the front lines and given that a year's worth of funding to operate the Servants Anonymous safe house is about the same as the annual salary of just one of the communications people in the Premier's office, when can Albertans expect this Premier to get her priorities straight?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, I'm glad that this member brought this up, Mr. Speaker. I don't expect you to listen or to read the *Hansard* from the estimates. This opposition went through my entire budget. Even though, on one hand, they're asking us to balance and cut deeper and most severely, on the other hand they don't want anything cut. The only thing they found wrong in my budget, the budget for our ministry, was to lay off one person in my office from communications. This is how constructive this opposition is.

2:10

Mr. Wilson: It's good to see they continue to answer the questions, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the Justice minister just last year presented Servants Anonymous with an award recognizing the important work the organization does and given that the Justice department's analysis showed that for every dollar invested in SAFE House, \$8 are saved in policing, justice, health, and social supports, to my hon. friend the Associate Minister of Finance: how is it possible that a 700 per cent return on investment was deemed a waste of taxpayer dollars?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Denis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Servants Anonymous over the last four year received \$866,000. This was designed to be a temporary grant with some bridge funding. I know they've done a lot of good work. In fact, I was just talking to one of them on my Facebook today. That being said, this was just temporary funding, and if you look forward, we do expect these individuals and these groups to look towards private funding as well. I'm sure that's something that this member could support.

Collective Bargaining with Teachers

Mr. Jeneroux: Mr. Speaker, it's been an entire month since the Premier, the ATA president, and our Minister of Education announced that a tentative deal had been reached with 40,000 of Alberta's teachers. This agreement is great. Many of my constituents were relieved, knowing that all we have to worry about now are just new schools coming to our constituency and not a teachers' strike, but we haven't heard much since. To the minister: can you please give these parents an update since the

fanfare announcement last month on when this great education deal might be finalized?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, since the fanfare announcement last month there has been a great deal of progress made, but there is still work to be done. Since the announcement of the tentative deal I can tell you that we've been going around the province meeting with several communities and with all the school boards as well as the ATA locals, making sure that they're well informed on it and that they make good decisions as they try to ratify this. As a matter of fact, yesterday Edmonton public ATA local voted yes. I can tell you that we've got close to 40 of our 62 boards now onboard, and we'll be working with the rest in the coming weeks.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we've only had a fraction of the boards support this deal and a number are still debating whether it works for them and some have even taken the step of voting against this deal, when will we know that this great education deal is final and the school boards' voices are heard?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the school boards' voices are being heard on an ongoing basis, but there are still several weeks of work to be done in terms of working with the boards, meeting with the boards, making sure their concerns are heard and that all the trustees understand the deal here. As a matter of fact, this week alone there are dozens of meetings scheduled with the ATA locals and the school boards across this province. Within the coming weeks, by the middle of May, we'll know how every one of them feels, but I'm very optimistic.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question: given that you just said that this agreement ensures the stability and sustainability of our system, can you please speak to my constituents, clear the air on how the specifics of this deal will truly impact our kids, my kids, in the classroom and not just comfort in the boardrooms?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, as the Premier said when we announced this deal – it was over two years in the making – it does recognize the vital role of teachers and gives them some of the supports they need to continue doing the great job that they do. It's great news for school boards because it gives them cost certainty over the three years. We've frozen salary and pay for three years in terms of the raises for teachers. More importantly, it gives stability to the entire system and to the students so that we can continue to focus on making the system better for students as opposed to worrying about labour agreements.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Calgary-Glenmore.

Out-of-country Health Services

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While health executives are busy expensing private health care at the Mayo Clinic to the taxpayer, five-year-old Brooke Aubuchon from Innisfail is dying of a rare disease of the nervous system, the same disease which took the life of her brother Alex in 2011. But there's hope. Brooke qualified for a revolutionary clinical trial in New York that may save her life. Her surgery was on February 26 of this year. Unfortunately, Brooke is not a senior health executive, and the Minister of Health told Brooke's family that the PC government

won't cover her expenses. How can the associate minister for Health possibly defend this absolutely disgusting hypocrisy?

Mr. Lukaszuk: You know, as a parent I have to tell you that nothing can be more difficult to anyone than having a sick child and not being able to help. But at the same time, I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that to hear this, the word "despicable" would be an understatement. We have been very clear that the decisions on out-of-province and out-of-country services are made by medical doctors in the best interests of the patient, not by a PC government, not by a Wildrose opposition but by medical doctors, who know what is best and what is really possible.

Mrs. Towle: So disappointing.

Given that this PC government clearly has set up the worst kind of two-tier health care possible and given that one tier has Albertans waiting the longest in the country for many medical procedures if they're even available and given that the second tier allows Alberta Health Services executives and members of the government family immediate access to private health care on the public dime, when will this government afford this same opportunity to everyday Albertans?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, if we had the choice and the ability, every member on this side of the government would give any child and any parent any ability to send their child anywhere possible, but we all know that that is not realistic, especially when you have an opposition screaming to cut deeper and deeper and deeper. We will always make sure that decisions are made on the best medical information available to the benefit of the child or the patient and that they will not be politicized by government members, by bureaucrats, or by the opposition, who have a tendency to do so.

Mrs. Towle: Given that five-year-old Brooke Aubuchon's family has taken on severe financial hardship to pay for what this government gives away to senior health executives, will someone in this government finally do what's right, realize how wrong they are, and pay for Brooke Aubuchon's expenses?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, let me restate the obvious. Decisions on sending children or any Albertans to clinics outside of Alberta or outside of Canada are made based on medical information from medical doctors and other allied professionals. These are not political decisions. These are not decisions made by government officials, nor should they ever be.

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

Employment Supports

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Human Services. Mr. Minister, Budget 2013 includes adjustments to program supports for underemployed and unemployed Albertans. Can the minister advise the Legislature: what are the expected effects to literacy programs as a result of these decisions?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we anticipate with the strength of the economy and the job market in Alberta is that a number of people will not require the services of Alberta Works or will require the services of Alberta Works for a shorter period of time. What it will allow us to do is to focus on target

populations who actually need more supports to get into the workforce. Literacy is one of those target populations. Obviously, literacy is a very important part of being in the workplace today, and we're working closely with Enterprise and Advanced Education to ensure that those programs are available.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister comment on the impact of the skills improvement plan, where I hear from community members there is some concern?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I would just add on to my previous answer to say that by reducing the number of people who require the services of Alberta Works and the associated programs, we'll actually be able to focus more strongly on those people who really need our assistance. That skills program is one of those areas where we'll continue to connect actively to Albertans with job opportunities and continue to assist in programs which will help them get the skills they need not just to get a job but to get a job with a livable wage.

Ms L. Johnson: Finally, Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear from nonprofit agencies about the cancellation of the STEP program. Can the minister indicate his progress with nonprofit organizations for the upcoming summer employment programs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The STEP program was cancelled as it was started up to be a summer temporary employment program. As I referenced in the previous two answers, the job market is actually quite good, and there are jobs out there. What we do want to do is to work with not-for-profit organizations and service providers who want to get students to come into their area to learn about a career in that area. We're working with Enterprise and Advanced Education, with Volunteer Alberta, and with other organizations to find ways to assist those organizations to achieve success in drawing students in to learn about careers in that area, and we'll continue to work in that area.

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

Support for Vulnerable Albertans

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this government continues with damage control communications couched in the new guise of results-based budgeting. Most Albertans see it for what it is, a desperate attempt of government to make their financial mismanagement look responsible. Cuts to the Servants Anonymous emergency shelter we've heard about; \$48 million in cuts to persons with disabilities community supports; inadequate funding to the charitable group Inn from the Cold, housing families from the street, mostly First Nations; cuts to child care; and no poverty strategy. To the Minister of Human Services. Albertans contacting my office don't believe that these changes, most without consultation, reflect anything but this government's PR problem. How is that any . . .

2:20

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem they've got is that they went to his office. In fact, there's a lot of good work

happening. We've had strong consultations across the province with respect to a social policy framework that's leading into some excellent work with partner agencies and communities on a poverty reduction strategy. These people talk about cutting grants with respect to organizations. The organization that he referenced was on a short-term, three-year grant program. So they've got to get their facts right. They've got to know that we are working closely with Albertans to ensure that every Albertan has the opportunity to achieve their potential.

Dr. Swann: Well, Mr. Minister, tell vulnerable Albertans how these cuts to services are going to improve their quality of life.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we're doing is making sure that every taxpayer dollar is effectively used to achieve results. Focusing on outcomes, focusing on targeting where people need assistance to overcome a barrier to success, whether it's periodic or chronic, working with individual Albertans to understand what the barriers to success are and how they need to move past those barriers to success: it's very focused, it's very broad in terms of looking at all of the things that get in the way of success, and it's going to be achieved with the success of communities and Albertans.

Dr. Swann: Well, this government has a lot to account for, with bonuses to executives when they're cutting the services to the most vulnerable. When are you going to allow the vulnerable to define their results?

Mr. Hancock: Every day, Mr. Speaker. Every day, every time we embark on this type of a process, we talk with the most vulnerable to find out what their issues, what their barriers have been and what will help lead to success.

This hon. member would have people believe that it all stops and starts with the money. It doesn't stop and start with the money. It starts and stops with understanding what success looks like, understanding how you can help people overcome the barriers that they have to success, and understanding where they want to get to. Applying and prioritizing our resources is part of that, but it's not the be all and the end all.

Environmental Protection Policy

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, in Washington the Premier told the story, and I quote: the truth is that Alberta is home to some of the most environmentally friendly, progressive legislation in the world. Clearly, the Premier is confused about how to use the word "truth" in a sentence. As renowned scientist David Schindler said last week: just because you shut your eyes and say the oil sands are clean four times doesn't mean they are. So to the Premier: why don't you understand that intentionally and knowingly making public statements that are not correct jeopardizes our industry in the long run?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier was quite accurate in her statements. I'd like to actually mention a few statements that Dr. Schindler has made in the past as well about when we look at the work that we're doing with regard to land-use planning, with regard to the monitoring in the oil sands, and

doubling that monitoring. Dr. Schindler has actually made very positive comments about from where we were to where we moved to. The Premier was very accurate in her statements in Washington.

Ms Notley: Well, interestingly, given that Dr. Schindler said that even the village idiot couldn't deny the significant impact the oil sands have on the environment and given Alberta's inaction and denial on almost every facet of environmental protection means that this government has not yet risen to village idiot status, why is this minister standing by while the Premier intentionally and knowingly makes public statements . . . [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Inflammatory Language

The Speaker: Hon. member, we had an episode last week when someone was quoting something, and it was somewhat derogatory for some. Some could construe what you just said as a quote also in that same light of casting an aspersion that may not rightfully be so. So please review your questions before you bring them in here. It just raises disorder and disruption, and I'm trying my best to not allow that to happen.

Meanwhile let's have an answer from the minister.

Environmental Protection Policy (continued)

Mrs. McQueen: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the facts about Alberta, the first jurisdiction in North America to put a price on carbon, to have a technology fund to reduce emissions. As we grow the oils sands region to supply access to markets, world-wide markets, we continue to make sure that on integrated resource management, land-use planning, monitoring, and the climate change policy – show me anywhere else that has the kind of environmental policies that this Premier and this government have taken.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this PC government just handed over most environmental protection in this province to the founding member of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and given that Alberta will miss its reduction targets by miles and has absolutely no plans to fix that, why won't the minister admit that the failed PC environmental record seriously damages Alberta's international credibility and simultaneously hurts industry and the environment?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You can do solid environmental policies while being efficient and effective in the regulatory process, and that is exactly what this minister is doing along with the Energy minister. As well, we're making sure that our environmental policies are being reviewed as they pertain to climate change policy to make sure that our emissions will be reduced. That is the commitment we have made.

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

Capital Region Municipal Planning

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today Albertans living in and around our major cities awoke to some rather troubling

comments made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The minister stated that he is seriously considering forcing the amalgamation of capital region municipalities. It appears this government wants to throw the little guy under the bus on the way to the creation of megamunicipalities and end local autonomy just like Ontario did with the regions surrounding Toronto. Will the minister commit to preserving local autonomy rather than forcing Toronto-style megacities?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, the member's comments actually are inaccurate. I never suggested that we were going to amalgamate in any way, shape, or form municipalities. We haven't talked about that at all.

The Capital Region Board is critical to the success of the entire region. They have to adhere to the same principles that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs does. There is no us versus them. One of them will not be successful while the rest fail, and politicizing this process drives business away and does not appropriately serve the people that live within the Capital Region Board.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you. Given that this government thinks that Toronto is a good example from which to copy regionalization plans and given that Albertans in and around our major cities want their local autonomy preserved, why won't the minister commit to working with municipalities to keep local decision-making in their hands instead of threatening to forcibly amalgamate the entire region?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, again the premise is inaccurate. I've never even mentioned the city of Toronto once in any comment I've ever made. It's completely inaccurate.

The Capital Region Board is a group of municipalities that comes together to try and find creative solutions to ensure the success of every single municipality. We in Municipal Affairs and this government respect municipalities, and the Capital Region Board also has to respect municipalities and each other because we're all dependent on each other for success.

Mr. Rowe: I understand the minister's comments, but this process has been going on for eight to 10 years now, and it's clearly not working. Given the numerous failures of forced centralization here in Alberta, chief among them Alberta Health Services, and given that forced regionalization will rob municipalities of their autonomy and their democratic authority, why is the minister even considering imposing a Toronto-style program of regionalization on our municipalities and threatening their independence?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, this is about smart planning for the next generation as well. This has been eight years of success. They have reached a small impasse, but ultimately I don't think I'm going to take any recommendations from an opposition that needs a mediator to meet with the town of Sylvan Lake, that demands the city of Calgary have a red-light district, that tells the city of Edmonton what they're going to do with their municipal airport, and writes chastising letters in local newspapers when a municipality decides to build a library. I won't be taking their advice.

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

The Speaker: A point of order from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills has been noted at 2:29 p.m. in response to the last answer that was just given.

Let's go on to Calgary-Varsity, followed by Strathmore-Brooks.

Results-based Budgeting

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Results-based budgeting was implemented last November to review individual government programs for their relevance, their effectiveness, and their efficiency. Supported by five external experts and two other MLAs, I'm chairing the results-based budgeting panel challenging 60 of 180 economic development programs across eight ministries. We're reaching the end of our cycle, and panel members want to ensure that this work does not lead to another report that's simply filed away. My first question is to the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education. How will your ministry ensure that the learnings from this RBB process are incorporated into decision-making not just this one time but on an on-going basis?

The Speaker: The hon. minister and Deputy Premier.

2:30

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, results-based budgeting is an exercise where we practically have a chance to step back, look at what we do, and make a determination on whether we deliver the best services possible to Albertans at the best price possible. So it's in a sense deconstructing the delivery and then reconstructing it again. One of the benefits that will occur from this is that we're hoping that the culture of delivering benefits will change so that we will continue to deliver great programs at good cost.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: My next question is to the Associate Minister of Finance. Given your role in overseeing the results-based budgeting process, what have you learned from this process thus far, and what improvements will you be recommending to ensure that this process achieves even better results going forward?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister. [interjections]

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the opposition is so interested to learn more about this.

What we have learned is that there's a high level of professionalism and commitment in the public service, and they've embraced this initiative in changing the culture of how we deliver and how we look at making decisions in allocating finite resources. They've really embraced the fact that we need to balance the fact that we have finite resources with the ability to achieve an outcome of excellence for Albertans, and that's the responsible thing to do.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by St. Albert.

ERCB Production Outage

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday we learned of some troubling developments at the ERCB. First of all, we found out that several of its core technological systems had been down for days, jeopardizing applications, notifications, licences, and fee recovery, but it appears the system outage is only the surface of the problem. A former ERCB executive has blown the whistle, saying that the outage is part of a much deeper backroom issue where egos are trumping sound decision-making. He called it a panicked environment. To the Energy minister: just what exactly is happening at the ERCB?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hughes: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to answer that question because it's quite clear that what's going on is that the most important function of the ERCB is carrying on, and that is ERCB's incident reporting and emergency response capability. Field staff are continuing regular inspections, monitoring, and responding to landowner concerns. They are also dealing with a temporary outage of some of their IT systems. They're managing through that, and as we have seen, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers has indicated that this is not causing a concern at this stage.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Energy minister: given that it took five days for the ERCB to even report the systems outage and given that the former ERCB executive has alerted us to the internal problems that are apparently paralyzing the board and its functions, how can Albertans have confidence that the ERCB is doing its job to ensure the safe and secure development of our natural resources?

