



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday, April 18, 2013

Issue 48

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)  
Cusanelli, Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)  
Dallas, Hon. Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)  
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)  
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)  
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)  
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Jeneroux, Matt, Edmonton-South West (PC)  
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McQueen, Hon. Diana, Drayton Valley-Devon (PC)  
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Olson, Hon. Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)  
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Pedersen, Blake, Medicine Hat (W)  
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Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
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Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)  
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
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Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W)  
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)  
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)  
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC),  
    Government Whip

### Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 61

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

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Doug Horner	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Ken Hughes	Minister of Energy
Jeff Johnson	Minister of Education
Heather Klimchuk	Minister of Culture
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Diana McQueen	Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
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Verlyn Olson	Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
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Bhardwaj	Olesen
Cao	Pastoor
Donovan	Quadri
Dorward	Rogers
Eggen	Rowe
Hehr	Sarich
Luan	Strankman
McDonald	Xiao

**Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Khan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Anderson
Casey
Dorward
Eggen
Kubinec
Sandhu
Sherman

**Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee**

Chair: Mr. Allen  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Luan

Blakeman	Notley
Dorward	Saskiw
Fenske	Wilson
Johnson, L.	Young
McDonald	

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Mr. Quest  
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Brown	Jeneroux
Cusanelli	Leskiw
DeLong	Notley
Fraser	Pedersen
Fritz	Swann
Goudreau	Towle
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**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

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Blakeman	Quadri
Brown	Rogers
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**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Forsyth	McDonald
Fraser	Quest
Kennedy-Glans	Sherman
	Smith

**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

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Allen	Hehr
Amery	Jeneroux
Anglin	Khan
Bilous	Pastoor
Donovan	Quadri
Fenske	Quest
Goudreau	Sarich
Hale	Stier

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 18, 2013

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us pray. As we conclude our work in this Assembly for this week and return to continue our work in our constituencies, let us be thankful for what we have accomplished on behalf of our constituents. Let us also be replenished with renewed energy and enthusiasm that results from being reunited with our families and our loved ones. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**Ms Calahasen:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 24 students from Northern Lakes College in High Prairie and area along with their chaperone, Jennifer Zallum. I ask that they stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. I'm not exactly sure if they're seated in the public gallery.

**Mr. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly some amazing people. In fact, we're very lucky here because we have 80 of the smartest and most promising students in all of Airdrie – in all of Airdrie, obviously, but in all of Alberta, too – here with us today, three classes of grade 6 students from Ralph McCall in Airdrie, and they're here with 10 teachers and parents. I know this class is very excited to be here. We skyped in preparation for this meeting. We had a great Skype question-and-answer session. They asked incredible questions. As everyone in this Assembly knows, we get some of our hardest questions from the students that visit, far more probing than even the opposition, the House leader would say, and I would agree.

They're here today with their teachers and group leaders. I'm just going to ask those group leaders to rise as I call their names and remain standing: Mr. Brian Jackson, a teacher; Mrs. Pam Burke; Ms Kendall Brown; and Rob Saibe are all here. Their parent helpers are Ms Dawn Weaver, Mr. Michael Froslev, Ms Gray – I'm sorry, I didn't get that first name – Mrs. Stella Randell, Mrs. Tammy Dixon, and Jason. Again I didn't get the last name, but I saw you earlier, Jason. There you are. If the students could now all rise – they're in both galleries – and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Mr. Khan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two very special constituents from St. Albert, Eileen Hofmann and her husband Lorne Hofmann, whom I'll ask to rise in the members' gallery as I introduce them. Eileen is the manager of my constituency office in St. Albert, a position she has served with passion and grace for the past five years. Eileen is a remarkable asset to our community. She is a determined and compassionate advocate for all who come to our office for assistance, and I can't imagine serving in this position without her guidance and support. In her spare time Eileen is a loving mother of two teenage children, Kyeler and Corissa, and she's also taking night courses

to complete her social work degree. She's developing and honing a skill that she uses every week in our office in St. Albert.

As for Lorne, you could say that he has dual citizenship between St. Albert, where he resides, and Athabasca, where he works at the Alberta-Pacific pulp mill. It's also worth mentioning that Lorne is a hockey buddy of Minister Johnson, and I've been told he's got exceptional hands. Lorne is also the resident handyman in our office.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank both Eileen and Lorne for their tireless dedication and commitment to our office in St. Albert, and I'd ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Kennedy-Glans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two of my constituents, Louise Brisson and her daughter Aliya Bartkiewicz. Aliya is a U of A student currently in her last year of nursing. She graduated from the University of Calgary with a degree in geography. She's truly a product of Campus Alberta. She's following in the footsteps of her mother, who is also a nurse. Aliya and Louise are in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive our traditional warm welcome.