Mr. Hughes: Well, I think, Mr. Speaker, that Albertans can be quite confident that the ERCB is continuing to carry on its functions on behalf of all Albertans to protect the environmental concerns of Albertans under the new regulator when the Alberta energy regulator steps up in the next few months and to ensure the right balance between effective and efficient responsible development, that Alberta is well known for.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Energy minister: given that your department is already scrambling to have the new single regulator under Bill 2 up and running by June and given the apparent dysfunction at the ERCB right now, how can we believe that the new regulator won't be paralyzed by the same internal carnage that has seized the ERCB?

Mr. Hughes: Mr. Speaker, Alberta remains one of the strongest regimes in North America in terms of managing the regulatory regimes in this province and ensuring that the energy sector is appropriately regulated and ensuring that Albertans' interests are protected throughout the piece.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Support

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of concerned parents in St. Albert have approached me with a common concern and have identified what I believe are discrepancies that exist in our education and social support systems. Students who suffer and struggle with severe attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, ADHD, and other severe learning disabilities do not always receive standardized support services throughout all of their schooling years. My constituents have shared with me that from kindergarten to grade 6 youth with these severe learning difficulties get very good assistance, that helps them be successful. However, once these youth reach junior high, the extra support seems to wane. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Where is the support in our schools for youth aged 12 to 17 . . .

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education, you'll have to jump in here, please.

Mr. J. Johnson: I think I'll just guess what the rest of the question was about, Mr. Speaker.

Students with unique learning needs are something we heard a lot about with Inspiring Education over the last few years, so that's why we've taken action. Parents have told us that every child is unique, including those with ADHD, and we need to ensure that there's adequate funding and flexibility in funding for local educators to make decisions on how to support those kids. That's why we increased the inclusive education funding this last year by \$68 million to a total of \$375 million. We are increasing it even yet again in this tough budget.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. Mr. Minister, my constituents have a simple question. Why is it that an ADHD student who qualifies for additional supports in elementary school no longer meets the requirements for these same supports in middle and high school?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, there actually is no change in funding between elementary to junior high to high school. School boards have the funding coming from us in the form of \$375 million in inclusive education funding, and they can apply that funding to whatever they deem is appropriate at the local level because all kids learn in different ways, and they need that flexibility. So that funding should not drop off just because the student moves up in grades throughout their educational life.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Mr. Minister. My next question is to the Minister of Human Services. What supports currently exist outside of the school system so that youth aged 12 to 17 with severe ADHD who do not have access to school supports can still receive the community and family assistance they need to be successful?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, in certain circumstances that would fall within the purview of the family supports for children with disabilities, a program that we have to help families if their children have unique needs and barriers to promoting their development. Each individual circumstance would be determined on its own merits. FSCD would assess the impact of ADHD on the child and family and may provide services and supports to meet the child's and family's unique needs. Families whose children are severely affected by any diagnosed disability may receive specialized services and, of course, other information with respect to where they might find other supports.

Northern Lights Regional Health Centre

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the Northern Lights regional health centre is in dire need of a new building exterior, and this government doesn't seem to get that. The health centre is the only primary health facility in the Fort McMurray service area, and the ongoing delay in getting this done is a huge concern for local and area residents. To the associate minister for Health: doesn't the minister think it's time to publish a public infrastructure priority list so northern Albertans can have some assurance that their hospital will be able to continue servicing their area?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, because of the fact that this government did not take the advice of the Wildrose opposition and

did not cut our infrastructure spending by \$1.6 billion, the residents in this riding have hope. They have hope that the facilities will be renovated and built as we're building right now. Not only are we building health facilities, but we're building schools and seniors' homes and highways and overpasses, and we're fixing bridges. Those are projects that would not have been built if we'd adopted their capital plan with a \$1.6 billion cut.

Mr. Barnes: Yeah. Not the MLA office building.

Given that the Northern Lights regional health centre received a D in the CBC's Rate My Hospital investigation and most patients would not recommend the hospital and given that the government claims health and safety are the most important criteria to base infrastructure spending on, when will this government get serious about respecting northern Albertans and publish a public infrastructure priority list so residents of northern Alberta know their community priorities are important to this government?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, how rich coming from an opposition that is chastising this government every day for what they call not balancing the budget and not cutting deeper and harsher, from an opposition that wanted to cut capital spending by \$1.6 billion, from an opposition that doesn't allow us to amortize the cost of building infrastructure to the future, from an opposition that says that if we borrow to build those hospitals for which they're asking right now, we're passing on debt to the next generation. You can't have it both ways.

2:40

Mr. Barnes: Our debt-free capital plan accomplishes a lot of this.

Given that last month a report indicated that patients at the Northern Lights regional health centre are picking up infections at a rate twice the national average despite the best efforts of front-line health workers, isn't the associate minister for Health worried that this leaky building is causing patients to get sicker?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is why we will not listen to this opposition and will continue building Alberta. We will continue making sure that kids have schools today, not in 30 years; that patients have hospitals today, not in 10 years; and that our seniors have adequate facilities for homes now, not in 10 years.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, followed by Little Bow.

Alberta Distance Learning Centre

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the constituency week I met with the Pembina Hills regional school division to discuss recent funding cuts to the Alberta Distance Learning Centre. The ADLC serves in excess of 60,000 students, including those in FNMI communities, rural and remote schools, and outreach centres, in collaboration with over 130 school authorities in Alberta. My first question is to the Minister of Education. The number of students enrolled in distance education has been steadily increasing, so why was it so hard hit with the cuts?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. She's been a great advocate for her constituency and for the ADLC. To answer her question, when we were looking at this budget, we had to examine every line to make sure we were getting the best bang for the buck. When we looked at the way we were funding distance education, distance learning, we realized that we were funding kids taking distance education courses more

than we were the traditional courses when they actually cost less to deliver. So what we did was that we adjusted that funding, but it's important to point out that we did not, as part of that, change or decrease the funding that the ADLC gets for each student that it delivers those services to.

Ms Kubinec: To the same minister. Pembina Hills felt that they were left out of the conversation that led to this new funding model. Why weren't they included?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the Alberta Distance Learning Centre, which is operated by the Pembina Hills school division: their funding for delivering the distance learning to the kids didn't change. They used to receive 56 per cent of the value for the credits that any child taking the distance learning courses got, and they still do. What we did change is the funding of the resident board, the board that registers the student. They used to get the same level of funding that they would get for a student that they were delivering traditional learning to. Of course, it doesn't cost as much. It doesn't take as many resources. That didn't make sense, and we addressed it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education: how can we ensure that these cuts don't affect students' distance learning capabilities when the subscribing boards indicate that they will not be able to afford the services of ADLC to the same extent?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, students take distance learning for a variety of reasons, and we expect that demand to keep increasing for a number of reasons. Really, it's about access, and it's about programs. We know that the school divisions will do a great job. ADLC continues to do a great job. As those programs are available, we'll have more and more students signing up because that's the way it's got to be delivered in the future for many students for a number of different reasons.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes question period. Before we carry on with the rest of the Routine, could we have unanimous consent to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some very important ears and advocates for my bill, Bill 203, being read for a second time today: Ms Angeline Webb, Ms Anna Mann, and Ms Chelsey Anseeuw. All three of these ladies and others have provided countless hours of advice and support during the consultation process of my bill. This bill wouldn't have the legs it does today without their unwavering support. I'm proud to ask that these guests here today please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this

Assembly Dr. Sharon Vaselenak. I am very privileged to have Dr. Vaselenak here today. She's joining us in the Assembly to show her support for my private member's bill, Bill 204, the Irlen Syndrome Testing Act. She is one of many professionals who view this as a condition which must be addressed. I will be meeting with Dr. Vaselenak later this afternoon to discuss Irlen syndrome and the negative effects it has on literacy for all those affected. Dr. Vaselenak is from Edmonton, and she wears many hats. She's a family physician, a parent, and a person who suffers from Irlen's. She is seated in the public gallery, and I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Seeing no others, in 20 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements, beginning with Calgary-Mountain View.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Support for Vulnerable Citizens

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After 42 years in power this government is clearly the best in Canada at one area, public relations spin. Given another serious budget deficit this government announced it has suddenly realized new ways to improve care for our most vulnerable and save money at the same time. The Public Affairs Bureau is clearly in damage control for a government that has failed a thoughtful, evidence-based, inclusive plan for people, especially our most vulnerable. Having mismanaged our finances and still dependent on oil prices for 25 per cent of Alberta's budget, it's no surprise that the cuts to some of our most vulnerable citizens are being explained as improving care for people, and all this without consultations with key stakeholders and clients in these programs.

Under the excuse of results-based budgeting Human Services has cut Servants Anonymous emergency shelter in Calgary; \$48 million from persons with developmental disabilities community supports; allowed cuts to Inn from the Cold, housing families which are mostly First Nations, including children, from the street; announced it will wait to address its commitment to end child poverty until it has a definition of poverty. Yet another example is the lack of indexing of AISH, assured income for the severely handicapped, which would protect them from cost-of-living increases year to year. This, of course, contrasts sharply with the MLA salaries, which benefit from a policy of indexing and annual cost-of-living increases.

It's a small wonder that Albertans are saying that enough is enough. When the most vulnerable and their exhausted families must fight each year for their essential supports and depend on the charity of churches and donors for their security, there is no security. With the fear of the Wildrose dominating all decisions of this old government, they will not bring in a fair tax system to provide stability and dignity to our most vulnerable, just more spin. Well, Albertans are doing their own results-based analysis on this government, and the trust is gone. Many long-standing Tories that I know will no longer be supporting this sham of responsible government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very pleased to present a petition that has been reviewed and approved in format by Parliamentary Counsel. The pheasant release program petition to be presented has 486 signatures, and it's petitioning the Legislative Assembly to

urge the Government to take the necessary measures, including the introduction of proposed amendments to existing legislation, to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the Pheasant Release Program, which has been an important part of Alberta's hunting tradition, heritage and culture for over 65 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Bill 19

Metis Settlements Amendment Act, 2013

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 19, the Metis Settlements Amendment Act, 2013.

The proposed legislation will amend Alberta's Metis Settlements Act. The amendments in Bill 19 flow from my ministry's close work with the Métis settlements leadership over the last year. Bill 19 is vital to the success of the Métis settlements' long-term arrangements, one of my ministry's key initiatives. The Premier and I officially signed an agreement with the Métis settlements on March 12, 2013, and this represents an investment of \$85 million over 10 years.

2:50

The long-term arrangements have four objectives: strengthening settlement governance, accountability, and sustainability; enabling the Métis settlements to provide essential services, including infrastructure, on par with neighbouring communities; developing long-term economic and financial stability and settlement capacity; and enhancing the productivity relationship between this government and the settlements. The Metis Settlements Amendment Act focuses on accountability and governance, which will contribute to the sustainability and future economic prosperity of the settlements for the benefit of all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling five copies today of a report entitled Injecting a Sense of Urgency: A New Approach to Delivering Justice in Serious and Violent Criminal Cases. This report was presented to me on April 11, 2013, and it was authored at my request by Greg Lepp, who's the assistant deputy minister in my department. I'll pass five copies to the Clerk.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you'll indulge me, I have two tablings today. I have the appropriate number of copies of an open letter sent to Premier Redford by Joyce Tona of Rimbey. In this letter Joyce speaks very passionately about why it's so important for this PC government to reconsider the closure of the Michener Centre. Joyce's daughter has now lived in the Michener Centre for 45 years and is one of a very vulnerable group of people who would be severely affected by this closure.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is the appropriate number of copies of one of many e-mails we received about the PC government's cancellation of the STEP program. Marianne Wilkat, president of Ogden House senior citizens' club, writes about how STEP helped them set up a program to assist seniors who were incapable of clearing snow and doing yardwork. Marianne describes the cancellation of the STEP program as a "real kick in the teeth" for seniors in Alberta. Here's another example of the effects of the cancellation of this program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre or someone on behalf of, followed by Calgary-Buffer.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier the parents of Paul Siebert, who has been a resident of the Michener Centre for 50 years, were here, and his mother penned the booklet Over the Wall with Paul, which I'm tabling five copies of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie, please.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of a document that has been signed by over 1,000 folks, constituents mostly, asking the government of Alberta to

immediately pass legislation that will:

- Expedite all cases of crimes against children;
- Automatically trigger an outside investigation, independent of Alberta Justice, where cases are stayed due to institutional or Crown delays, in order to determine the causes of such delays as well as solutions to ensure such delays do not happen again;
- Grant victims over 18 the right to waive media bans on their name if they choose to speak publicly about their victimization;
- Publish the number of Crown Stay of Proceedings and Withdrawals annually with an updated action plan from the Attorney General detailing how this problem is being addressed; and
- Ensure the government allocates adequate resources to ensure the Crown Prosecutor's office is able to effectively manage all prosecutions against violent offenders, especially those charged with sexual and other violent crimes against children.

I have five copies of that with well over a thousand signatures.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, please.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of two e-mails that I received. One is from Ryan Holt of King Drug Accounting regarding pharmacy as well as one from pharmacist Wayne Smith in Raymond. I've handed them to the page.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we're now going to deal with points of order. I have one on the schedule today, and that was Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. Please proceed with your citation and the point.

Point of Order

Allegations against Members

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today according to Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j), and it's with respect to a comment that was made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Our hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills was asking a question about municipalities, and for some reason the minister decided to respond with an allegation that was not true, that our party in some way supported red-light districts. That is in no case the circumstance. Our party does not advocate or support that in any way whatsoever. Perhaps the member found that idea in his book that he wrote, *13 Ways To Kill Your Community*, because it certainly would be.

One thing that we see is, you know, this government's policy in respect of cutting the safer communities funds, which had actually provided a safe house for individuals in prostitution to provide them with a sort of safe haven. With respect to those cuts our party actually vigorously advocated against front-line cuts to those services that provide support to the most vulnerable in our society.

Mr. Speaker, we've discussed this matter multiple, multiple times. Our party has clarified this issue multiple, multiple times. I think that in these circumstances, where you have a situation where an allegation is continually made, our side continually clarifies our position, and after that robust and exhaustive clarification there is a continuation of making an incorrect and false allegation, that is obviously going to cause disorder in this Assembly.

Again, this was a circumstance where the question that was asked was on a topic within the minister's jurisdiction and prerogative, but instead he went out of his way. He went out of his way to make a false allegation, an incorrect allegation, that has been clarified multiple times. In these circumstances, where it's an intentional, flagrant use of an allegation towards our side and where this matter has been clarified again and again, I ask that under the standing orders you request that that comment be withdrawn from the record.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's actually kind of humorous to be standing up here and to listen to some of the comments that have been made that it's completely inaccurate and that it's a false accusation. Every single statement that comes out of the opposition's mouths in a preamble to every question is a false accusation against the government.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, who is the Municipal Affairs critic, I have some respect for, but he's obviously buying into some of the mantra that comes from his opposition colleagues because in his preamble in the second question he said: given the fact that I think Toronto's system of a large municipality is great. I've never ever, ever made any such comment, and in every question the opposition does that. They come out with false information.

I simply was pointing out, in the question about how this department and how this minister approaches municipalities, that we treat them with respect, that we honour their integrity, but we know that they need to work together because conflict does not

help build a better Alberta. It does not build stronger communities. Especially in something like the Capital Region Board, Mr. Speaker, it's essential that they work together for the common good so that the people that they represent live in a competitive environment where the industry, the business, and their communities continue to grow and be prosperous. I was simply pointing out on the last question some facts that the opposition has said that indicate that they are not a good group to take advice from when it comes to working with municipalities.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, Mr. Speaker, wrote a couple of very public letters in the local newspaper chastising the local municipality for making a decision to build a library. Something that you're supposed to have is respect for municipalities, and they were insinuating I didn't. I was simply pointing out that they're the ones that seem to have challenges with municipalities.

The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, Mr. Speaker: the town had to get a mediator to come in to have a meeting with their local MLA. Obviously, there's a challenge there for respect, and again this helps me to indicate that the opposition is not a great group of people to take advice from on how to approach a deal with municipalities.

The constant berating of the city of Edmonton and its council on its decision to close the city airport, Mr. Speaker: their assertions that they would overturn that decision and impose their decision on the city council and the citizens of Edmonton, who made a decision to close that airport, show, again, that they are not the best group of people to take information from.

3:00

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I was simply pointing out that the Leader of the Official Opposition very, very publicly – and never has a member recanted their comments about that – recommended that the city of Calgary have a red-light district. It's fact. When you write a column in a local newspaper in the city of Calgary telling the city council what they need to do even though many aldermen said that they didn't think that was a very good idea, it simply indicates the way the opposition approaches their discussions with municipal councils.

Those are four good examples, in my mind, of why I would not take advice from the opposition on how to deal with municipalities. Every single thing I talked about, every single one of the four examples I used, Mr. Speaker, is a fact. It is a fact. There is no point of order. Simply because the opposition doesn't like the truth does not make it a point of order.

Mr. Hancock: Although my friend has been very eloquent, perhaps just a brief supplement to suggest that it's very dangerous, Mr. Speaker, to have points of order with respect to questions of policy. Those can be clarified by people getting up and making clarifications. But if one was to call a point of order every time there was a deviation from the facts, there would not be any questions coming from the opposition side of the House. There are clearly differences of viewpoint. This is clearly a difference of viewpoint. But to call a point of order every time they believe that they've been misquoted or misapprehended is ridiculous. I mean, if we were to do that, there wouldn't be any other business carried on.

The Speaker: I see the hon. Minister of Justice wanting to rise briefly, but we've had several speakers, and I'm prepared to rule on this. In fact, I've been sent a bunch of notes here, and I was distracted momentarily by them. But they're all valid. Hon.

Minister of Justice, I apologize for interrupting you prematurely there.

In any event, let me make a couple of very brief comments here before I give you the decision. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills rose and asked a question at 2:27 p.m. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs answered the question and said this:

They have reached a small impasse, but ultimately I don't think I'm going to take any recommendations from an opposition that needs a mediator to meet with the town of Sylvan Lake, that demands the city of Calgary have a red-light district, that tells the city of Edmonton what they're going to do with their municipal airport, and writes chastising letters in local newspapers when a municipality decides to build a library. I won't be taking their advice.

Now, there's nothing unparliamentary about anything that went on in the question or, frankly, in the answer, so there's really no point of order.

Let me just remind you of this. You know, it's fair and fine for opposition or private members to stand up and ask all kinds of questions they want, and the chair typically allows a maximum amount of latitude in that regard. Also, there's a thorough appreciation for what we call freedom of speech in this Assembly, which is what it was set up many, many hundreds of years ago to in fact reflect.

On the one hand, we get questions, in the two examples I'm going to give you, from the opposition. One opposition member today stood up and said something about the idiot status of the government or something along that line. Well, the context within which it was said and because it was a quote and so on doesn't make it very parliamentary. Then we had somebody last week and perhaps the week before as well accusing government of muzzling people and words to that effect. Typically these things go without any point of order being raised.

However, on the other side, when a government member says something in return, you have to remember that you get as good as you give, and that is what this Assembly has been noted for. Now, that does not mean that you should become unparliamentary in the giving and the sharing and the getting and the receiving. That doesn't mean that that justifies it. I'm simply telling you that there's a wide amount of latitude that goes on here.

I think the Government House Leader is very correct in the statement he made when he said that we would probably stall the entire proceeding of this Assembly, or words to that effect, if someone stood up every single time that there was a disagreement on a policy matter, on a procedural matter, or on something along that line. We wouldn't be making any progress here at all.

So how do we cure this going forward? Well, fix up your language. Most of these points of order happen during question period, and question period is also a time when you have ample time to prepare your question. In fact, you can time it to the second. You know word for word what you're going to be asking. Look in the mirror and, again, ask yourself: "Is this the kind of question that I'm going to get away with, so to speak? Is this question in order? Am I going to raise a point of order, or am I going to be accused of creating disorder, disruption, and all the rest of it?" At the end of the day let's be a lot more careful if we can, both on the questions and in the answers, to avoid any accusations, to avoid the allegations, to avoid the assertions, and to avoid attributions that may be unfounded. There you have the four As of the Assembly coined today: accusations, allegations, assertions, and attributions.

That being said, you might want to also – and I'll close on this point – review *Beauchesne's* 494 just as a reminder, where it is noted very clearly that the acceptance of one member's word on an issue ought to be enough and that statements within their particular level of expertise are to be taken and treated as true regardless of how you may feel or if you feel differently.

Secondly, on page 510 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* it says that there is frequently disagreement over the facts and what I just alluded to. If there's a disagreement as to the facts or as to the question of debate or a particular policy position, that is not a point of order. It is simply a disagreement. Please keep that in mind, and we'll save the House a lot of time, save you a lot of time, and we'll move on with a much more effective mannerism in this House.

Orders of the Day

Written Questions

[The Clerk read the following written questions, which had been accepted]

Federal Building and Centennial Plaza Costs

Q28. Mr. Barnes:

As of November 1, 2012, what costs have been incurred on the Edmonton federal building and Centennial Plaza project?

Health Capital Plan Infrastructure Costs

Q29. Mr. Barnes:

As of November 1, 2012, what is the status of all infrastructure projects in phase 1 and phase 2 of the health capital plan, 2010-2013?

Traffic Safety Act Vehicle Impoundments

Q31. Mr. Barnes:

How many drivers have had their vehicles impounded since September 1, 2012, pursuant to the 2011 amendments to the Traffic Safety Act, and what was the average length of time of the impoundment?

New School Construction and Maintenance Costs

Q33. Mr. Barnes:

What was the cost to build each school under the Alberta schools alternative procurement 1 and Alberta schools alternative procurement 2 initiatives and the ABC Schools Partnership, and what is the ongoing annual cost of the maintenance agreements for each school?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Transportation Construction Costs

Q30. Mr. Barnes asked that the following question be accepted.

As of November 1, 2012, what is the projected spending for each project listed in Alberta Transportation's three-year construction program, 2012-2015?

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to ask that my Written Question 30 be accepted as written. It makes me wonder why the Transportation ministry and the government want to change the question. I want to start with what we have now. We have a three-year tentative major construction project list by highway number without any cost, and obviously being listed by

highway number means without any real priority. Throw the word “tentative” in there, and that, of course, strongly suggests without any commitment either.

One of our researchers did a great job and took the 2012-13 list and compared it to the 2014 list, and it’s amazing how many different projects I have that have been dropped from the list that appear not to have been done. It makes me wonder whatever got them on the list in the first place or maybe, better yet, what got them taken off the list.

The Wildrose and myself especially believe that Albertans and Alberta taxpayers are open to a full-blown conversation about where their taxpayer money is spent, what our highest priority needs are, and where our money is best put forward to help our economy. Too many times – too many times – I’ve seen where Albertans thought they were on a priority list, thought they were getting a much-needed infrastructure project, and it doesn’t happen and the hardship this causes. It pits one area of Alberta against another, and that’s not what we want. We want all Albertans working together to build a strong Alberta and a strong economy.

3:10

I think that fact, coupled with the fact that this government ran on the idea of being more open, more transparent, more fair, suggests that we should have the numbers as to what these projected costs are going to be there. In part (a) the government has suggested they change my question by adding “the contract associated with” before where I had put in “each project listed.” For some reason we want to add “the contract associated with.” Well, then my thoughts are: what the heck are they doing on the list if they’re not that far?

I think there are some other important reasons, though, for us to have the estimated or the cost that the government is projecting for these Transportation projects transparent. Number one, it will help us prioritize. I’m very much in agreement with the government that there are only limited dollars, and they have to be spent where they’re most effective. When Alberta citizens and taxpayers can get a full look at what everything is going to cost, this will help tremendously. People realize that they may have to wait a year or two or that they may not be the highest priority in terms of safety, in terms of health, and there may be other things.

I would hope that for all of our government spending, especially in Infrastructure and Transportation, there is a huge degree of cost-benefit analysis put into the bigger, more expensive projects before they’re committed to. I would hope they’re not just political. I would hope there’s proper planning and the proper use of taxpayers’ money for all reasons. If we’re going to the extent of trained professionals, whether it’s in our Transportation department or some consultants we may have, doing a full-blown cost-benefit analysis on the importance of having these projects, it’s only a smaller step, then, to having the estimated cost of these projects on the list as well.

I’ve been talking to a lot of stakeholders since I’ve been Transportation critic, and a lot of stakeholders have told me that the government’s inability to plan properly, the government’s inability to spend on a sustainable, consistent level, the government’s inability to let projects know what order they’re going to be done in on a certain priority costs Alberta taxpayers extra money, costs us more services, costs us all quality of life.

Why do they tell me this is so? They tell me this is so because what happens when they see the government not prioritize these things, when they see the government break promises, is that they go to other jurisdictions. They do some private work. Or, worse yet, when they do get some government work, they put in many,

many costs of capital equipment and costs of being in business that they would probably prefer to amortize over a longer period of time if they could, but because they don’t know what the government’s priorities are, because they don’t know what the total costs are of these projects, because they don’t know the full estimates, they end up increasing their bids. If they become a successful bidder, it ends up costing us all more.

Again, stakeholders are telling me that with a fully public prioritized infrastructure list with costs and a government that had the commitment to stick to the list or release the good reasons when things change, that openness and transparency would lead to better value for all Albertans and future generations. I also believe that it might help avoid some cases of what might be missing costs and what might be missing estimates.

We all may remember that in the supplementary estimates we had a hundred-million-dollar extra request from the government for some of the ring road around Anthony Henday. Whether it was missed or whether it was just part of the overall process and was a later part of what was being done is not clear to me, but I do believe that if this was on the priority list and our number was there, this would help taxpayers hold the government and Transportation accountable for how the money is spent, and this would help our Transportation employees work towards the number we need to work towards.

Also, I think that this can be done. If we know the number and if we release the number, I think this could become an important way, Mr. Speaker, to hold contractors accountable. If we’re not releasing the number and if one of the reasons that we’re not releasing the number is that we’re not sure what we want, then we haven’t done our planning. If we’re only putting it out to two or three bidders and we don’t know what the costs are going to come in at, then, my goodness, we’re in a tough spot if the safety or the economic importance of that project rises and our costs are only the higher costs.

Again, I think that releasing a project cost that shows more clearly what the experts in the Transportation department are expecting this to cost can help hold some companies in check and can help us negotiate some better deals for taxpayers and some better quality infrastructure for all Albertans.

I also think that if we’re more open and transparent with all of our stakeholders, all of our transportation and road-building companies, this will lead to some efficiencies. They will see what certain projects are, what certain costs are estimated for certain areas, and again they can plan their capital, their men, and their equipment better. This will allow them, you know, to give the taxpayer and the citizen a better deal, better quality, and possibly more roads.

I also think that if we put this projected cost of the projects out, it would ensure some more fairness for taxpayers and certainly for contractors. Taxpayers can see what’s on the list. We’re very fortunate. We have a great, educated population. They know that Rome or Alberta cannot be built in a day, but they do know that working together on what is most important and has the highest safety needs will lead to better infrastructure for all of us.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would speak against changing my question, where the phrase “the contract associated with” before “each project listed” is put in there. Once a contract is signed, we have certainly missed out on huge parts of the planning. We have certainly missed out on what may be the most important part of all, and that is the cost-benefit analysis. A good cost-benefit analysis, of course, will have to have some number with some degree of hardness.

When we add to the end of the question “with the exception of pretended estimates,” that basically suggests, again, that many,

many parts of the priority list are just thrown on there with the desire to come off in a short time without being seriously thought of. I think it's a disservice to Albertans not to provide as much information to them as we can.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. member, thank you for your comments. Actually, it sounded like you were anticipating some changes to your motion. The House has not seen any amendments yet, but that's okay. It will save us time later when we get to the amendment if there is one.

That being said, the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has now moved Written Question 30, and it's on the floor for discussion.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is like Kreskin because as it turns out, there is an amendment. It's like he read my mind. That's actually because we furnished the hon. member with the amendment ahead of time. The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat asked this question: "As of November 1, 2012, what is the projected spending for each project listed in Alberta Transportation's three-year construction program, 2012-2015?" After reviewing the question, I would propose an amendment so that it would read as follows:

As of November 1, 2012, what is the projected spending for the contract associated with each project listed in Alberta Transportation's three-year construction program, 2012-2015, with the exception of pretended estimates?

Mr. Speaker, I'm asking for this amendment really just to protect the integrity of our tendering process. Alberta Transportation does not publicize the pretender estimates of construction projects. If we did, it would influence the prices bid on these projects. As an analogy that would be like getting an estimate to build a house and telling your contractors in advance how big your bank account is and then saying: now bid on it. This is essentially what the hon. member is advocating, and the reason that we don't want to do that is that we don't want to put Alberta taxpayers in that position.

3:20

Of course, we set a budget for projects, but again by contract if you tell the contractor what your bank account is for that project, they're obviously going to bid the full amount or more. Without doing that, there is a chance, of course, that they could bid under that, which is in the better interest of Albertans, which is essentially the reason we're asking for that amendment.

We need to be accountable within our budget. Project bids should reflect what the work will cost, not what contractors think we can afford on behalf of the taxpayers. In addition, costs are not presented at a project level because it could put a contractor at a competitive disadvantage on a future project. Of course, that also might dissuade them from giving the people of Alberta through this government the best price that they can. Each project on the three-year program could be a subcomponent of a larger construction tender. For example, they could be different types of work or work on different highways, so when the time comes to tender, they may be bundled together to achieve efficiencies in their delivery.

Making this type of detailed "project" information publicly available to their competitors could put them at a disadvantage. Of course, Mr. Speaker, if we put our contractors at a disadvantage, they may not want to do work for the government anymore, and with fewer people bidding on our contracts, the taxpayers could actually get a worse deal, and we don't want that to happen to

them. So we don't want anything that may impact the integrity of our construction project tenders or the competitive process. If there are questions offline later on that I could explain to the member, I would be happy to do so.

Mr. Speaker, another couple of points were raised in the opening speech. One that the member raised was about a hundred million dollars in estimates for Anthony Henday. The biggest part of that, as was explained to the member, was that the work got done actually ahead of schedule. Of course, it shouldn't really surprise anybody that when work gets done, you have to pay for it. Sometimes when work gets done sooner, you have to pay for it a little sooner.

Further, the speaker also talked about pitting one area against another, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we put all of our approved projects on the website. We think that that actually prevents pitting one area against another because there are only two rankings that matter, funded and unfunded. Well, pitting one area against another because one project was theoretically under the speaker's idea approved at number 1 and another at number 17 would cause a fight that has no point simply because they're either funded or they're not. That's what the municipalities tell me. They want their projects funded. Funded or not funded: that's what they need to know. That's what we tell them.

Mr. Speaker, that's why I'm proposing the amendment, and I hope all members of the Assembly, having heard the explanation that I have just given, will support the amendment that has just been proposed.

The Speaker: Having heard the amendment as moved by the Minister of Transportation and having heard some comments already about the anticipated amendment by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, are there other speakers to the amendment?

The hon. member.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry for my misunderstanding at first, and thank you to the hon. minister for providing me the amendment earlier. I appreciate it. I think it is a step forward that we're going to get some information on what the costs are going to be. Again, openness and transparency is something that's important to many Albertans.

An Hon. Member: All Albertans.

Mr. Barnes: All Albertans. I appreciate that.

What is the projected spending for the contract associated? That phrase to me suggests that the numbers that are provided are going to be limited, and I don't see any reason to limit them. "With the exception of pretended estimates" is also going to limit it. I'm going to suggest to you that possibly a range of prices where your cost-benefit analysis has looked at things would go a long way to help Albertans know when things are going to be done.

In closing, thank you for considering my question this far, and thank you for providing it to me earlier.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to support the original, unamended question, and that question reads: "As of November 1, 2012, what is the projected spending for each project listed in Alberta Transportation's three-year construction program," and that's from 2012 to 2015 inclusive.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I support this written question is that we often see that when the government comes out with various announcements, promises on different projects, there's often an overspending or escalation of costs once they get into the process. We saw this with the MLA offices, where the Minister of Infrastructure had come up with a budget for that project, and again and again it just ballooned and ballooned and ballooned. That may have been because of extra parts of it in terms of, you know, a rooftop garden or an 80-person movie theatre or something like that, but it also could have been because the contractors, due to the type of project, simply had to escalate their costs and increase the price, and that may not have been incorporated in the original estimate that was put forward by the minister.

We see this with other types of projects: roads, hospitals, and things like that. I think the average Albertan would want to see that. You know, I talk to my constituents. Okay. You have a list of projects over the next three years. What do you expect those to cost? I think that is a very reasonable question to ask here in this Legislature. What is the projected cost of those projects?