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

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly a privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you members and staff from our Youth Secretariat. We are joined by Amber Moos, Nancy Groat, and Shandy Wogan, who are currently serving on the 2013 Human Services Youth Advisory Panel. They are joined by David French and Brittany Wiebe, Human Services staff that support the work of the Youth Secretariat. The newly appointed Youth Advisory Panel has made great strides this past month. I'm glad to have these engaged youth here today to have a better understanding of how this Legislature works. Please join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition, followed by the New Democratic leader.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Merv Lien, his daughter Sherri-Ann Godby, and Jean Zukowsky. Merv is a retired construction superintendent, and he and Jean have been dating for 35 years. Between them they have 12 children, 27 grandchildren, and 19 great-grandchildren. All of their children give back to the community as nurses, doctors, teachers, caregivers, dispatchers, and tinsmiths. Sherri-Ann is a full-time foster mom. Merv is concerned about the future of Alberta and has been a fervent advocate for better democracy. Yesterday was the 31st anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and he is here to show his support. He's been advocating to get rid of gag orders in the health system, section 11 of Bill 44, and he's also an advocate for property rights. Merv is also an author of some books, *The Devil's Tongue* and *Life Is a Joke*. He's written to Her Majesty the Queen and to you, Mr. Speaker. He's here to thank Her Majesty and you for writing back. I would ask Merv and his family to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the New Democrat opposition, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my guest, Steve Kaz. Steve is originally from Sherwood Park but now splits his time between Edmonton and Slave Lake. He owns and runs his own company, Summit Finishing & Woodwork. In the 2012 election Steve was also a candidate for the NDP, running in the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake. I would now ask Steve to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you my guest Lisa Kaye-Stanisky. Lisa is the sister and guardian of Floyd Kaye, a medically fragile resident of Michener Centre for 56 years. He doesn't speak, he's blind, and he's mostly deaf. He has to be fed very carefully, or he will choke. Lisa worries that in Floyd's new home the staff will not have time to feed him properly, will assess him as too high risk to feed, and will put a feeding tube in him. He will resist this treatment, and he will have to be restrained. At Michener Floyd receives regular baths, is taken on outings, goes to camp and to church. Lisa is incredibly worried about the future quality of life for Floyd unless the Premier reverses her ill-conceived decision to close the Michener Centre. I would now like to ask Lisa to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, your guests have not yet arrived, so we'll move on to the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly one of the councillors from the beautiful community of Devon in our new part of our constituency. It's great to have elected officials join us here. If I could introduce to you Councillor Gordon Groat and his lovely bride. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

### Members' Statements

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

### National Volunteer Week

**Ms L. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across Alberta the same incredible spirit of community that helped to build our great province continues to burn brightly. It is a light fuelled by the compassion, the concern, and the generosity of a special group of amazing Albertans. They are our friends and neighbours, our students, our parents, our grandparents, and even our children. They are farmers, bankers, shopkeepers, rig workers, and home builders. They are Alberta-born and -raised and those who have come from far and wide to make this province their home. While their backgrounds may differ, they share a common bond of community service. They are volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, April 21 to 27 is National Volunteer Week, a time to recognize and honour our volunteers, Albertans who have identified a need and stepped forward to create solutions in their communities. Our volunteers are delivering recreational, social,

and cultural programs and services valued at more than \$9 billion annually that enhance the quality of life for our families and communities. Our volunteers help to develop the artists, the athletes, entrepreneurs, and leaders of tomorrow.

These remarkable individuals are not driven by their desire for compensation, recognition, or praise. They are motivated by a sense of duty, a sense of compassion, and a sense of community. Mr. Speaker, their reward is in the new skills they've learned, the experience they've gained, the friendships they've made, and the memories that will last a lifetime.

The government of Alberta is proud to support our volunteers and voluntary sector agencies. The Stars of Alberta volunteer awards are presented each December to recognize exceptional Albertans who are making it happen and who demonstrate the true spirit of this province for the benefit of all our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members and all Albertans join together to recognize and celebrate our amazing volunteers during National Volunteer Week, starting this Sunday, and every day of the year.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### Health System Executive Expenses

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been a bad week for Albertans' ever-eroding confidence in their public health care system. Our public system is built on key principles of universality and equal access. All Albertans are entitled to the same level of health care regardless of who they are or who they know. These principles took a very public beating this week with revelations that not one but two senior health executives bought private health care out of pocket and then recouped the money from Alberta taxpayers.

Last year former AHS VP Alison Tonge charged for medical tests at a private facility. She submitted the bill to taxpayers, and AHS CEO Chris Eagle approved it. If you are not an AHS VP, good luck getting the government to pay that for you, Mr. Speaker. In 2007 former Capital health VP Michele Lahey went all the way to the world-renowned Mayo Clinic in Minnesota for \$7,000 worth of treatment and then turned around and charged taxpayers for it.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, Albertans who would have to wait in line for health care got stuck with the bill for a connected government insider to get preferential access unavailable to them. Now, I understand that Sheila Weatherill has since admitted that this was wrong and has agreed to pay it back on Ms Lahey's behalf, and if that's true, that's a good thing.

Regardless of that, this is queue-jumping, Mr. Speaker, no ifs, ands, or buts. It's queue-jumping, and it's wrong. The government is pretending to be mad about it. It's the same act they pull whenever they are confronted with a smoking gun that verifies their entitlement and mismanagement. But they're not mad. They can manufacture rhetorical anger for political convenience all they want. They will be judged by their actions. The ball is now in their court, and they can do two things. They can sweep it under the rug and pretend it never happened, or they can undertake to get to the bottom of it.

### North Saskatchewan River Valley

**Mr. Dorward:** Mr. Speaker, in 1957 I caught my first goldeye in the North Saskatchewan River. In 1967 my family founded the

Waskahegan hiking trail, a 300-kilometre trail that transverses at the North Saskatchewan River at Ross Creek, near Fort Saskatchewan. The beautiful constituency that I've lived in for over 50 years, Gold Bar, has as its western and northern border this beautiful river.

Mr. Speaker, I've canoed the river from Devon to Whitemud park, but not recently.

In 1978, Mr. Speaker, I worked for the company that planted thousands of trees and shrubs in the valley. At that time the province and the city of Edmonton invested in the river valley trails. The city continues to be great stewards of the valley. Today the River Valley Alliance, with the goal to preserve, protect, and enhance, is working on linking the trails from Devon to Fort Saskatchewan. The North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper is urging responsible use of the river, and a relatively new group, the North Saskatchewan River Valley Conservation Society, is promoting the Big Island/Woodbend natural area. This 400-hectare area will be Canada's largest urban wilderness area, completely within the city of Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, the North Saskatchewan River valley is a year-round blessing to Edmontonians and Albertans. Let's protect it, and let's use it.

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

#### Youth Advisory Panel

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to stand before the Assembly today as chair of Alberta's Youth Secretariat. As such, I'm excited to take this opportunity to recognize its success and make mention of its current activities.