When you have a government that's talked about being open and transparent – this was actually part of the original throne speech; this was supposed to be a pillar of this government – part of that includes putting forward publicly information that is important. I think what would be important when you come up with a three-year construction program is how much that construction is going to cost. What is the projected cost going forward? It's a little odd that that simple information, that would be used in any type of budgeting, cannot be put forward in its purest form as is asked in this question by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

We see again and again various examples of how this government puts forward ideas, openness and transparency, coming forward and being, you know, the most the most open and transparent government across Canada, but when it comes to actually doing something to further that objective, in this case making public the projected costs of different projects, they fall short. I think that in this Legislature if you have a viable, important question, the information for which should be readily attainable by the minister or obviously his department, that information should be made public, that there should not be any type of amendments.

It looks like part of the amendment here is to put in “the contract associated with” before the part that's quoted as “each project listed.” Of course, once a contract has been finalized, you would have crystallized the cost within that particular contract. But even there, I mean, there are obviously provisions in the contract that would allow for either the increase or decrease of the eventual payout. We saw this – again, this is a perfect example – with the brand new, fancy MLA offices.

Mr. Speaker, I respect the hon. Minister of Transportation for his comments about, you know, perhaps not knowing with clear certainty the projected costs, but this an estimate of it. What are you projecting going forward? We do not know numbers definitively right now, so we need to know what the projected amounts are. How do you come up with budgetary decisions when you don't even have projected numbers?

I think that this a very important question to ask because we see again and again this government rolling out different projects, picking numbers out – they seem to be able to project numbers at certain times, and then those numbers inevitably are proved to be wrong. But it's important that you at least come up with those projections right off that bat so that taxpayers can say: “Okay. This is what they projected based on these circumstances. There

was a change for some reason in circumstances.” The MLA offices are one example. Maybe there wasn't a projection of a rooftop garden. You know, there was a change in circumstances. That's why the costs escalated. I think taxpayers could forgive the government if they actually were open and transparent and showed their decision-making right from the beginning all the way through to the end. “This is what we projected. This is what happened. This is why the projection either fell short or was too high.”

3:30

So I think, Mr. Speaker, in these circumstances where you have a very clear question, you go to Albertans, you go to your constituents and say, you know: “We asked a question of the government. What is the projected spending for each project listed in their three-year construction program? They couldn't even answer that.” I think that most Albertans, small-business owners particularly, who have to project their costs on a go-forward basis, would understandably indicate that that type of rejection of a question like that doesn't make any sense.

That's why I rise today to support the question in its original form without the amended statement that was put forward by the hon. Transportation minister. We need to know going forward what the projected costs are for each and every project within that department. What are they, and how are we going to proceed on a go-forward basis if we don't even have the projected costs, if the government can't even answer that simple question? It shouldn't take us, the opposition, going through the process of FOIP to dig this information up, to go through that long, tedious process when, if the information is readily available, the government should be able to provide that information so that not only the opposition can see it but, of course, all Albertans and taxpayers can see what those projected costs are within a particular department.

Mr. Speaker, you know, it just seems to me to be pretty common sense. The government is indicating: we're going to go ahead with a certain project. We're simply asking: what is the projected cost of that project? That doesn't seem unreasonable. In these circumstances I believe it's incumbent upon the government to answer clearly, to be forthright in their answers, to be comprehensive. Making this amendment really limits the usefulness of the information that was requested by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. That's why I rise today to vote in favour of the unamended question and to vote against this proposed amendment that's been put forward by the Transportation minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I have the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, rise opposed to the amendment but in favour of the original question brought forward. The minister is welcome to address my concerns, but the idea that we should not have an expected cost of an unfunded project so that we can budget properly is just not consistent with the way we budget in municipalities.

That's a good analogy. The fact is that we have funded and unfunded. For those projects that remain unfunded, we have to go back occasionally and re-evaluate what the projected costs are, but then once they become that funded portion of our budget, we generally put them out for bid. Now, if we don't have an expected cost, how on earth are we supposed to have any idea whether or not the bids are even going to come in correctly if they're way

over or way under? Having just a general sense of what a project is going to cost is, to me, fundamental in planning your budget going forward. So the original request is asking for just that, and the amended version is saying: if it hasn't been bid yet, we're not going to disclose that information.

I'll bring up a point that was kind of made a little bit earlier. In my little community of Rimbey the library has come forward for an expansion. Much of the town has risen up in opposition to that, but they're not opposed to the library expansion. What they're opposed to is that there's no idea what the project is, there's no idea how much it's going to cost, and they want to know before anything is approved. That, to me, is logical.

We sit here now trying to figure it out, dealing with the issues of the various ministries' budgets. What we really do want to know in the Wildrose is: what is the priority list of these infrastructure projects? I know we get all the rhetoric back saying, "You want to cut, and we want to build," but the fact is that all we want to know is: what are the priorities so we can argue about the priorities of what should or should not be funded?

What, in particular, a lot of the communities want to know with infrastructure – in my community it's highway 53. Highway 11 and intersection 761 is also very important. Highway 11 upgrades are important. What they want to know is: where does that project sit? What is the estimated cost of the project? Is it going to be this year, next year, or in the third year? This is the information people can live with.

We're not asking to build the world. We're not asking to overspend. What we're saying is that we do want to spend within our means, but we need to have an idea of the priorities of what is more important in one project versus others, and how much the expected costs are.

This is nothing new even in the private sector. When private corporate entities, particularly very large ones, plan for the future, they have an expectation of what they're budgeting for, and that is generally well known in the internal workings of a company. When it does get funded and it goes out for bids, it's evaluated based on bids. If those bids come in way over, maybe you have to rethink the project. Maybe something was wrong in the planning stages. That's a good cautionary tale.

That is a big part of holding a government accountable. If we knew what projects were unfunded in the sense of this budget year but with an expected cost or an expected price tag on that project, when that comes into the funded portion of our budget, we are better equipped to deal with it, whether it's reasonable or unreasonable. It's also very helpful to us to plan future budgets.

So I don't understand the Minister of Transportation's argument on this that because it hasn't gone out to bid yet, you don't need to know what the expected cost is. We're not asking for the bid price here. What we're asking for is the budgeted price. How much is this government going to put forward on these projects when they come into the funded pool of projects to be built? That's really important because it gives us a great sense of our books, of what's funded, what's unfunded, what to expect. What are the needs of Albertans?

Also, when you have this type of information, if something like the Rocky Mountain House hospital remains unfunded and on the books for 10 years or on the list for about 10 years, you know that has to be upgraded. You know things have changed. But it also gives you a tool to look across not just your budget but the community's. "How can I maximize spending my dollars when we go forward to build this infrastructure?" These are all important issues of why that information is important.

Again, just to close, I'm opposed to the amendment, and I will be supporting the original question. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and support the original question and not the amended version put forward by the Minister of Transportation. The original question reads: "As of November 1, 2012, what is the projected spending for each project listed in Alberta Transportation's three-year construction program, 2012-2015?"

I can appreciate the Minister of Transportation's concerns regarding competitive advantage and not wanting to put out the maximum budget amount that they would want or possibly receive from vendors who go to tenders, but there is importance in making sure that that competitive advantage is anchored on both sides. One of the things that we often see with this current government is that when the tenders go out, the costs that actually are incurred by Alberta taxpayers are significantly higher than what the original projected amount was and even what the tendered amount was. Some of that is unforeseeable, and some of it is foreseeable.

As many of my colleagues have already discussed, we saw that with clear, clear indication on the federal building renovations. The original budget was \$275 million, and the new projected budget is \$350 million. We're going to see an 80-seat gallery in there, and while that's very nice, I'm sure we can put that money to better use. We're also going to see a complete rooftop garden that can only be accessed by the Premier and selective members of her cabinet. So it's not an opportunity for all Albertans to enjoy, yet we're expecting Albertans to expend an extra \$75 million over the projected budget to cover the costs of that. If there actually is a budget, then we should stay within the budget. It would seem to me that that is only one example.

3:40

It also seems to me that clearly one of the ways to avoid this is if you just had a clear list of the projects that the Alberta government sees as priorities, a clear list of the order of priority, and a clear list of what the projected dollar amounts associated with those projects might be. I don't think anybody is asking for their exact budget. We all know there are unforeseeable circumstances, but we also know that if unaccounted for, spending can get a bit out of control.

I would also have to question the Minister of Transportation's assertion that if we tell companies what the budget for certain projects might be, those companies would be so greedy as to gouge the government at every opportunity and take as much from the government as they possibly can. It would seem to me that if the government actually went out with an idea of what the plan should cost, many Alberta companies are very competent and very much want to deal fairly, so if given the opportunity, these companies would come back to the table with a reasonable offer to the government.

If they don't know the projections of the budget and they don't really know the exact parameters of what the client wants, you're not allowing for any planning by the company that might actually allow the company to build in some cost savings or efficiencies that would allow for them to save the government money either. If they never know sort of what the guidelines are – we're asking companies to meet guidelines and come in under budget, but they never really know what the budget is.

I think we're assuming that all companies and especially Alberta companies – you know, from my experience Albertans and Alberta companies are very entrepreneurial and very honest and hard-working – will automatically go to the dark side and try and take as much as they can from the government. We also are assuming that companies are incapable of putting in an effective tender if they're given the actual budget which we want them to work within, and we are assuming that they're unable to plan for those costs and find ways to save the government and eventually the Alberta taxpayers money.

If we don't have a complete list of the prioritized projects, what we see is the politicization of these decisions. A clear example of this is one from my own riding. I can tell you that clearly the residents of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake riding and in the community of Sylvan Lake did not see it as a priority of this government at all to close down the intersection of highway 11 and highway 781. That closure of the intersection not only has devastated our downtown economy in Sylvan Lake and created a different safety issue not even a mile away and then put other residents at risk, but it actually has come in at a cost of close to \$10 million. Ten million dollars for an intersection that was never in the budget.

This was a knee-jerk reaction, and it was an unfortunate situation that caused the knee-jerk reaction. If they'd actually had a discussion with the residents of Sylvan Lake and surrounding area about what their priorities would be for how to spend taxpayer money, they would have seen that the residents of Sylvan Lake and surrounding area actually wanted it to be a clear priority that they have an open and safe intersection and that they wanted lights to be considered, a cloverleaf, a four-way, whichever. They wanted a safe intersection open, and we know that lights at similar intersections much busier than that highway 11, highway 781 intersection came in at a cost between \$500,000 and \$1 million, which would have allowed for significant tax savings to the Alberta taxpayer.

Given that there's a set of lights not 1,500 metres away on the crest of a hill which has resulted in two fatalities since those lights were installed, it's not a matter of money and safety. It clearly is just a matter of Alberta Transportation and the Minister of Transportation just picking and choosing what the ministry decides is a priority for him at the time. That was not, unfortunately, this current Minister of Transportation's but the previous Minister of Transportation's decision. Unfortunately, this government has decided not to listen to the community.

In that community 4,500 people signed that petition expressing their concern about the money being spent to close this intersection and the devastating effects it's had on that community. That's just one example.

Then we go even further. When you don't have a clear list of priorities and a clear budget attached to it: we saw this clearly with the Strathcona community hospital. Promises have been made several times. For the last 10 years this community has been promised a hospital. It started in 2005, when the hospital was built. This hospital was promised during the election, that phase 2 of the hospital would be built. It was clearly a political election promise, a campaign promise to get votes. What ended up happening, because there was no clear priority list and no budget associated with it: phase 1, which cost \$130 million, has now essentially turned the Strathcona community hospital into one of the most expensive urgent care facilities in Alberta. Their own physician, Dr. Jim Adams, has called this a glorified walk-in clinic and an expensive one at that.

Clearly, the Sherwood Park residents are reeling. After the election nothing was said until the budget came out, and that was no longer on the three-year capital plan. If we had a clear list of

priorities, you would see that residents would be able to actually go online – and I don't care if it's online or if it's in writing and hard copy – and see what the priorities of this government are. They would be able to see the dollar amounts, what each of these projects costs.

Additionally, the other part of it is that we maybe need to educate Albertans on exactly what a project does cost. I know that in my own riding, for example, with the idea of lights there were many people who thought a set of lights was \$50,000 when in reality it's \$500,000 to a million dollars. That was an education process. I also know that many in my community didn't understand that the closure of an intersection and fixing a few roads would cost \$10 million either. If we actually started prioritizing and putting budget amounts together for each priority project, you might have the added benefit of educating Albertans on what the true costs of these projects are.

That goes a long, long way to working with Albertans and being accountable, being transparent, and getting Albertans onboard with what should be asked of our government. There is sometimes an expectation from Albertans that think that we need to pay for every single thing. But we have to do our part as legislators as well. We have to do our part to set expectations, we have to show what the priorities are, and we have to start showing what the true cost of each and every single one of these priorities would be. That can easily be solved with a simple priority list and budgeted amounts.

That's why I stand in support of the original question. "As of November 1, 2012, what is the projected spending for each project listed in Alberta Transportation's three-year construction program, 2012-2015?" I'm not in support of the amended version that the Minister of Transportation has provided.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. We're on the amendment, by the way.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the question as originally put forward by the hon. member, and therefore I'm speaking against the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, there are several points. One, you know, the job of the opposition is to hold the government to account and ensure that they are not breaking their promises. I guess, then, unfortunately, the opposition needs to do a bit better of a job considering how many have been broken.

However, the one thing that we'd like to do is to ensure that Albertans know exactly where their dollars are going. In order to keep the government accountable, to keep them honest, and to force them to do a better job planning and looking at how many dollars are going to be going into different projects, we and Albertans need to have access to this information. I think that asking for projected spending for each project listed under Alberta Transportation's three-year construction program is a very reasonable request. I think that by having this figure, the opposition and Albertans are better informed as to where their hard-earned money is going.

3:50

I, too, agree with the idea that a priority list of projected projects needs to be made available to the public. Part of this is because if there is a change in priorities, if the government decides that one project is going to move up or down the list, at least Albertans are informed as to what those priorities are. More importantly, then the opposition and citizens of this province can ask the government what the reasons are behind one project being

delayed and another one being accelerated. I think part of the reason that it's frustrating to Albertans is that they don't know where they are on a list, and it makes it very difficult to plan and to know what direction the government is going. I find it very interesting that, again, for a government that campaigned very hard on being accountable and open and transparent, you know, we have to resort to the opposition asking and fighting for the government to be accountable and transparent and open.

I think the written question that was submitted by the hon. member was very well written and goes to the heart of the matter, where we're looking for projected costs, not exempting the pretended estimates. I think Albertans need to know what the government is projecting for spending. I think, you know, that if the hon. minister is concerned about prices for tendering going up, well, then the government can be very conservative in their budget estimates or what they would like to spend, which may actually bring down the tendering contracts.

Again, I'm speaking in favour of the question as it was originally written, and I ask all members of the Assembly to agree. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak in favour of the amendment. I listened to all of the comments very carefully, and I can certainly appreciate where every member that has stood up is coming from. I think there isn't a single person in this House that does not want to see us improve and always be more accountable and transparent and responsible for the dollars that we spend on behalf of the taxpayers.

Quite frankly, I'm not sure if it's naïveté or what it is, but the members that have been speaking against the amendment are in fact speaking against what is currently common purchasing practice. It's a procurement standard. It's supported by the PMAC and the PSAB and everyone else. I think that for us to not stay with those standards would in fact be not only inappropriate, but it would be irresponsible, and I think there are certain cases where it can actually lead towards artificially impacting market forces, which would have a negative impact.

I've got a couple of examples here. You know, I've never said that the government needs to operate like a business, but I have always believed it needs to operate with sound business practice. The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and I share, I think, a common passion in our private lives, and that is for sales and marketing. I believe the member – I'm just going to throw this out there – would probably agree with me that the interpretation of this type of disclosure in any case, whether it be the public or private sector, is going to have a different impact on whether you are the buyer or the seller. The person who is selling is going to have an advantage by not disclosing how much he actually wants for it. He's going to invite several different bids. The person who is buying it wants to know: exactly how low will you go? In this particular case we're talking about spending public dollars on projects.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are cases where we do announce prices before they're tendered, and I'll use highway 63 as an example. Last October we announced that we were going to fund and complete the balance of the twinning of highway 63 at a cost of \$778 million. That cost was based on a completed design of the road, but that tender is going to be broken up into multiple tenders. It could be 30, it could be 50 tenders. So there's no one

company that is going to know that he can bid on the entire job for \$778 million or push it to \$777.5 million. It's not allowing them to know what is in our bank account, as he said.

The other thing is that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is quite correct when he says that the private sector does disclose a budget to their shareholders. However, they're talking about total project prices as well. When Suncor came out and announced their Voyageur project, it was a \$10 billion project. Literally thousands of different tenders would have been issued on that.

Municipalities also follow this, and I'll use my own municipality as an example, the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, when I served on council there. Every piece of land they're going to buy doesn't appear as a single line item in their budget. They came out and said: we need \$30 million for land acquisition. If you do it line by line – and you'll know this in real estate as well – that leads to real estate speculation, and that can have some impacts on the market forces.

When we look at different bids, particularly in Transportation, these are very complex projects, projects that are going to require multiple tenders. We can come out with an estimate. We can publish that in advance. But until it's actually tendered and tenders are awarded, I believe it would be irresponsible to put a price out on every bridge and every mile of highway. We can estimate those, and road builders and other people can estimate based on what the average is on a per-kilometre basis for asphalt, et cetera, but everybody that's in the business of bidding knows what it's going to take to do the job, and they will bid accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we're following the appropriate transparent process right now, and that is to come out with a budget that is a lump sum for our highway transportation projects and to list them all out until such a time as we know exactly what the actual costs for the citizens of Alberta are going to be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Medicine Hat unless I see others on this side.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also stand up in favour of the written question from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. It happens every day in the real world. When a company plans a project, they always have the projected costs. You know, this is just for accountability and so that we can scrutinize a project. We have to have the number in order for the project to go ahead. I don't see any reason why the Ministry of Transportation can't release the list of the number of projects and projected costs. When somebody is building a house, there's a price put on the whole project, and then tenders go out. It all depends how we negotiate with the contractors when the tenders come in.

If the minister is worried about the tender costs going up, I don't know how that would be because it's done every day. Companies always have projected costs on the projects, and they always tender. They always go out and, you know, finish the project on budget and on time. I don't see any reason why the Ministry of Transportation can't do the same.

For those reasons, I'm also supporting the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat on his written question. Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Medicine Hat on the amendment.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm voting against this amendment, and I'm going to tell you why. We think that

prioritized lists are very useful. They increase the transparency. They also increase the certainty of projects being followed through on. If a municipality or an area of the province knows that they're on this list and where they are on that list, they may not like where they are on the list, but they'll see the projects that are higher up on the list being completed and checked off. They know that they're moving up that list, so they can have some confidence that it's really going to happen.

4:00

We know, unfortunately, that this government has a track record of breaking some of those promises. The projects are being promised, and the people are waiting for them, but somehow they just keep getting shuffled back to the bottom of the deck in some sort of political sleight of hand, and that undermines the credibility of the government. It also undermines the people's confidence in the likelihood of their projects coming on. It makes it harder for those individual jurisdictions to plan.

I think a prioritized list would go a long way towards reassuring them but also remove from the government or make it harder, at least, for the government to politicize and change projects on prioritized lists. We know that happens. Unfortunately, it's sort of the way the game is played, and it's not the right way to play the game. It's sort of bending the rules for your own political benefit. We'd like to of course see that eliminated, not just because we're in opposition but because we all live in these communities.

Some of us have served on local community councils. You know, I've been a mayor and a village councillor, and some others have had other positions like that, too. We count on it. We've received the promise. It doesn't happen. We look at where we are on this list, and apparently we're never coming up to the surface. That's pretty discouraging.

Of course, the tendering process itself can be manipulated by designing a bid in such a way that only certain bidders qualify. We don't like to talk about that. It's sort of the elephant in the room, though, because we all know it happens. You'd think that in theory it's good on the surface to have some prequalifications that you have to meet in order to be allowed to bid, and as far as that goes, if that's all it was, that would be good. But if it's used to eliminate certain companies that would be equally capable because their equipment isn't painted the right colour or whatever – sometimes it seems like it's almost that frivolous. It would make it harder for that to happen if the prioritized list was there.

I will be voting against this amendment and voting in favour of the well-thought-out, well-constructed proposal, the question that's being asked, that will help bring more accountability and transparency to this government and give Albertans a chance to really see where they stand with their projects and know when they can anticipate their actual completion.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, we're on the amendment. I'll recognize Medicine Hat.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also will be voting against the amendment. The original question, I think, is interesting. It's asking for projected spending. It's not saying that that is what the project will spend or what the cost will be. It's projected spending. There's always a range of dollar values that you can work with, up or down, and I think that is fairly consistent in how projects are budgeted, whether government is doing it or

whether it's private business, but you have to have some kind of idea of what number you're going to play with.

If you have a good vendor or construction company or somebody who is doing services, they can come to the table and offer some very innovative new technology or ways of delivering services that can drastically slash the cost of your project. Projected is what we're dealing with today. What the budgeted or the let contract actually comes out at will be much different.

I think the way the original question is worded is proper, and I think it also helps to take the politics out of the whole equation because now you're seeing that there is a number associated to it. We're talking about the number, not only the cost but where it is on the list of projects to be done, and again, as has been mentioned by other members here, people just want to know where their project is. They just want to know: are they on the list? Has the government heard them? When the project drops off the list, I think it's incumbent that the people know that so that they can get representation back in there and say: "Where is our project? Why is it no longer on the list? Can we get it added? What was the reasoning for removing it from the list?" I think that's very important.

It's also a great opportunity for the government to work towards, you know, being more open, more transparent. The accountability factor: I mean, we all strive to have that in our personal lives and our lives as MLAs, being accountable. Transformational: I've heard that term as well. Gee, I just thought of something here. Government could even propose maybe doing an associate ministry of such words. But now that I'm thinking about it, it's probably not a good idea, and it would probably just be a waste of time and money.

These projects, unfortunately, are used as carrots. Where I find that they're most used is during elections, or they can be used to buy favours in certain ridings or from certain people, or they can be used as a punishing or intimidating factor. Take those out of that, and take the politics out of it. Just be open, be transparent, and make that list public so that people can actually hold government accountable. That is the purpose of this.

It also helps to keep an eye on the cost and the progress of all these projects. Sometimes I think we all get lost in the idea that we're the only ones interested in it or that certain special-interest groups are interested in that project, but it's not the case. It's constituents who are going to benefit from these projects. They need to know, they want to know, they're asking to know, so I think it's very important that we actually address these needs and concerns.

By having this list and having these costs there, it could help reduce the cost of inflating the price on the project. Look at the south Calgary health centre, for example. That was originally talked about as being around, I believe, \$600 million, plus or minus. The last number I heard is well over \$1 billion, maybe \$1.3 billion. Who actually misses the mark that badly on an estimated project? Who misses it that badly? I mean, in the private sector you would be looking for a new job. Why is this behaviour accepted? Why is government actually allowing projects like this to overrun that badly? There's no accountability. Where is it? There are stories of all kinds of waste on that project. You know, if we had really good whistle-blower protection, we might even have some of those people come forward, but again we don't.

The federal building is another example of costs going down and then up and then down. Oh, guess what? It's up again. If you had that list on the Internet or if it was accessible to the public, we

could see that. I don't think we'd see as much movement on projects up and down, up and down because you'd have to be transparent. You'd have to be open. You'd have to be accountable. But if you don't have it out there, I guess it gives you the freedom of not having to be any one of those three.

Building infrastructure, to me, is a really clear comparison to what happens in the private sector because we're actually spending money that you could term as being part of shareholder money. Shareholders want good value. They want a return on their investment. They want it to be handled properly, and they just want to have the faith in whomever is using their money to make sure that the procurement of the service or the infrastructure is done properly.

I think one of the issues is that it appears that the government hasn't been really clear sometimes on the specifications or the requirements or maybe the expectations of the project because we continue to hear about projects that go over budget. Again, if we had that listed in front for everybody to see in black and white, I think there would be a lot more accountability to hold the original project price in line with what the delivery price is from the contractor.

There also should be an opportunity for the government to push back on contractors when costs are escalating, and there might even be an opportunity to offer incentives for bringing costs in under budget as long as there's no cut to specifications or towards safety or building codes.

It's amazing to me, actually, that during the election we had to listen to the now Premier promise 140 family care clinics. That was thrown out there as being a proposed projected cost of over a billion dollars. Why was this, you know, deemed acceptable at that point in time, yet when the real needs are required, when the rubber needs to hit the road, many old and outstanding projects go unaddressed? I just don't understand why that's acceptable at one time and not another.

4:10

The promise to build 50 new schools and renovate 70 was another campaign promise. That was over, I believe, a billion dollars, and that number was thrown out, so why was this deemed acceptable at the time? You know, during the election it was okay to do it, but now why wouldn't you roll that over into budgeting models? If you can do it during electioneering times, why don't you put it into practice?

In closing here, I think the fear the government has in disclosing project estimates is because they have typically done such a poor job in managing these and in holding the contractors to account and holding themselves to account. I just don't think they want to wear the responsibility of this.

Thanks.

The Speaker: Are there other speakers to the amendment?

Not hearing or seeing any others who wish to speak, let me then pose the question.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: Now on to the motion as amended.

Hon. Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question has been called.

[Written Question 30 as amended carried]

Staffing for Checkstops

Q32. Mr. Barnes asked that the following question be accepted.

As of November 28, 2012, how many peace officers have been added to operate checkstops in Alberta since April 23, 2012?

Mr. Barnes: We all may remember that in the Wildrose's balanced budget alternative from 2012 we clearly announced that we would hire 300 new police officers, corrections officers, and sheriffs, including five dedicated checkstop teams. We feel this would go a long, long way to increasing the visibility and, obviously, to catching impaired drivers, but the visibility would go a long, long way to potentially keeping impaired drivers off the road.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

On kind of a personal interest basis, I have a few friends in Cypress-Medicine Hat that are policemen, very, very hard-working professionals. It's interesting to me, when I talk to them, how big parts of their day are lost in paperwork, book work, transporting prisoners, working with courts. There's lots of this. It's potentially a situation where, you know, the idea of five dedicated checkstop teams could go a long, long way to really making our province safer for all.

With that, I would ask that the government please support my question and consider it.

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

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker. With respect, I'm going to reject the hon. member's question for a number of reasons. First off, the term "peace officers" can include both police officers and provincial traffic sheriffs, and frankly we don't cover that. The word "peace officers" is open to interpretation. Tracking down accurate specifics to this written question would be difficult if not impossible. If the term "peace officers" is limited to provincial traffic sheriffs, an answer may infer that sheriffs have criminal impaired driving authorities, which, of course, they do not have. That would be tantamount to creating a provincial police force, which, as we know, our government has decided not to do. The provincial police service agreement, of course, is being funded 30 per cent by the federal government, which we would lose in the event that we were to go in that direction.

The province does not directly establish or allocate police officers at checkstops. This is the responsibility of the highly qualified and hard-working chiefs of police as well as the commissioner of the RCMP in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we're not a third-world country. We don't tell the police chiefs what to do. The wording of this question implies that we tell law enforcement when to conduct checkstops, how many they can execute, and how many officers are involved. Again, the policing in this province is fully and completely independent of any political interference from anybody in this Chamber.

We do allocate sheriffs to provide a support function to the police at checkstops. This would include the laying of provincial charges, providing mobile breath testing, traffic control, or towing vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, I know this member didn't support our particular crackdown on drunk driving a number of years ago. This government takes drinking and driving very seriously, and to support our provincial strategy to reduce impaired driving, we've provided additional funds through the enhanced Alberta checkstop

program, that has funded approximately 2,500 additional law enforcement hours between April 23, 2012, and November 28, 2012.

I would also be remiss if I did not point out, Mr. Speaker, that there are many ways other than checkstops, however useful that they are, for police and peace officers to detect and pull over drunk drivers. There is the 911 call, that we encourage people to make if they actually see a drunk driver. Of course, we don't live in a police state. We don't want to live in a police state, where you have a cop around every corner. We expect people to obey the law. We also expect law-abiding citizens to call and report a drunk driver so that the police can act accordingly. On top of that, there are police that are periodically on patrol here in Edmonton, in Calgary as well as in rural Alberta. These are all ways that the police do enforce drunk-driving laws.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm rejecting this member's question for the reasons outlined, I ask him to help us in supporting our continued efforts to crack down on impaired driving and save Albertans' lives. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there others? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of this question: how many officers were added to operate checkstops in Alberta since April 23, 2012? As the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat indicated, our party had supported more front-line enforcement, boots on the ground, to actually find drunk drivers. In addition to that, we had put forward a proposal for five dedicated provincial checkstop teams. This is because we often see that, you know, in rural Alberta sometimes there's enforcement during certain time periods, but then there's not enforcement in other time periods and in particular locations. In particular, we see this in rural Alberta. We felt that having five dedicated provincial checkstop teams would show a real force and momentum to actually get drunk drivers off the road.

Now, the hon. Justice minister mentioned this .05 legislation as cracking down on impaired driving, I think he mentioned. We saw earlier today where there are clogs in our judicial system. There was a report, actually, that was filed on Friday, that indicated that because of a whole bunch of traffic ticket cases serious sexual assault cases were actually being dropped. This minister is promoting, advocating more of these types of administrative penalties in our judicial system. It just seems completely counterintuitive. We should be going after serious offenders and making sure that those people are brought to justice. Part of that is actually finding these serious offenders, finding those people who are driving over the legal limit, and making sure that once those individuals are found, we put them through the judicial system and that there are serious, swift, and certain consequences for their actions.

Part of that is actually increasing boots on the ground. There are various instances where, of course, people are out there driving impaired, over the legal limit, but they are just not found because of the lack of resources in terms of front-line officers. In our case we're suggesting five provincial checkstop teams.

The question, in particular, here is simply asking for a statistic. "How many peace officers have been added to operate checkstops in Alberta since April 23, 2012," since the election? I don't think this should be a very complicated answer for the Justice minister to provide. His refusal to provide what I would suggest is a very vital statistic I think demonstrates his lack of control over his portfolio.

4:20

This information should be very readily available. If he's actually taking drunk driving seriously, if he was actually serious about cracking down on crime, serious crime, he should actually know how many officers have been added to checkstops in Alberta. Instead, what we see is a continuation with this Justice minister where he scraps electronic monitoring for individuals who've committed very serious offences, where he eliminates funding for safer communities, where individuals who are very vulnerable had safe havens to get out of particular lifestyles. We see that this minister is promoting offenders getting two free passes when it's dealing with vandalism or with petty crimes. This is a continuation of a soft-on-crime agenda that's been put forward by this government.

I know the hon. minister must be jumping for joy with Justin Trudeau being elected as the federal Liberal leader and maybe hoping that he would take after his father in terms of these types of progressive justice policies, but I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that our party does not support that type of soft-on-crime attitude. We know that when we're going after drunk drivers, we need to ensure that the resources – the boots on the ground, the front-line officers – are available. For this minister to not be able to answer a very simple question – how many more officers have been added to checkstops? – it's just, quite frankly, shocking that this information is not readily available at his fingertips.

We see, Mr. Speaker, some type of a progression that I think hasn't been seen in Alberta politics for some time. When there are very serious questions being asked – you know, we saw with the McConnell case that what the minister actually did was bring out his ADM to answer questions to the media. The ADM is supposed to be, of course, truly nonpartisan. He actually brought that individual out to speak to the media, which I think is unprecedented. I think it demonstrates a lack of, again, control over his portfolio. If he can't actually answer questions in front of the media and has to bring out his bureaucrat to answer for him, I think that demonstrates that he doesn't have control over his portfolio.

The rejection of this question furthers that argument. The fact that he cannot answer how many officers have been added to operate checkstops in Alberta since the election, a very simple number, whether it's part-time or full-time, the fact that he can't even answer that, that it's not readily available at his fingertips, to me speaks to the fact that instead of actually being tough on crime, instead of actually being hard on drunk drivers, instead of actually putting in the front-line resources to find drunk drivers, to ensure that prosecutions occur, and that there are swift, certain, and severe consequences for those people who break the law, this minister has no grasp on his portfolio and doesn't even know how many officers have been added to checkstops in Alberta since the last election. To me, Mr. Speaker, that is completely confusing.