The Youth Secretariat, which falls under the Ministry of Human Services, was formed by Premier Klein in 1999 for the purpose of helping the government to address issues that impact youth at risk. By the year 2000 a Youth Advisory Panel was established to provide an ongoing youth perspective on all work done by the secretariat. Ever since, Mr. Speaker, Alberta has been able to provide its youth with the unique opportunity to become involved in government through their voice on the panel.

This Progressive Conservative government takes seriously the civic education and engagement of Alberta's youth. Alberta's long-term success depends upon inquiring minds and proactive attitudes in all of its citizens but particularly in our youth. It is today's youth that will lead the Alberta of tomorrow. This is why we are looking at upcoming legislation with engaged youth in order to familiarize them with the legislative process to gain valuable insight from our up-and-coming leaders.

We held our inaugural meeting with this year's Youth Advisory Panel in early March, and I can honestly say that it was an inspiring meeting. We engaged the hon. Minister of Human Services on the panel's goals and priorities for the year. We also discussed the water conversation with the hon. Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. Along with their fellow panel members Amber, Nancy, and Shandy, who are here today, have embraced this opportunity to help shape programs that impact everyone in this province.

Now I issue a challenge to my MLA colleagues. If you see an opportunity to engage youth on government initiatives, involve the Youth Advisory Panel. The best way to educate the citizens and leaders of tomorrow is to get them involved early in their lives.

Mr. Speaker, we have some incredibly bright, ambitious, and hard-working Albertans on this year's Youth Advisory Panel, and I can't wait to sit down with them again. This government is

building Alberta. What better way to build than to foster ambition, compassion, and responsibility within young Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by Calgary-Bow.

#### Advocacy for Seniors

**Ms Kennedy-Glans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The median age of people living in the constituency of Calgary-Varsity is over 60. Many of our constituents have lived in this community for 30 to 40 years, and they want to stay in these communities, close to their family and their friends.

As a new MLA how do I support this vision? In our constituency office we've decided that we're going to be unrelenting advocates for seniors. Negotiating transitions from home care to acute care in hospital to supportive living or long-term care in the community is daunting. Sometimes this involves going to the seniors' bedsides to support planning with Alberta Health Services or talking to family members about choices.

We're always talking with local community associations about active aging programs. Together we look at all possibilities. For example, will permitting more secondary suites in Calgary support the goal of keeping seniors in the community longer? We meet with the mayor of Calgary, his staff, and our local alderman to figure out ways to streamline zoning approvals for construction of new supportive living and affordable housing. At our urging and with the support of colleagues the city has even designated someone responsible for managing seniors' issues at city hall.

Our constituency office presses the Calgary board of education, our government, and the private sector to identify land in Calgary-Varsity where we can locate more facilities. When we see plans for new construction happening – for example, the west campus development at the U of C or the redesign of Stadium Shopping Centre in University Heights – we're at the table with the developers and the local communities promoting age-friendly buildings even at the design stage.

Mr. Speaker, seniors are the heart and soul of our communities. As MLA my goal is to work with the government and our other strategic partners to create the conditions for seniors to live in their communities in dignity for as long as they choose.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. We have one final member's statement, which we'll hear after question period.

Let me just congratulate all of you for listening so attentively to each other's member's statements today. That was well done. You deserve a thank you from the Speaker, and you've got it.

1:50

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** Hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, your first main set of questions.

#### Health Services Preferential Access Inquiry

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health continues to undermine public confidence in the Alberta health system. He refuses to acknowledge any shortcomings or failures, yet his performance on doctors' negotiations, drug prices, excessive expenses, facility closures, wait lists, and executive bonuses is terrible. Then there is the reluctance to get to the bottom of queue-jumping. The Lahey Mayo Clinic example is the smoking gun.

Will the Premier agree to ask the Vertes inquiry to reopen and re-examine this matter?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have some news to share with the House today, and I will table the relevant document at the appropriate time. Just prior to question period today I received a letter from Mrs. Sheila Weatherill, former CEO of Capital health, in which she acknowledges that the payment in question, referred to by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, was made in error, was a mistake. She has apologized for the mistake, she has provided an explanation, and she has repaid the money to the government of Alberta and the people of Alberta.

**Ms Smith:** I'm glad she saw fit to use a portion of her \$1.5 million severance payment to do the right thing and pay that back.

Mr. Speaker, the former CEO of Capital health sent one of her VPs out of the country for special treatment, signed off on the expense so that it would be covered by Alberta taxpayers, bypassed the process that other Albertans have to follow. That is queue-jumping. Even though she has paid it back, that same CEO testified before the Vertes inquiry and never even mentioned it. Why doesn't the Premier reopen the inquiry to see if there are any other cases we should be worried about?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the inquiry into improper preferential access is still ongoing. As we've discussed in the past, it is not the business of the Minister of Health or, I would say, any elected member of this Assembly to tell the commissioner for that inquiry where he should and should not look. The inquiry is open. An extension has been provided until the end of August. We have every confidence that Justice Vertes will thoroughly investigate any matter he deems relevant.

**Ms Smith:** The justice invited us to give him suggestions, and we intend to do that.

The Premier told the Assembly yesterday that she ran for office so she could make changes in the way government operates. Well, Mr. Speaker, so far we haven't seen any evidence of any changes to the culture of entitlement that pervades that 42-year-old operation. I ask again: if she won't agree to get to the truth through the Vertes inquiry, how about a forensic audit into all of the expenses of the health regions going back to the Merali era?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, I think we've established in this House on many occasions that there is a process available under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to access that information. While I don't have details of any of the information, I would be very surprised if it was not the case that all of the expense claims that the hon. member refers to – I don't know how many years she's talking about today – have in fact been requested through that process.

Mr. Speaker, what I did do earlier today is that I had a conversation with and subsequently wrote to the former Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench, Chief Justice Allan Wachowich, and I've asked for his assistance in looking at avenues to recoup . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. leader, your second main set of questions.