Of course, our party has put forward many tough-on-crime policies, but we also backed it up in our alternative balanced budget, back in 2012, with resources to those front-line officers who could actually find those people that are driving over the criminal limit and ensure that they get off the road and that we prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law and that there are consequences for it. The fact that this Justice minister can't answer this question, again, is just shocking. It seems to be a very simple statistic that should be readily available within his department.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there others? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well to support the original question, which is, "As of November 28, 2012, how many peace officers have been added to operate checkpoints in Alberta since April 23, 2012?" It would seem pretty easy for the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to actually provide this information. Yes, it does include many layers of officers who provide this service, but if this minister is truly dedicated to ensuring that drunk drivers are off the road and with creating safer roads for all Albertans, then it would seem he would actually want to come out and gloat about exactly how many officers are providing this much-needed service.

As my colleague the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills has said, the Wildrose has always supported additional workforce to ensure that drunk drivers are not on the road. To actually suggest otherwise and to actually suggest that just because we may not agree on everything, just because we might be on the opposite sides of certain funding models and certain policies, we are in favour of having drunk drivers on the road and that we would be in favour of endangering Albertans and killing Albertans at risk of drunk drivers is actually truly offensive not only to me and my colleagues who stand here but is truly offensive to all Albertans.

I think every single Albertan out there assumes and wants to believe that every single person in this Legislature wants the safety of their roads to be a primary concern. To insinuate that any single one of us in this House wants everyday Albertans to be killed on Alberta roads by drunk drivers is absolutely offensive.

To go on even further, to decide to not provide this information based solely on a technicality and to use it as sort of a scapegoat way to not come forward with exactly what the plan is by this provincial government is really irresponsible. Actually, it goes even further. One has to question first of all his dedication to ensuring that drunk drivers are off the road, but even further to that is his competence. The reality of it is that we've seen time and time again that during the election they promise one thing, and then they do another right after the election. We saw it with the .05 administrative penalties. We saw them come forward and promote .05, which in reality can have the effect of forcing everyday Albertans to plead guilty because the ramifications to their personal life, to their job can cause them to lose their job without even ever having the benefit of going before a court.

[Mrs. Leskiw in the chair]

As one example of this, my husband works for a company that has a zero-tolerance policy. He does not drink ever when he's out on a workday, but a .05 policy could force him to plead guilty in the event that he was ever stopped and possibly faced this procedure. It clearly has come forward. We know that lawyers are challenging this law right now. Really, this is an administrative penalty, and it's a dollar grab. It really is a way of trying to get money away from Albertans and put it into their pockets without actually having the benefit of the courts and without actually letting the person appeal to the court and plead not guilty. It assumes on the side of the road that they're guilty of something that is an administrative penalty. We've seen the government take it this far. There's no reason to have the government not gloat about how many officers they have providing this service.

The other part of it is that if you go to the Alberta Transportation website, it states, "The highest number of casualty collisions involving alcohol occur from May to October." It goes on to state that "most casualty collisions involving alcohol occur

on the weekends" and that "the most likely time for these collisions is between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m." It also goes on to state that "drinking and driving collisions are often associated with long weekends."

It would seem to me that in the budget that the Department of Justice puts forward, they would know how many officers they need to allocate at any given time and what the funding model is for checkpoints to ensure that Alberta's roads are safe from drinking and driving. They already know what the stats are. Alberta Transportation has done it. Alberta Health Services did a policy paper in 2005 that talked about the need to increase the patrols for drinking and driving. Clearly, this government continues to state that this is a number one priority but really can't come to the table with any numbers at all. That seems a little odd.

It also goes on to state on the Alberta Transportation website under Suspensions and Convictions that "over the last five years . . . administrative suspensions for drinking and driving have been initiated." They received 42,762 immediate 24-hour suspensions, 6,123 Alberta zero alcohol tolerance suspensions, and 34,852 administrative licence suspensions. They also had 41,466 convictions. Clearly, they must know what the dollars allocated are as to how many officers are currently being dedicated to getting drunk drivers off the road and what they plan to put forward because they promised Albertans that this is a priority for this government. If they know that, it would seem very clear that they could come to the House and provide all that information to Albertans.

It would also seem that under the guise of accountability and transparency they would also want to make sure that Albertans truly understand what these costs are, what the impacts are that drinking and driving is having on Albertans.

I would also go even further to say that there's an *Edmonton Journal* article from January of 2013 that talks about:

Alberta's rate of impaired driving rose slightly faster than the national average to 450 incidents per 100,000 population. Only Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island were higher.

Of those charged across the country, 84 per cent were found guilty. Alberta shared the distinction of having the lowest conviction rate in the country with Ontario, at 81 per cent.

. . . Alberta's assistant deputy minister of criminal justice . . . said the lower rate is a reflection of the fact the province has a large number of defence lawyers who specialize in impaired driving cases and lots of well-heeled accused who can afford to hire their services.

4:30

It seems disturbing that the Minister of Justice is clearly wanting to blame everyone else for his inaction on drunk driving. If he wants to actually do the right thing, he can make it very clear and provide Albertans with all of the activities that he's doing.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The *Journal* article goes on even further to say, "Only 6.6 per cent of drivers in Alberta who were convicted were sent to jail." Now, this is the assistant deputy minister of criminal justice. I'm not making this up. These are his words. "Only 6.6 per cent of drivers in Alberta who were convicted were sent to jail. The median sentence in the province of 30 days was also slightly less than the national average."

He goes on to say, "First-time offenders rarely get jail time in Alberta unless they have caused injury or death." He said that the prosecutors in this province seek the same mandatory sentence of 14 days as their counterparts elsewhere in Canada in cases where there's a second conviction in five years. So this soft-on-crime policy that clearly this minister has shows that even he is not

assisting to increase the sentencing. Fourteen days for your second drunk-driving conviction, but we're making drunk driving a priority in this province.

He also goes on to say, "They'll spare no expense to try to hire some lawyer to take advantage of the fact that it's a technical and difficult area of the law and try and get off." Here the associate deputy minister is saying – and he's criticizing – that those who are facing drunk-driving convictions will "spare no expense to try to hire some lawyer to take advantage of the fact that it's a technical and difficult area." I believe the Minister of Justice just used those same words in the House. He said that it was difficult or impossible to get those numbers – so is it difficult, or is it impossible? – yet his own associate minister is criticizing lawyers for using that it's difficult or of getting out of having to do what's right based on a technicality.

Yet this minister is using that exact same argument in this House today. He's saying to the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat: "Sorry. I'd like to answer it, but because of a technicality of just calling it peace officers, there might be too many people in there. It's a little difficult, and you might be asking me too many questions at once, and I might have to deal with the RCMP, peace officers, police officers— I'm not really sure – so based on that technicality, I'm just going to choose not to answer your question." Yet his ministry has no problem branding those who are before the courts, saying that they're sparing no expense to get off on a technicality.

It seems a bit of hypocrisy for this minister to on one hand tout the greatness of how his provincial government is protecting Albertans and putting all these initiatives forward for drunk driving when clearly he can't even say how many resources are being allocated to this initiative, and we're failing even with those that we do convict. We can't even get them to spend any serious time so that there's actually a repercussion to an action that they're performing.

Clearly, everyone is against drunk driving. We're against drunk driving. They're against drunk driving. I have no doubt about that. I think most Albertans are against drunk driving.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak in regard to . . . [interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, you have the floor. Please proceed.

Mrs. Forsyth: You know, it's always a pleasure to rise and speak on a written question when you have the Justice minister yelling across the floor at you. It always makes me wonder why.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to speak as a former Solicitor General of this province. I was listening very intently, and quite frankly I wasn't going to speak to this particular question, but it bothered me when the Justice minister spoke about the question and the intent of the question and how he said: we can't answer. He talked about what we have, whether we have peace officers or whether they're police officers, and then he had to throw in the provincial police force. I find it quite fascinating. Fascinating isn't even the word, possibly appalling. He was reading from a piece of paper, so he obviously got that little briefing note from someone within his department. It shows to me the relationship that this minister has with the fine men and women that do the job in this province on behalf of us.

I can tell you that it doesn't interfere in any way for him to pick up the phone and call the chief of police in Calgary or to pick up

the phone and call the chief of police in Medicine Hat or, for that matter, to pick up the phone and call the chief of police in Edmonton and say: "Chief Hanson, how are you doing? Just wanted to check. You know we're serious about what's happening in this province in regard to drunk driving. I wanted to know how you're doing on the checkstops." No one is suggesting that this minister is telling Chief Hanson what to do, nor would anyone on this side of the House even think about telling a chief of police how to tell their men and women in this province how they operate.

I know that when I had the opportunity of working with a former Minister of Justice, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, the relationship that we had with the policemen and -women that serve this fine province was open and accountable. We would sit down and talk about some of our initiatives. I go back to the time when the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was the Minister of Justice and was adamant, at every FPT that we appeared at, about talking about moving the age of consent up. He talked, when we went to the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police, about what, you know, his priorities were.

You know, for me it is perplexing that this minister can't pick up the phone and ask:

As of November 28, 2012, how many peace officers . . .

Now, he's using the word "peace officers" in the way he wants. "Well, is it federal, or is it provincial, or is it sheriffs?" It's astounding.

. . . have been added to operate checkstops in Alberta since April 23, 2012?

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I had the privilege when I was the Solicitor General of being on many checkstops – and they were interesting, to say the least – spending hours at a checkstop and watching the officers do what they had to do to keep drunk drivers off the road. For me and for a government that touts that they're adamant about stopping drinking and driving, you would think that the Justice minister would want to know how many checkstops are operating in this province and what they're doing, not only how many but where they are, to make sure that they're, you know, getting at where checkstops should be.

I mean, I can tell you as the former minister that the police officers that I was working with at the time knew exactly the areas in this province where people tended to drive. We all know that if you're on the Deerfoot, that's not such a good way to be driving home because possibly – possibly – there might be a checkstop when you're coming off Heritage Drive or maybe off Glenmore. Those are some of the areas that are central to where some of the locations are downtown.

It bothers me that this minister cannot pick up the phone and find out exactly how many charges were laid or how many checkstops there are out there at any given time. Has it increased? Has it decreased? Is it working? Is it not working? The minister was all over the map on this particular question. I guess that, to me, if he doesn't like the question, why doesn't he propose an amendment so that the question can be answered?

Quite frankly, I think Albertans deserve to know if what is happening in this province is really tackling the issue of drinking and driving. We've seen the .05 legislation, that we debated for long hours at night, and I had asked continuously the then Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul to provide us some numbers on how many times there have been stops, how many times people have been pulled over, how many suspensions there are. Well, lo and behold, it's April 15, 2013, and we're still waiting for those numbers. No one in this province knows whether that's working or whether it's not working.

4:40

If we are serious in this province, if this government is serious about the issue of drinking and driving, as they say they are, and they're serious about dealing with the issue of getting the drunks off the road, then the minister, you would think, would be able to stand up and be able to say how many checkpoints have been operated, how many people have been stopped. He doesn't have to give away the idea of where the checkpoints are, but it's important information. If he wants to eliminate the Official Opposition on that information, that's okay, but for his own information and his own self-satisfaction and for his own caucus colleagues he could provide that information to them and say: "You know what? We need to talk" – not dictate but talk – "to the police about whether we have enough police officers on the ground. Do we have enough police officers dealing with checkpoints?" My colleague from Lac La Biche talked about the fact that, you know, we talked about increasing the number of officers that are doing checkpoints.

It's a simple question. The problem is that he's complicated the answer by throwing in his lawyer terms of peace officers. Quite frankly, it's an embarrassment to the minister, and it's sad that he doesn't want to give Albertans the opportunity to know the answers.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there others?

Seeing none, we'll call the question on the question as proposed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 32 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:42 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

| | | |
|---------|----------|-----------|
| Barnes | Forsyth | Saskiw |
| Bikman | Hale | Strankman |
| Bilous | Kang | Towle |
| Donovan | Pedersen | Wilson |

Against the motion:

| | | |
|----------|-------------|---------|
| Allen | Hughes | Olesen |
| Bhardwaj | Jablonski | Olson |
| Bhullar | Jeneroux | Pastoor |
| Brown | Johnson, J. | Quadri |
| Casey | Johnson, L. | Quest |
| Denis | Khan | Sandhu |
| Dorward | Klimchuk | Sarich |
| Drysdale | Kubinec | Scott |
| Fenske | Lemke | Starke |
| Fraser | Leskiw | Xiao |
| Goudreau | McQueen | Young |
| Hancock | Oberle | |

| | | |
|---------|----------|--------------|
| Totals: | For – 12 | Against – 35 |
|---------|----------|--------------|

[Written Question 32 lost]

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, in light of the hour and the fact that the mover would not have time to properly introduce his bill, I would move that the clock be called 5 o'clock and that we move to motions.

[Motion carried]

Motions Other than Government Motions**Hospital Emergency Department Data Reporting**

508. Mrs. Forsyth moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to mandate that Alberta Health Services report length-of-stay data for all emergency departments across the province on a weekly basis.

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and speak to my Motion 508. As it stands, two performance results are recorded with respect to length-of-stay data on a week-by-week basis, the percentage of patients discharged from the emergency room within four hours and the percentage of patients admitted to the hospital from the emergency room within eight hours. Only those results from Edmonton and Calgary hospitals are published, however, on a week-by-week basis.

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

An AHS online release titled Action on Emergency Department Lengths of Stay reads:

Updated length-of-stay statistics from Edmonton and Calgary emergency departments will be posted here every Monday, reflecting the previous week's data. We're working on getting accurate wait time information from elsewhere in the province, which will be posted here as soon as it's available.

Well, they already have the data. They release wait time information in the ERs of all hospitals on a quarterly basis. Still the weekly wait time data for Edmonton and Calgary is easily accessible online, but the exact same information for all other Alberta hospital stays is buried in the AHS quarterly reports.

This data can be acquired on a monthly basis through the freedom of information process, but as we all know, that takes time, and it takes money. I think all members would agree that whether a citizen or an MLA, for that matter, is living in Edmonton or Calgary, Red Deer, Okotoks, High Level, Fort Macleod, Crownsnest, or anywhere else in this wonderful province, they deserve to know how the health care system they rely on and pay for is operating locally. Unfortunately, this is sadly just another example of how AHS continues to ignore the needs and concerns of our communities across this province.

Now, what Motion 508 calls for isn't changing the wheel. It is a simple, modest step, making sure that Albertans across this province feel like their health system responds to their needs. It means that we can slowly take steps so we can change the reputation of our health system from being managed by executives who are plagued with scandal and mismanagement to one that Albertans can slowly once again put their trust in. The fact is that across Alberta the wait time average for Albertans to be admitted within eight hours is a paltry 45 per cent. Madam Speaker, I have one of those FOIP documents that I referred to earlier. For the Red Deer regional hospital, which you will know: 43 per cent. That's not good for your hospital.

It's important that we look at this as an issue of quality care. AHS continues to spend more money on administration – I think the last time I checked, we had 81 vice-presidents – and fails to improve many, many wait time outcomes, which was clearly put out on the last quarterly report, which is actually quite dismal. This kind of data that we're asking for in this motion provides citizens with the kind of insight into their health care system that will put us in the right direction to finally improve government transparency and public trust.

Let's remember that Motion 508 simply mandates AHS to meet the guidelines it already has in place and to improve transparency.

The same release that I mentioned earlier says, “Transparency is important.” I wholly believe that transparency of performance will lead to accountability and in the future ultimately an improved health care system. I think it’s important that we start to examine the information surrounding our health care system.

From the reports that I’ve seen on successes, we can see how Big Country, Cardston, Fort Macleod, Pincher Creek, Medicine Hat, and many of these other small to mid-sized practices are in fact operating exceedingly well compared to many other hospitals in our system, and we need to congratulate them on their work.

5:00

For Albertans not to have access to this information is, quite frankly, illogical and completely unreasonable. For Albertans who pay so much into the health care system – in fact we’ve heard over and over again in this House that we spend more per capita than any other province in Canada. For them not to be able to get this information simply isn’t right. The fact is and the fact remains that there is no good reason why this information isn’t available to all Albertans. Albertans are entitled to the same information about their hospital that is provided to people living in Edmonton and where I live, in Calgary.

Whether it’s queue-jumping, executive bonuses, or lavish expense claims, AHS and this government have earned a terrible reputation when it comes to accountability and transparency. This motion would be a step on the road towards a more efficient, effective, and accountable health care system in Alberta. This is Albertans’ health care system, and we need to remember that. After all, we shouldn’t lose sight of whose health care system it is.

I think that Alberta Health Services could easily cast their net a little wider, and they can increase their reporting. AHS already has the data. They release wait times in the ERs of all hospitals on a quarterly basis. They are already collecting the data. They are already publishing it.

I’m urging all members of this Assembly to support this motion so we can begin to make these small steps towards accountability and transparency a reality.

The Acting Speaker: The Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation.

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to Motion 508, brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. As we all know, our health care system is foundational to healthy families and communities throughout Alberta. It is essential to ensuring a high quality of life filled with longevity and prosperity. As Alberta’s population continues to grow, demands on health care service providers, infrastructure, and front-line workers will continue to rise. It is essential that we continue to invest in our communities and health care system, and our government is doing just that with a commitment to build Alberta and care for our most vulnerable.

The objective of Motion 508 is to make sure that data regarding the length of stay in emergency wards is reported and made publicly available on a weekly basis. Now, it is no secret that the efficiency of our emergency departments is paramount to providing the urgent care that Albertans need and deserve. Make no mistake, Madam Speaker, I am all for improving efficiency, but on the surface I have to question the necessity of this motion. I think it fails to propose a real solution to this issue.

In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that this motion to an extent duplicates a service that’s already provided by Alberta Health Services, and that was acknowledged by the person proposing the motion. Currently AHS publishes weekly length-of-

stay statistics for admitted and discharged patients at the nine busiest emergency departments in Edmonton and Calgary, and as the proposer of the motion has acknowledged, there is quarterly reporting as well. Madam Speaker, these reports are completely transparent and available for all Albertans to see online. Given that such reporting is already provided, why must it be duplicated in any form, as suggested by the hon. member’s motion?

Collectively AHS is taking action to provide more timely access for patients. A target has been set so that 90 per cent of patients needing emergency care are assessed, treated, and discharged within four hours by 2015. Such action demonstrates that this issue has been identified and what steps are being taken to address it. This is being achieved in part by optimizing the scope of practice of key health professionals so they can make full use of their education and skills and also by redesigning protocols for care and treatment, known as clinical pathways.

Early indicators suggest that these province-wide overcapacity protocols aimed at reducing peak pressures in emergency departments are having the desired impact of reducing lengths of stay. Madam Speaker, this is certainly an encouraging sign and important for the overall quality of health care in our province. Again, while I understand the underlying premise of the hon. member’s proposal, I need to ask why we should be spending the extra resources in this way. Taxpayer dollars could be better spent elsewhere delivering health services.

When you look at emergency room lengths of stay, I think that it’s important that you understand the demographic of citizens who are receiving care. Many but not all are seniors. For these patients their needs are such that sometimes they cannot be adequately cared for in an independent home setting and require an alternate care option. This being the case, we may be better served allocating resources to services like home care or perhaps assisted living and long-term care facilities instead of an expansion of IT capacities in smaller hospitals. Essentially, Madam Speaker, it comes down to an opportunity cost.

All things considered, however, I certainly understand the importance of reducing emergency department lengths of stay for the sake of improving efficiency. This government clearly recognizes the importance of this as well as continuing to invest in health and social services, culminating in stronger, more vibrant communities for all Albertans. By making the right investments, I am hopeful that Albertans will be healthier, hence reducing the strain on emergency department services across the province.

I would like to thank the hon. member for proposing this motion today, but as it stands, I will not be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to support Motion 508, which reads: “Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to mandate that Alberta Health Services report length-of-stay data for all emergency departments across the province on a weekly basis.” As the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek clearly and understandably talks about, there are currently only two wait times that are tracked, the percentage of patients that are discharged from ER within four hours and the percentage of patients that are admitted to hospital within eight hours. Right now the only ones that are clearly disclosed weekly are the Calgary and Edmonton locations.

While that seems fine on the surface of it, the reality of what that means is that everyday Albertans from all over Alberta are not able to see what the wait times are in their local areas and make decisions that affect the crucial health care that they may or may

not need. Albertans in all areas of this province have a right and an expectation that they should get to know what the wait times are at their local hospital. They may choose to go to a different care facility or a different hospital to provide care or they may choose to wait. They may choose to go to a walk-in clinic. They may go to an urgent care facility rather than going to that facility. But if they never know, then they become involved in the situation of not knowing exactly what the wait times are.

What we've also seen – and let's take a look at some of those numbers in a moment here – is that Alberta Health Services' budget continues to be out of control. We've seen Alberta Health Services ask for over \$480 million this year to cover administrative costs. One has to wonder, when they're already gathering the data to prepare it quarterly, that it's a very simple task with very little work to be done to provide it weekly. The hospitals already provide this information. It's just that Alberta Health Services can't get their act together and provide it to Albertans in a timely manner.

Alberta Health Services has the data, but they bury it in a link on the quarterly report. Ask the average Albertan to go in and take a look at that quarterly report and try and find the wait times for their local hospital. It's very difficult to find. We know, unfortunately – I apologize, Madam Speaker – that with the Red Deer hospital the Wildrose had to FOIP that information. It wasn't even included in the link, minister of accountability and transparency. We actually had to FOIP that.

We had to literally spend money and wait months to find out what the actual wait times are for Red Deer. Red Deer right now is only meeting those really important targets that Alberta Health Services has set out 43 per cent of the time. Is the minister honestly suggesting that Albertans in Red Deer and surrounding areas don't have the right to know what the efficiencies are at their hospital so that they may choose to go to a surrounding hospital or go get their health care somewhere else? I find that incredibly shocking.

5:10

Let's take a look at the data for Calgary for emergency department lengths of stay. For Alberta Children's hospital from March 24 to March 30, so one week, they were only able to meet the target 82 per cent of the time. Actually, that's pretty good. It's pretty close to the target, and I actually honour that they're working really hard. Let's look at the Foothills medical centre. They were only able to meet the target 51 per cent of the time. The Peter Lougheed Centre was only able to meet the target of discharged patients 60 per cent of the time, and Rockyview general 63 per cent of the time. The people in that area know exactly what their hospitals are doing and exactly what's going on at their hospital.

Let's go over to Calgary admitted hospitals, March 24 through March 30. That means patients that are admitted to the hospital within eight hours. That means you are sitting in the emergency department – this is not from the time you arrive. This is actually from the time your triage determines that you need to be admitted. Please understand that you could sit in the hospital for many, many, many more hours either in an ambulance or wherever while you're waiting to be seen. So within eight hours – oh; too bad – the Alberta Children's hospital was only able to meet the 90 per cent target 53 per cent of the time; Foothills medical centre, same thing, 53 per cent of the time; Peter Lougheed Centre, sadly, 31 per cent of the time they were able to meet that target; and Rockyview general hospital, 35 per cent of the time. Yet Alberta Health Services executives were given bonuses for meeting their targets on a pro-rated basis, and that truly is disgusting.

Let's go even further. That was just Calgary. Let's go on and take a look at Edmonton patients who were able to be discharged from emergency within four hours. Let's take a look at how many times they were able to meet the targets: the Grey Nuns, 67 per cent of the time; Misericordia, only 59 per cent of the time; the Royal Alex hospital was only able to meet the target of being discharged from ER within four hours 38 per cent of the time; the Stollery, still trying to achieve a very good rate, 86 per cent of the time; but the University of Alberta could only meet that target 43 per cent of the time. That clearly identifies that discharging patients from ER within four hours is a huge challenge for Alberta Health Services and goes on to identify – this is just one week – that, clearly, Alberta Health Services is not putting the resources where they need to go.

Let's take a look at admitted patients for Edmonton, the number of patients that are admitted to hospital within eight hours. Once again, they could sit in the admitting room or in an ambulance bay for a long, long time. The Grey Nuns was only able to achieve the target of admitting into the hospital within eight hours – that means your loved one was identified and needs to go into hospital – 28 per cent of the time; Misericordia, 35 per cent; Royal Alex, 47 per cent; Stollery, 66 per cent; and U of A, 47 per cent.

Can the Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation honestly stand here and suggest, by not identifying these rates for all of the other hospitals, that this shouldn't be a priority for Alberta Health Services if not for all Albertans, which should be our first priority? Clearly, it identifies that Alberta Health Services is failing to meet their own targets of 90 per cent, and clearly it identifies that Alberta Health Services continues to give themselves bonuses for not meeting targets. This is their own data.

Let's go on even further. Let's just take a look even further. Why wouldn't the Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation not want to give credit where credit is due? Why would the associate minister actually want to be so deceptive as to not acknowledge what facilities are doing it right? Let's take a look at what facilities are actually meeting these targets: Bassano health centre, 92 per cent; Big Country hospital, 94 per cent; Bow Island health centre, 98 per cent; Brooks health centre, 93 per cent; Cardston, 92 per cent; Chinook regional hospital, 78 per cent.

The Coaldale health centre, Crowsnest Pass, Fort Macleod, Medicine Hat, Milk River, Pincher Creek, Raymond health centre, Taber health are all above 95 per cent of meeting the targets. Why would the Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation not want to acknowledge that some of our facilities are actually doing it right. You know what the beauty of it is, Madam Speaker? The Piyami community health centre met its targets 100 per cent of the time. Should that not be acknowledged by the transparency minister?

Let's go on to talk about which facilities are getting it right. Admitting from emergency departments within eight hours: Bassano, 92 per cent; Big Country hospital, 69 per cent; Bow Island, Brooks, Taber are all achieving past 90 per cent. The rest of them – Raymond, Pincher Creek, Medicine Hat, Crowsnest Pass, Chinook regional, Cardston, and Brooks – are all achieving between 60 and 80 per cent of their target times.

If this minister is truly dedicated to accountability and transparency, he needs to understand that Albertans need to know that there are facilities across this province who've got it right, are getting it right, and they should start to be the model for other facilities who can't raise the bar and get to the 90 per cent discharge rates that this government keeps touting. That's a fact. Unfortunately, what this says very clearly is that Alberta Health

Services is not able to identify the challenges within their own bureaucracy. That's what it says clearly.

The minister talked about how he would not support this motion because it didn't offer a solution. Is the minister of accountability and transparency honestly suggesting that the only time transparency is relevant or the only time that transparency should happen from this government is when it's convenient for them and when the Wildrose has to come up with a solution for this government to get it right? Is that honestly what he's saying? Or should he actually take his ministry and show initiative and actually tell Albertans exactly why transparency is so important.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for making this motion totally irrelevant by telling us that all of the hospitals that don't now need to report are so good.

It's an honour for me to rise today to speak to Motion 508, the goal of which we can assume is to improve the quality of patient care by enhancing accountability and transparency. I have to say that the goal is perhaps good, and the goal is one that this government shares with the member opposite. Length-of-stay data is an important indicator that can help pinpoint a variety of ailments in the health care system such as a lack of long-term health care beds or inadequate staffing in emergency departments. Monitoring and reporting are important components to improvement. As the old adage suggests, you can't improve what you don't measure. Because of this, length-of-stay times are in fact being measured.

Alberta is one of the many Canadian provinces that submits statistics on lengths of stay in emergency departments to a program called the national ambulatory care reporting system operated by the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Unfortunately, there is a delay from when data is reported to when data is made publicly available, Madam Speaker. This is not an issue of having something to hide at all. This is about having adequate resources to commit to timely publication. There is a cost to resources.

That being said, Alberta Health Services is committed to publishing weekly updates of length-of-stay statistics for the nine busiest emergency departments in Edmonton and Calgary. The data is posted for the prior week and includes trends for the past two years. This is feasible because the larger emergency departments already have appropriate information technology systems in place to do it. Alberta Health Services is also considering expanding weekly reporting of length-of-stay data to include five regional hospitals as follows: Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat. This expansion would now address the 14 busiest emergency departments in Alberta. Apparently, all the other ones are doing just fine.

However, this would still exclude the Sturgeon community hospital and the Northeast community health centre, which are included in the high-volume hospital statistics in the AHS quarterly reports. That's because the proper information technology, which would cost more money, something being asked for by individuals over on the other side again – Madam Speaker, it's an ask day, apparently – is not in place.

It becomes a question of: what is the most effective use of taxpayers' dollars? Would the member opposite like another RN in a rural hospital or another IT person in AHS? As Ralph Klein would say: let's hunt where the ducks are. More so, AHS has been

directed to decrease its administrative expenditures by 10 per cent over the next three years, something that I think would be supported by the other side. So who exactly is going to do this work? Any decision whether to expand weekly reporting of ED length-of-stay data to include regional and rural hospitals will need to be considered against competing budgets and human resource demands. Once again it becomes a question of: where will we get the most bang for the taxpayers' buck? Because, Madam Speaker, nothing is free unless, perhaps, you're on the other side.

5:20

I want the member opposite to seriously consider whether she thinks it's the best use of resources in this tough fiscal climate, especially when previous analysis of emergency department data indicates that long wait times and lengths of stay are not significant problems in rural and suburban hospitals, as we were just told. Rather, long wait times and lengths of stay are concentrated in Edmonton and Calgary hospitals and to a lesser extent in the regional hospitals of Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat, as mentioned, which will be reporting. As such, we're already providing consistent weekly reports on the requested data where the problem is concentrated in Edmonton's and Calgary's nine busiest hospitals.

I'm curious as to why the member opposite believes that expanding this reporting capacity to every emergency department across the province is a prudent use of resources. If the purpose of this motion is to ultimately improve patient care, I urge the member opposite to reconsider whether this is the best way that she can think of to improve patient care. I don't think it is. Although I do support the goal, I don't support this way of achieving the goal.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise and speak in favour of Motion 508, the motion that was put forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I speak in favour of this motion for several reasons. First and foremost, we're talking about ensuring that all Albertans are treated fairly and that they have access to information that not just residents of Edmonton and Calgary have access to.

I find it quite interesting that the previous speaker, a member from the other side, talks about having to choose between accountability and programming whereas I think all the opposition would agree that in order to evaluate our programs, we need to be accountable. We need to have targets, we need to see them, they need to be available to the public, and then the public can evaluate to a better extent how well something is working or not working.

It's my belief that all Albertans, whether they live in rural Alberta or in other urban centres other than Edmonton and Calgary, deserve to know the length-of-stay data for the emergency departments. I think it's not fair to Albertans, to about 49 per cent of Albertans in this province, in fact, to get B-level information while almost half of Albertans are given information on a weekly basis.

I think, first and foremost, this motion speaks to ensuring that Albertans, that opposition can keep this government accountable and to showing Albertans how well our system is performing or to show if it is underperforming. I think the fact that this information is not readily available makes it very difficult, again, to have a proper assessment. I think as well that it's not good enough for the

government to say: well, this is available; a citizen can FOIP the information. Well, accessing information is a very timely process. It does cost money. Many Albertans do not have the expertise to navigate through that process.

What the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is calling for is ensuring that this information is accessible and that the government is being transparent. Again, I don't know how many times in under a year I have stood up and called out this government for providing lip service to the words "accountability" and "transparency," yet when it comes time for action, they seem to fail miserably. Here is an example of where the government can very easily do what's right. Let's get this reporting available to all Albertans in a timely fashion and do the right thing.

The other point that I just want to address is the fact that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar tried to make an issue as far as: well, if we do this and we bring this through, it's going to cost a lot of money, and then we won't be able to have as many front-line workers available. I'd like to remind the hon. member that, as it stands, billions of dollars go to corporate welfare to some of the largest corporations in the province that do not need those dollars. As well, as has been pointed out numerous times in this House, there are high-level executives in AHS who are receiving an exorbitant amount of money, not to mention huge expense accounts, privileges which the average Albertan does not have.

So it's a matter of priorities and where the government is choosing to spend their dollars. I think it's quite important and any business would argue that you need to have targets, you need to be accountable, you need to have measures in order to evaluate if you're meeting those targets. This motion is calling for that.

Again, I'm speaking strongly in favour of this in order to ensure there is a level playing field for all Albertans regardless of where they live. So I will urge members on the other side of the House to support this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

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

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek: we missed you a few days last week. I noticed that you were absent in the House. [interjections] Oh, sorry. Pardon me. But our thoughts are with you. It's always a pleasure to hear your advocacy for health care, and that was the point I was trying to make.

Madam Speaker, you know, I've got quite a bit of experience with hospital wait times, unfortunately, all too much, I regret to say. Let me tell you that I think sometimes we're glossing over the complexity of the issues that we're facing in this province and some of the things that are actually already in place.