**Ms Smith:** I'll be looking forward to seeing how the Minister of Health finishes that statement.

### Health System Executive Expenses

**Ms Smith:** The Minister of Health finally did acknowledge yesterday that it was wrong and offensive to spend public health dollars to send a health executive to the Mayo Clinic, but he does say that it was in the past. Well, the minister in 2007 is sitting right there as Human Services. He himself was the minister's top adviser then, yet he still denies any continuity. Unbelievable. Will this minister at least take full responsibility for AHS executive contracts and expenses that were signed since he became Health minister, or is that too much to ask?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the ability to weave conspiracy theories apparently knows no bounds on the other side of the House.

We have taken the appropriate steps to put in place not only rules with respect to health executives but with respect to all of government, agencies, boards, and commissions that report to government in order that we do not have to entertain a situation such as the one that was reported on in 2007. If the hon. member truly regards herself as a Premier of a government-in-waiting in this province, she needs to take a lesson from a real Premier of Alberta as to how . . .

**Ms Smith:** We are not talking about conspiracy when we are demanding accountability.

When executives get monster contracts with country club memberships, tax advisers, and career coaches and then get released with huge severance packages, including expenses, just a couple of years after they're recruited from abroad, Albertans are right to wonder about the competence of AHS management. The minister claims to have fixed all the trouble with lavish expenses in the old health regions. When is he going to look into the lavish contracts and sloppy management at the Health superboard?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this hon. member is in absolutely no position to cast judgment on the competency of management or the delivery of health care in this province. Every time she does so, she denigrates the reputation of not only the board of Alberta Health Services but of the people who actually deliver care to each of us each day, and that is reprehensible.

As I was about to say in the answer to the earlier question, I have also taken an additional step. Given the importance that Albertans place on recouping repayment of improper expenses, I have asked the former Chief Justice of Alberta to conduct a review of any and all legal avenues that are available to recover such expenses.

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, to recover them, we've got to find them all first, and when we ask for information, the minister points us to the freedom of information process. Now, we're using it, but we've still only received about half of the requests, and some very senior former health executives are fighting very hard to keep their expenses secret. Once again I ask the minister: to restore public trust, will he agree to release all of the expenses for all of the executives for all of the health regions going back to 2005?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I was waiting to see how far back in time the hon. member would want me to go with her in her time machine today. We have rules and processes in place that appropriately govern the approval and the disclosure of expenses at Alberta Health Services and across government. These have been in place for some time. They've been well documented with members of the Assembly. The information is there not just for



the opposition to see but for all Albertans to see on the Internet. That's responsible government, that's what responsible Premiers do, and that's the leadership that we've provided.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, your third main set of questions.

### Prescription Drug Coverage

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the Health minister said this week: "On April 1 in response to a pan-Canadian decision by all provinces to set the price for our six top-volume generic drugs at 18 per cent . . . the manufacturers have met the . . . price . . . on those six drugs." That's great, but his answer makes me wonder if the minister even understands his own generic drug plan. He cut prices across the board for everything, not just those six drugs, and that is what now threatens the viability of Alberta pharmacies. Why did the minister break the original agreement?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, once again I have no idea what the hon. member thinks she is talking about, but I can tell you what we have done. It's a very interesting dynamic to be on the side of taxpayers in one set of questions and then to not be on the side of taxpayers in the second set of questions.

The leadership that Alberta has provided in reducing generic drug prices is important. It's important for Albertans. It's important for our economy and small business. It's also important for the rest of Canada. On a pan-Canadian basis we have as a country now reduced the price of the six top generic drugs to 18 per cent. We will proceed with our plans to do the rest with a balance of . . .

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, there is an agreement across provincial jurisdictions to set lower prices for the six most prescribed generic drugs, but that is not what this minister did in Alberta. He announced he was setting prices for all of the generics, so naturally many of these drugs have been delisted, and the prices have actually gone up. Doesn't the minister understand that this Fred-icare plan will mean higher prices for patients and eventually drug shortages and pharmacy closures?

2:00

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's statement is about as far from the truth as I could possibly imagine. Drug prices in Alberta are only going in one direction, and that is down.

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

**Mr. Horne:** As the hon. member well knows, with leadership comes the responsibility of taking on difficult challenges and implementing policy in the interests of citizens. Mr. Speaker, this province has led the country in providing transition support to pharmacists as drug prices have been reduced. There are no drugs in Alberta that are delisted without an equivalent drug being brought to the market. I'm very pleased to report to the House that prices are coming . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Ms Smith:** Every time he talks about this, he confirms he doesn't know the details of his own plan.

The minister made dramatic changes to the way drugs are priced without the agreement of drug companies or pharmacies. He broke the original deal. Will the minister now admit that it was a mistake to try to control the prices of all generic drugs and go

back to the original pan-Canadian agreement on the six top-volume drugs?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues across Canada who are ministers of health are welcoming Alberta's initiative in reducing generic drug prices for all generic drugs to 18 per cent. They support it because they know it means that they're able to provide more drugs to their growing populations. They support it because they know it means support for jobs for small- and medium-sized businesses that have to pay for employer-sponsored benefit plans. They support it because it reduces prices for people who are unfortunate enough to have to pay out of pocket for their drugs.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, you rose on a point of order at 2 o'clock during the first supplemental answer by the Minister of Health. It's been noted.

### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Hehr:** In her press release this morning the Premier stated that the budget would not be balanced "on the backs of students." That's quite a statement given the draconian cuts this government has delivered to our postsecondary institutions. I'm not the only one who thinks this. The mayors of Edmonton and Calgary believe that these cuts are unjustifiable and a terrible error. To the Premier: in all sincerity given that Alberta already has the lowest participation rate in postsecondary and even fewer opportunities will be given to Alberta's students to take part because of these cuts, how can you make this type of statement?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's get some facts straight. First of all, it should be known – and I'm sure it's appreciated by the majority of students in Alberta – that even following this budget adjustment Alberta advanced education is the second-highest funded advanced education system in Canada. Also, we have the second-highest level of bursaries and grants to students in Canada. Nobody jumps up and down with happiness to have a budget reduction, but we will be focusing on adjusting the budget through administrative changes and not at the expense of students.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, let's look at Mount Royal University. They announced program cuts to disability studies, music performance, theatre arts, aging studies, forensics, journalism, prenatal, engineering and reduced the intake for nursing. Does the Premier not recognize that these cuts to our postsecondary system are devastating to students and will have long-lasting effects?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, the only artistic performance that should be cut is that of this member sitting across asking those questions because no programs have been cut at this point in time. Maybe it would serve the member well to know that in order for a program to be eliminated, first, the board of directors has to make that decision and vote upon it. The board of directors is made up of community members. Then that has to be submitted to the minister's office for approval or not. I have to date not received any requests for cutting programs.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, despite this rhetoric I cannot get over not only what the hon. member said but the press release today stating that

we are not balancing the budget on the backs of students. Isn't that akin to when I was trying to pull one over on my grandma, and she would say, "My boy, don't take a leak on my shoes and tell me it's raining"?"

**The Speaker:** Let us move on.

The hon. leader of the New Democrat opposition, followed by Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a hard image to get out of my mind.

### Health System Executive Expenses

(continued)

**Mr. Mason:** Well, the CEO of Capital health, Sheila Weatherill, approved Michele Lahey's \$7,800 visit to the Mayo Clinic while she was the CEO. Today Mrs. Weatherill repaid the \$7,800 expense. As she received a \$2 million severance from Capital health, no doubt she can afford it. However, we still haven't seen Mrs. Weatherill's own expenses. Why not?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, that information is available under the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I am not the party that makes a determination about the release of information under that act. The hon. member is aware of the process, and he has the ability to access that information.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, that act is to get information that the government wants to give. It doesn't prevent the government from giving it.

Mrs. Weatherill also approved the extravagant and outrageous expenses of another senior Capital health official, Mr. Allaudin Merali. Will the minister ask Sheila Weatherill to repay those expenses as well, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear, and I think you would probably caution us to be careful about talking about individuals that are not in the House. What I will tell you and will confirm when I table the document later today is that Mrs. Weatherill offered this repayment of her own volition. She acknowledges in the letter that she sent to me that the payment to Ms Lahey was an error, has apologized for that error, and has renewed her commitment and restated her concern for the interest and integrity of our health care system. For that, I do thank her.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it seems to me that the expenses of Allaudin Merali were similar, almost identical, yet the minister is not prepared to demand that Sheila Weatherill return those, nor apparently is he prepared to tell this House what Sheila Weatherill's expenses were and who approved those. Why not, Mr. Minister?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, as I attempted to say in the answer to an earlier question from another member, I have asked the former Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench, Mr. Allan Wachowich, to look at the question of the ability of government to seek repayment. We want to seek repayment for inappropriate expenses, and I've asked him to look at the law and to provide me with his considered opinion as to how that can be done.

### Out-of-province Health Services

**Mr. Hale:** Mr. Speaker, this week we learned a little bit more about the health expense scandal. In addition to personal butlers and fancy dinners, senior AHS executives are allowed to expense private medicare, leaving Albertans stuck holding the bill. Grant Ellefson and Russell Coyne are two victims of this minister's two-tiered health system. Both men underwent spinal surgery after suffering injuries and had their surgical claims rejected. Both men contacted the Health ministry and were turned away. To the Health minister. It's time to start telling the truth. Why are AHS executives getting paid access to private care when Albertans like Grant and Russell are left holding the bill?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, I've got to take issue with the premise of the hon. member's question. Access to private health care is not a right or a benefit that is provided to Alberta Health Services or any other employees. If we want to talk about 2005 and we want to talk about the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition to privatization of health care, we can look at her words in the *Calgary Herald*. "The sooner Canadians realize that privatization is a must, the sooner we can move on to the more crucial debate over how to refinance the system." What did she mean by that?

**Mr. Hale:** Given that Russell Coyne, a hard-working Albertan with a young family, is suffering the financial burden of his surgery and he's been waiting over 10 months to hear back from the minister's office, will the minister commit to personally looking into Russell's file and compensating him for his surgical costs even though he's not an AHS executive?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd be pleased to look at any information that the hon. member wants to send to me on behalf of his constituent.

What the hon. member hasn't mentioned is whether his constituent is seeking compensation through the Out-of-country Health Services Committee process or the appeal process associated with that. These decisions are not made by government. They are made by a quasi-judicial panel, and there's an appeal process, but I'd be pleased to look at the information if you'd like to send it.

**Mr. Hale:** I have a document here from back in June. You were fully aware of this for over a year now, Minister.

To the same minister: given that Grant and Russell are both on the hook for tens of thousands of dollars after they were only compensated for anaesthesia and given that both men were facing paralysis, a lifelong debilitation, will you admit that something is wrong with this two-tiered system and that it's examples like these that truly undermine Alberta's confidence in the health care system?

2:10

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, as much as I would certainly feel for the hon. member's constituents, this situation has nothing to do with two-tier health care. Decisions that are made on repayment for health services received out of country are made by a body independent of government. This minister does not have the authority – the hon. member knows this – to override the decisions of the committee or the appeal panel.