While we've heard that Calgary and Edmonton do indeed post their wait times and put them on a website and try to give people accurate information about the patients coming in – and, certainly, patients going out would be part of that – the one thing to remember, I guess, is that when we're thinking about hospitals and emergency rooms throughout the entire province, we can never control who actually walks in through the front door. As people come in through the front door, their issues are sometimes serious and sometimes not very serious at all. Part of that message in health care and Alberta Health Services is informing patients to make sure that they're making the best decisions on their health care.

I think we've seen from this government, whether it's publishing wait times on emergency access to encourage people to use their family clinic or primary care networks or, certainly, the new

development around family care networks in this province to, again, ease those wait times – as a government I think we're well aware of these issues, and each one of those initiatives has an impact on the overall wait time.

The one thing that we'd also recognize is that in the rural emergency departments how we would gauge that wait time would be significantly different than how we would gauge it, certainly, in the cities. I know that one of the things mentioned by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake was the 31 percentile at the Peter Lougheed Centre. Now, I certainly did a lot of my career there in the Peter Lougheed Centre, and if you're gauging it on a percentage of how they meet their wait times, being a kid from northeast Calgary and living there, I can tell you that it's a very diverse area with a lot of new Canadians, so the challenge sometimes, particularly around wait times, is being able to communicate with the patient about what the real issues are.

That leads us back again to the overall idea of patient outcomes. It's one thing to move patients in and move them out right away to try to meet a wait time – and I think that is part of the danger when we start making the terminology mandatory. Again, when we think about those rural hospitals that might have a different socioeconomic demographic, they also don't have the capacity in terms of the specialty needs that some of these larger hospitals in the cities would have; i.e., Edmonton and Calgary.

As we look at that, I mean, there are some things in place, and one of them is referral, access, advice, placement, information, and destination, which we use on the ambulance to make sure that we're actually taking patients to where there is an open bed, and that is in a real-time atmosphere. We get it right over the computer-aided dispatch in the ambulance to make sure. Sometimes that changes on the fly. Again, that's another initiative that would impact overall wait times in terms of people coming in and out.

5:30

The other part of that is our aging population. I can tell you a story, Madam Speaker, about a time when I went to a home and had to deal with a patient who was about 95 years old. Her kids were somewhere in the range of 60 to 65, and her son-in-law was closer to 70. Well, the challenge there was that all three of them needed placement all at once. That's what we're facing in this province, that transition, and those people, maybe not necessarily needing an emergency room, have to go there to see a physician. These are some of the tasks and the complexities that we have to take on. The options are family care clinics or very efficient primary care networks, being able to access physicians to get people to go to the right place. It's the right care at the right time.

The real-time emergency patient access and co-ordination is what I mentioned before. Again, referral, access, advice, placement information, and destination: that refers to the small rural hospitals. The rural hospitals use that on a very regular basis to get their patients to specialized care in these larger centres. Quite often we're moving there. We know that, based on what we've heard about emergency services and interfacility transfer. That's why you see those ambulances going all the time from those rural centres to get that specialized care, that one-time treatment that they need, again, where the higher populations are, where it makes more sense to put those things, particularly where research and advancements can be made. To the hon. associate minister of transparency, it's really about driving down to: how can we make efficiencies in the system?

Again, I appreciate the advocacy from the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek and her passion for health care, but I can't support this motion simply because it's mandatory. Certainly, when we think

about it, when we start picking apart the efficiencies in those rural hospitals – I think we’ve seen a report recently about how some of our rural hospitals are very transparent and they’re doing a lot of great things. You know, I can’t support this motion.

Those are my comments around that. I think that there are better ways to measure our performance outcomes. I think it’s also important for us to remember the very complex job that Alberta Health Services has to make sure that the right type of care is happening at the right time for that particular patient and then make sure they get back to their communities. That’s why we have the reporting the way it is.

Again, I thank the member for her motion, but I simply won’t support it today.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. member.

The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise in support of my colleague in favour of Motion 508. I’m not going to cast aspersions or question motives.

An Hon. Member: Thank you.

Mr. Bikman: You’re welcome.

I want to talk about principles and good management. As was alluded to by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, if you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it, or words to that effect. I’d also add that if you aren’t measuring it, you aren’t doing your job. When we deal in generalities, we rarely succeed. You know where I’m going with this. When we deal in specifics, we rarely have a failure. When performance is measured, performance improves; when it’s measured and reported, the rate of improvement accelerates. Thomas S. Monson said that, and I believe him. It’s a principle of good management. Stephen Covey said that for things that you’re measuring to be of use to you, they need to be focused, specific – in other words, as Monson mentioned – but also reported in a timely manner.

Taxpayers, the folks that pay the bills, that give the government the money that they’re spending, are entitled to know this information. Their health and maybe even their lives depend on their ability to make informed decisions, choosing to go, perhaps, to a more efficient, more effectively run emergency department. I would hope that AHS is measuring this, and I don’t think it’s too great of a stretch to say: “If you’re already measuring it, good for you. Let’s report it. Let’s get it out there.”

What are you doing with the information yourself? It isn’t just the taxpayers, the people who are patients that need to be admitted to emergency rooms that need this information to help them make better decisions. AHS, the management, also needs this information because there are departments that are getting it right, and we ought to see how they can do it and why. Is there some aspect of what they’re doing that could be shared with the rest of the system, could be cascaded throughout the system to raise the bar, so to speak, or to raise the performance and the ability of these other departments to provide this service that I know they’d like to provide?

I’m sure that the goals that have been set and the commitments that have been made to reach those goals have been set with all sincerity. You want to reach them. You’re not happy with the result, and we’re not bringing it up to embarrass you. You’re doing enough things on your own to do that; we don’t have to do it for you. I think that recognizing that this information is there and is easily capturable – and it probably is, in fact, and not just in the places that have been mentioned, but it could be reported in a timely manner.

We know that wait times are a problem in and of themselves, but they’re also symptomatic of problems within the Alberta health care system. Emergency departments used to be used for real emergencies; thus, the name. I think we all know that over the past few years they’ve evolved into walk-in clinics in many cases. Why? I’m sure Alberta Health Services knows why, but I’m also sure it’s largely due to breakdowns and inadequacies in the system itself. Perhaps there aren’t enough clinics or doctors to go around.

So the system suffers, and we download again onto these front-line workers in these critical, stressful situations in emergency departments the responsibility to do things that the system should be taking care of in other parts of the system rather than in emergency rooms.

I support this motion. I think it’s a timely motion, and I think we need to consider the source of this motion. It’s from a former Health minister, somebody that’s among the most knowledgeable people in this House about the importance of timely information to make good decisions. I hope AHS already has this information. I hope they are using it to tweak and correct and improve the system, but if they aren’t, shame on them.

Thanks.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who wish to speak? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’d just like to say a few words here. It’s been interesting listening to the ongoing debate, and I, too, would like to compliment my counterpart from Calgary-Fish Creek on her heartfelt passion for trying to bring forward proper health care within the system.

Madam Speaker, just while I was away from the Assembly this weekend in the constituency of Drumheller-Stettler, people were asking me about the past process whereby people could look up their own health care costs and what they were charged within the system. They felt that that was a way that they could achieve accountability for their own costs within the system. They felt that that was something that would have been a method of bringing forward their own accountability, their own transparency, and their own method of making sure that the system, to the level of their involvement, was being adjudicated correctly.

Because we have nuances to the wording in the Chamber, Madam Speaker, I’d like to reread this motion: “Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly” in the public interest “urge the government to mandate that Alberta Health Services report length-of-stay data for all emergency departments across the province on a weekly basis.” I found it kind of interesting, in compiling my thoughts to make this presentation, whether or not the party opposite would have a different point of view if we were to interject the words “in the public interest” because I believe that’s why this member is bringing this motion forward: in the public interest. Even though the words aren’t in her motion, that’s what we’re trying to do: do something better for the public and, therefore, bring forward some accountability and transparency to the regulation, to the legislation.

I just wanted to make that point, if possible, and bring forward another point. This issue is important to Albertans. In Alberta Health Services’ own words, “Transparency is important.” That’s what my constituents have been asking me to bring forward, and that’s why I wish to speak to this motion to some small extent.

5:40

How they rely on this health system is important to them, too. When they need it in an emergency situation, like the young

Member for Calgary-South East talked about with his personal experiences, how people relate to this system is important. When they need it, they need it to be there in a professional and timely manner. If we have some small semblance of presenting performance levels, as the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner talked about reporting, it allows vindication of service rendered. I'd just like to bring that forward.

With that, I think I'll relinquish the floor to other speakers.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any others who wish to speak on Motion 508? The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak in favour of this motion brought forward by my hon. friend from Calgary-Fish Creek. I do appreciate the dialogue back and forth. The Member for Calgary-South East is obviously very passionate about health care as well, and I thank him for that and being able to bring that experience into this House.

I disagree often with the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and will do so again right now when he stands up and suggests that this motion is irrelevant. I don't believe this motion is irrelevant at all. As has been discussed, this is something that AHS is already committed to doing, so all we're suggesting and all the member is suggesting is that the government urge AHS to do this now and do it more consistently. At the end of the day, we have the information. It exists. It's being tracked.

So the fact is that, you know, there are going to be charges from the other side suggesting: while we have these cost-cutting measures and this cost-cutting, conservative opposition party, how could they ever ask us to do anything that would potentially add more cost? Well, health care is still the number one issue facing Albertans today. I'm sure that you're aware of this, Madam Speaker. This is something that has been the number one concern of Albertans for upwards of 20 years, probably even more, and will be for the foreseeable future. The definition of insanity, as I'm sure you all know, is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Well, if you have the statistics and you have the data and you have a way of measuring whether or not you're actually making improvements, why would you not want to then publish that data and actually find out if you are improving?

Imagine the public accolades that the governing party could pat themselves on the back with if they were to actually make measurable improvements to some of these statistics that they so often fail at, that give us so much food to stand up in here, the low-hanging fruit of your failing to meet these targets. Imagine if we didn't have that, and imagine if you had a mechanism to ensure that we didn't. I'm sure you'd like to take it. Well, it just so happens that Motion 508 will help you get there, but apparently it's irrelevant.

I would challenge the members opposite to consider or reconsider their position on this because, as the body of AHS is already tracking the information, they've already suggested that transparency is an important aspect to improving the service that they deliver for Albertans, and given the fact that Albertans have all said and continue to say today, Madam Speaker, that this is the most important issue facing them – and it will be again moving forward – I think that this motion deserves their support.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who wish to speak? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to stand and speak in favour of Motion 508 from my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek. I think it's very important to show the results. You know, we talk about transparency. This is just another way of being more transparent. We have the quarterly reports, so let's go to weekly reports.

The comment has been made about the additional cost. Well, maybe the Alberta Health Services executive that's been charging a hundred million dollars in 17 months – they could trim a little something there to put towards somebody else that could actually report these findings.

There's been talk about the nine busiest hospitals between Calgary and Edmonton doing this reporting. Well, one of the hospitals in my area, the Strathmore hospital, has one of the busiest emergency rooms in rural Alberta. I've met with many of the doctors, and they work very hard. You know, because they are so close to Calgary, they have many challenges with people coming out from Calgary to this emergency room. I can't say enough good things about them.

The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake mentioned the Bassano and Brooks health centres, how well they do. That's a feather in your cap that you can promote and say: look, you know, we do have these rural hospitals.

We know that rural sustainability is tough, and part of that is having a good health care system. We work very hard. I'm good friends with a doctor in Bassano, and it's a challenge to get doctors to come out to these rural hospitals. It's something that's a challenge all over Alberta and that we have to keep working on together to try to get good doctors so that we can keep providing that good service, the most bang for the taxpayers' bucks.

We have a lot of rural taxpayers that would like to know this information, and many of them are seniors that can't go onto the websites and sort for hours through material trying to find this data. I think if it was made more accessible, it would go a long way to showing some of the good, and maybe it would go to show some of the bad and put a little bit of spur on these guys to get things right if those results were made known. You know, I think it's something that should be very easy to fulfill. The data is there. Put it out there so that everybody can see it, so you don't have to be a computer whiz to go and sort through and try to find it. It just goes to the accountability and transparency.

The AT and T minister was making comments back there: well, let's work to fix it. Well, yeah. We all want to fix health services in Alberta so that everybody gets the best service that they can, and this would go a long way to helping that service.

In closing, I'm in support of my colleague and her motion. I think it's something that would serve Albertans well. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who wish to speak? The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also rise today to speak in support of Motion 508. It's very interesting. You can tell that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek does have a long-standing passion for health care. I also appreciate the Member for Calgary-South East. The insight that you to bring to the Chamber from that side is so valuable for us that do not get to deal with that on a daily basis, so thank you for that insight.

I think that ties in. I think that the Member for Calgary-South East brought forward some very, very good information. He was talking about dealing with instances and issues in real time, and to have that, you have to have technology that's creating that real-time information. If that technology is creating that, it can be

tracked. If it can be tracked, it can be reported. So it's already in place, and it works to the benefit of EMTs. That is critical. When you find out that you have somebody in need of medical treatment, you need to know where they can get access to that as fast as possible based upon that condition. He has identified the fact that there is great, great technology out there already in use, and it's benefiting not only EMTs but hospitals and emergency wards and treatment centres. In that regard it is there and it's working, so it needs to be pushed out to all of the centres so that they're all able to take advantage of those great, great technological advances that some are lucky to have.

The interesting thing with health being the number one expenditure in the budget – we're looking at about \$16 billion – is that it almost seems like we're afraid to challenge this group of people running this ministry. As the number one expenditure I think it's incumbent upon us to ask even more from these people. It has to be our number one ask to this ministry. It's where the most money is spent. As mentioned before, it's the biggest concern on most voters' minds. It's got to give better results. It's failing on too many levels. I'm not going to say all but too many. They're doing great work in some areas on some things, but to get better, it has to be reported, it has to be visible, and we have to be able to do good things from areas that are doing good things and move that to areas where they're suffering. I think it's very important that we concentrate on that more than we would on any other ministry.

Thank you.

5:50

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I would now ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek to close debate on Motion 508.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise. I've been listening quietly and carefully to the debate in the Legislature. It's always amazing to me when we talk about private members' bills or private members' motions. I guess for me I personally want to thank the health care professionals who actually urged me to bring this motion forward, and I particularly want to thank a doctor that I've spoken to in regard to this motion for his incredible insight into the health care system. His name is Dr. Paul Parks. We've heard that name on this Legislature floor on many, many occasions. I don't know Dr. Parks' political affiliations, and I've never ever asked him. He would give the same advice to anyone else in this Assembly who would pick up the phone to talk to him and ask him about health care and what he thinks. After all, it was he that brought up the issue of the crisis in emergency that we were in for two and a half years. This motion was on behalf of Dr. Parks, who insisted that it's important for the government to be accountable and transparent to all Albertans, not just Albertans that are in Calgary and Edmonton.

You know, it's interesting to hear from the minister of accountability. I just think that's such a farce of a name for someone that can stand up here and speak about accountability and transparency. It's just, quite frankly, an embarrassment. [interjections] What I would like to say, Madam Speaker, if I can . . . [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has the floor.

Mrs. Forsyth: The Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation is yelling across the floor in regard to what he's not accountable for and what he's not transparent about.

Madam Speaker, if I may, I want to on behalf of Albertans and on behalf of all of the health care professionals in this province and particularly Dr. Parks thank them for their advice and thank them for their kind words. They are the people in this province who are accountable and who are transparent and who are trying on behalf of Albertans to do the right thing.

With that, I will ask all members of the Assembly to support this motion.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 508 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:53 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mrs. Jablonski in the chair]

For the motion:

| | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|
| Anderson | Forsyth | Strankman |
| Barnes | Hale | Towle |
| Bikman | Pedersen | Wilson |
| Bilous | Rowe | |

Against the motion:

| | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------|
| Allen | Hancock | Olson |
| Bhardwaj | Hughes | Pastoor |
| Bhullar | Johnson, J. | Quadri |
| Brown | Johnson, L. | Quest |
| Casey | Khan | Rodney |
| Denis | Klimchuk | Sandhu |
| Dorward | Kubinec | Sarich |
| Drysdale | Lemke | Scott |
| Fenske | Leskiw | Starke |
| Fraser | McQueen | Xiao |
| Goudreau | Olesen | Young |
| Griffiths | | |

Totals: For – 11 Against – 34

[Motion Other than Government Motion 508 lost]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 29 the legislative policy committees will convene this evening for consideration of the main estimates. Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Executive Council in committee room A, and Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Environment and Sustainable Resource Development in committee room B.

Thank you very much.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:06 p.m. to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

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