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

### Postsecondary Education Funding

(continued)

**Mr. Webber:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. After Budget 2013 was released, I received some concerns from my constituents in Calgary-Foothills. The concerns centred around the decreases to postsecondary education funding and the effects that this will have on institutions like Mount Royal University. MRU is now having to make budget adjustments resulting in the cancellation of the engineering transfer program and the cancellation of the theatre and music programs to name a few. My question is to the Deputy Premier: given that decreased funding has raised many uncertainties among postsecondary institutions, what options will be provided to ensure that students will continue to have access to affordable and accessible postsecondary education?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's only natural that in view of a budgetary adjustment there would be uncertainty. Often we talk about numbers and percentages, but at the end of the day we're talking about faculty staff and administrative staff whose job that is, who count on a paycheque, and who have families and probably mortgages. But having said that, this government had to make some very difficult decisions. As you know, we haven't adjusted the budget to the tune that the opposition would want us to adjust it to because then I would have to deal with a much more severe situation in the education system. However, what must be said is that we will work with administration and presidents to minimize the impact on students.

**Mr. Webber:** Again to the Deputy Premier: given the importance of investing in our province's skilled workforce of the future and that Alberta's prosperity is riding on the academic and professional success of our students and given the fiscal reality that we are currently facing, what can your ministry do to protect postsecondary students like those at Mount Royal University?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, first off all, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage everyone not to jump to conclusions. No decisions have been made on eliminations of programs. I know that the faculty associations are putting forward some worst-case scenarios. What we will do is that we will look at the operations of all schools and also of Campus Alberta to see where we can minimize expenses and make sure that the most dollars enter into the classroom. At the end of the day the second-highest funded education system in Canada should have at least the second-highest participation rate of students. At this point we don't. We will be working on that.

**Mr. Webber:** Again to the Deputy Premier: given that Alberta's postsecondary institutions are Alberta's engines of innovation and that we need them to continue to provide leading-edge education and given that the deadline for responses to the letter of expectations has been extended, what collaborative efforts are in place to ensure that the quality of education is not compromised?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Good question. Mr. Speaker, what we have established are three tables: one of presidents, one of chairs, and for the first time one of students. We will be meeting quarterly and engaging in those collaborative dialogues on how to better operate our system of Campus Alberta, how to be more functional, and how to deliver a better service to our students, who have more and more options as education is becoming a global commodity. I agree with the member. The only way to diversify our economy

and set this economy on fire is through innovation and commercialization, and that is also what we will be focusing on.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### PDD Funding

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's cold-hearted cuts to vulnerable front-line services continue. The PDD day program in southern Alberta provides high-needs clients with jobs within their limitations and helps to give them a sense of purpose. The Premier even did a photo op at this facility during the election last year in Coaldale. But now programs like it are being cut, and millions are being wasted on plush new MLA offices and special services for health care insiders. To the Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities: why do you swing an axe at the front-line programs for the most vulnerable citizens of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for the question. It's a good question. He's representing his constituents and concerns that he's heard out there. I can tell him that they are concerns that I share. We haven't cut any programs yet. We're shifting away from community access programs towards programs that produce better outcomes, community inclusion, community engagement, and employment programs. How that impacts any particular client out there we haven't yet determined, but we're going to do that very carefully.

**Mr. Donovan:** There was a web seminar on Monday saying that you're going to close all these programs. That's why people are concerned.

Mr. Speaker, again to the same minister: given that southern Alberta has especially high rates of PDD clients and given that you clearly haven't done all the homework for these various employment challenges that exist, when are you going to suspend these cuts and do a proper assessment of the programs that are needed in my region?

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, my budget saw an overall increase, though modest, this year. This isn't about cutting; this is about shifting to fund programs that produce better outcomes and better care for the clients that we have in the system.

**Mr. Donovan:** Mr. Speaker, again to the same minister: given that the parents of these PDD clients have contacted me and are worried they're going to have to quit their jobs to look after their adult children, what can we say to assure them? Are you going to reassess your cuts and the needs in my region, or are you going to just keep putting vulnerable Albertans at risk?

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. We're not putting vulnerable Albertans at risk, nor are we going to evict, as some members over there have suggested, persons in need and throw them back to their families or put them on the street. That's wrong.

But here's something for the member to ponder over the weekend. We're talking about implementing a difficult budget, doing some difficult balances with a modest increase in the budget. Think about what happens when you cut a couple of billion dollars out of the system, the difficult decisions that you guys would have forecast in moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, we are moving to increase and provide better care for the individuals, for vulnerable Albertans out there. We'll continue to do that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

### Immigrant Nominee Program

**Mr. Quadri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta immigrant nominee program is one of the important tools that we have to continue to build Alberta. Through the AINP program Alberta can nominate individuals and their families for permanent residence. Many of my constituents are interested in this program. My question to the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education: how many workers have been nominated each year?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, I should begin answering that question by saying that it is our firm policy to make sure that any and all job opportunities are first extended to Albertans and then to the rest of our brothers and sisters throughout Canada, and then if those jobs can't be filled, they are made available to foreigners.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, we nominate approximately 5,000 temporary foreign workers, but when you add their families to this, we're looking at about 18,000 individuals.

**Mr. Quadri:** To the same minister again: does the ministry have a limit on the number of people that can qualify under AINP in different streams?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, the program is a federal program, the program of temporary foreign workers. The obtaining of a labour market opinion by employers is also a federal program. There are federal caps that are put on provinces. Right now the province of Alberta is limited to some 5,000 semiskilled workers per year.

**Mr. Quadri:** To the same minister again: what kind of assistance does the province provide for the people who qualify under this program to help them out in the transition period until they become permanent residents?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, while they are temporary foreign workers, there are offices that assist temporary foreign workers not only with some administrative work and the paperwork that they have to go through but also with settlement services. Once they become bona fide permanent residents of Canada, they can access any and all services throughout the province, throughout the country such as Catholic Social Services, the Mennonite centre, and the list goes on and on. We're very fortunate in this province to have agencies and third parties that deliver some very valuable services to our immigrant community.

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

### Supports for Vulnerable Albertans

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month the Premier said: we will make tough decisions, but they will be responsible; they will ensure that we are protecting vulnerable people. Jody is a mentally disabled, mobile adult whose supervised community activities get her out of her basement for volunteering, group activities, and exercise. They've eliminated her need for antidepressants. Because of this government's poorly planned cut of \$45 million for community access to PDD Jody's meagre

opportunities will be severely reduced. To the Premier: will the Premier stop insulting Albertans who are disabled and their families by portraying these cuts as improvements when all Albertans recognize . . .

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. associate minister.

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out in a previous question, the overall budget for disabilities services did in fact increase although modestly. Nonetheless, there are always difficult decisions to make when you are talking about the care of vulnerable Albertans. We did not cut that budget completely. What I did commit is that those people that rely upon community access supports, that need them, that are identified in their assessments will still get those supports.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let me go to the Minister of Human Services, then, who has dodged these questions repeatedly. How can the minister be seen as anything but irresponsible in forcing these drastic cuts in three months? He's clearly out of touch with our most vulnerable and their families.

**Mr. Hancock:** I would answer that by saying: how can that hon. member be so irresponsible as to scare vulnerable Albertans when the answer is very clear? There will be a plan for each one of those Albertans, and if they need those services, they'll continue to get those services. But we're working to better services for vulnerable Albertans for better outcomes for vulnerable Albertans. That takes time. The associate minister is working with those families, and our department is working with those families. It's absolutely irresponsible to scare those vulnerable Albertans with any other comments.

**Dr. Swann:** Working with the families doesn't mean listening to the families, Mr. Minister.

Given that you want to increase employment and postsecondary for the severely disabled, which is impossible for people like Jody, and given that Alberta Works has cut a hundred million from employment programs and postsecondary has taken more drastic cuts, how is this not irresponsible? Are these ministries even talking to each other?

**Mr. Hancock:** What's irresponsible, Mr. Speaker, is to lump every single disabled Albertan into the same can and say that these cuts are going to affect all of them in the same way. What we're doing is responsibly looking at each particular program, at each particular individual, and each particular individual's need and saying: how can we get better outcomes for those people? Yes, we are working with Enterprise and Advanced Education with respect to how we get skill levels up, and yes, we are targeting our resources so that instead of devoting them to the advantaged Albertans, who have the opportunity to get good jobs in a good economy, we're targeting them at those who have barriers to success so that they, too, can participate in our economy.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

### Postsecondary Education Funding (continued)

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ink is not even dry on a budget which has been debated but not passed, and the advanced education minister is going back to the drawing board to find \$16 million. The minister is so focused on his bait-and-switch plan to

distract Albertans from the harm created by his much larger cut that he forgot to include the cost of this plan in his budget and refused to discuss it in estimates debate in the House. To the minister: does he have absolutely no respect for this House, or is he really just making this up as he goes along?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, last Thursday this member had an opportunity to sift through the estimates of this ministry and go line by line through this ministry's budget, so she should have known that there are no added dollars to supplement the inflationary costs that now we are saving students from paying and that the department will pay on students' behalf. There is a line item in the budget. She has seen it; she has approved it. [interjections] I imagine that if she wants to sit down with me and show me what the line item is, I'll gladly show it to her. The budget has not changed, and the allocation to universities has not changed.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that several rural institutions have already predicted staff cuts, downsizing of academic programs, and closure of student support services and given that these reductions when combined with the government's broken promise to fund scholarships for aboriginal and rural students will limit access by these underrepresented groups to advanced ed, why won't the minister admit the facts? Your cuts fundamentally assault the quality and the accessibility of Albertans' advanced education system.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in a province that has the second-highest funding for advanced education in Canada and also has the second-highest financial support for students and also in a province, as the member will point out every time, that has one of the lower postsecondary enrolments amongst students, if she points out that there is access lacking, something is wrong. [interjections] We will make sure that the dollars that we spend on advanced education get to the classrooms, we will make sure that students get the services that they deserve, and we will run a system that is efficient and student focused.

**Ms Notley:** Well, only this government would think that the way to fix a problem is to cut 8 per cent away from it. That's ridiculous.

Given that the minister claims he can only ask postsecondary institutions to refrain from raising noninstructional fees and given that Mount Royal University has clearly demonstrated the weight of this so-called ministerial request by announcing plans to raise noninstructional fees, why won't the minister admit that he has all the legislative authority he needs to ban these fees and then step up and do his job and ban them?

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, only a member of the NDP caucus would say that the only way to solve a problem is to spend your way out of that problem, to throw more money at the problem and grow it.

Mr. Speaker, we will be focusing on students. [interjections] We know that we can deliver high-quality, competitive education for our students, and we know that we can find administrative efficiencies not only in one school but in the entire Campus Alberta. That's what we will do because at the end of the day 25 per cent of that cost is paid by students through tuition. Certainly, she doesn't want that to go up, does she?

**The Speaker:** Can we go to the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Edmonton-South West, without any more outbursts if you please?

## Respiratory Care Services

**Mrs. Towle:** On July 1 Alberta Health will be handing clinical oversight of respiratory services to the AHS superboard, who will put the contracts to tender. This is the same board that in 2009 tendered contracts for cataract surgeries, resulting in ballooning wait times and worse outcomes for Albertans. Even the Respiratory Home Care Association of Alberta has stated that this move will lead to significant cost increases and reduced patient access. Does the minister understand that by not listening to those who are actually providing the oxygen service to Albertans that this will cause patient harm?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, this change will not cause patient harm. What it will do is enable Alberta Health Services to delivery respiratory services to a greater number, a growing number of Albertans across the province who need these services. My understanding from my department is that there was consultation with all of the stakeholders involved. The changes were publicized well in advance, and when they come into effect, they will improve access for Albertans who need respiratory care.

**Mrs. Towle:** I have here a document actually from the Respiratory Home Care Association of Alberta wherein they specifically lay out exactly what the implications are to patients. They also go on to say that this move will increase ER visits, increase death rates, increase hospital admissions, increase ICU admissions. Given that the sole sourcing of contracts leads to supply shortages, doesn't the minister understand that AHS bureaucracy does not need another opportunity to screw up something that is already working?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member probably knows, there are multiple vendors across the province, some large ones but many, many small vendors, who have been involved in the delivery of respiratory services over the years. One of the opportunities in having one health authority to serve the entire province is to achieve a better efficiency and savings in matters related to procurement. This is one such example. I said that people were consulted. I didn't say that everyone would agree. Vendors are affected by this change, but our concern, of course, is with access for patients.

**Mrs. Towle:** Given that in rural Alberta some oxygen users, including my own father, are already being told that they might not get access and given that this government's very own report from Keefe Taylor Associates says that this type of tender process should be avoided and that the government should keep the current program in place, will the Health minister please stop ignoring your own reports and please reconsider this decision and go back to the table and talk to the home care association of Alberta?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, in making decisions of this nature, it's very important to separate business interests from the interests of patients. The hon. member may disagree with the decision, and she may know people who disagree with the decision, but Albertans expect us as a province and within our health system to achieve the best possible cost-efficiency and value that we can. There are growing numbers of Albertans who require respiratory therapy as a result of the growing incidence of chronic disease and other factors. We must make provisions to meet their needs, and this initiative will do just that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Family Care Clinics

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently we've been hearing about how important family care clinics are for the long-term vision of this government. Specifically, these types of clinics are clearly integral to this government's commitment to investing in the families and communities that make up this province. I know within my constituency of Edmonton-South West we are eagerly awaiting news of when we can expect a clinic. My question is to the hon. Minister of Health. Can you clearly explain about the physical makeup of these clinics and how they're equipped so as to be suited to the needs of all Albertans?

2:30

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, we are very excited about the potential for family care clinics to further improve access to primary health care for all Albertans. That is our core commitment. Family care clinics will provide this access – they are a clinic model, not a network – by putting in place the right mix of health professionals in a given community to serve the people that live in that community. We're doing this by working with local health professionals to conduct community needs assessments. This is a community-driven process. There's an opportunity to tailor the services that are offered for the specific needs of the community.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a lot of what you just said seems already to be in place with the primary care networks and given that this may be more efficient to build as a model across the province, has the Ministry of Health considered standardizing these family care clinics so we can get more of them built and faster?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is that we are developing primary health care standards that will apply to both primary care networks and family care clinics, that will deliver a more consistent level of service across the province. This includes considerations such as core services that need to be offered in primary health care, the hours of operation, whether PCNs or FCCs are delivering the care to ensure the services are available when people need them, and also, as I said earlier, looking at the unique needs of each community.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in my constituency we have a lot of young families who could benefit from this type of clinic and given that this would significantly reduce the burdens on hospital emergency rooms, when can we expect more clinics to be operational, and where exactly will they be located in the province?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we currently have three pilot clinics, as the hon. member may know: one in Edmonton, one in Calgary, and one in Slave Lake. In the very near future we will be announcing a longer list of communities that we will be working with directly to develop a plan for their family care clinic. Part of this work obviously involves working with the primary care networks, that may serve the same area, to ensure appropriate linkages between the two. So some very exciting and good news coming in the very short future.

### Wainwright Health Centre

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, the Wainwright health centre is in dire need of infrastructure upgrades as the sewer system is on the brink of failure. According to Alberta Health Services the sewage system has been a significant concern. This desperately needed project is currently unfunded despite being resubmitted again and again. The need for a new facility is immediate. To the Minister of Infrastructure: a solution is clearly a priority for Wainwright; why is it not a priority for your government?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, this government was elected to build Alberta and live within our means, and we are doing that. My department consults with the Health department and builds the priorities that meet Health's recommendations. A facility condition index scoring is done on all facilities throughout the province every year, and the condition is reported.

**Mr. Barnes:** Minister, it's been asked for again and again.

Given that this new facility in Wainwright is in immediate need and given that the government recently gave itself an 8 per cent pay raise and given that AHS has been paying executives for out-of-country personal health care expenses, when will this government reprioritize its spending so the people in Wainwright don't have to live in fear that their health facility will shut down?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what the member says is all well and good, but I'm not sure if they want us to spend more money on building capital or less. We have a capital plan that's funded, and it's the priority list. That's the money we have. If they want us to spend more, they should say so.

**Mr. Barnes:** We want you to prioritize your spending properly.

The dire situation residents of Wainwright and the surrounding area would find themselves in should the health centre facility's sewage system fail and the facility be forced to close underscores again the need for a public prioritized infrastructure list so Albertans know when their critical infrastructure needs will be addressed. Why does this government refuse to do so?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said before, our priority list is our capital plan. It's on our website. The member has gone there and looked at it. There are good projects on there. Which projects on there would you like us to remove to do these other ones? It didn't make the priority list. They would have to cancel projects we have on there to build new ones. I guess they want to spend more in capital.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

### Impaired Driving

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Justice. Hon. minister, you and I are scheduled to meet with my constituents Robert and Sheri Arseneault, whose son along with two others was killed by an alleged drunk driver in a horrific accident between Leduc and Beaumont. This family is frustrated that it took a year to get this case to court. Mr. Minister, what are you doing to speed up this process?

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, you can clarify if this is sub judice. The chair has no knowledge, but you go ahead.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll just comment in general here. First off, my sincere sympathies to this member's

constituents. No one should have to suffer at the hands of a drunk driver because drunk driving is one hundred per cent preventable.

To deal with this member's question directly, we're opening up case management offices. We're looking at moving traffic court outside of the courts so we can deal with more serious matters such as this. Of course, we'll continue to advocate with the federal government for the elimination of preliminary inquiries, which take 26 weeks off of trial time on average, every trial.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. Mr. Minister, this past summer you brought in Bill 26 to increase penalties for impaired driving. What impact, if any, has this had on making our roads safer?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker. Last year I had the privilege of taking a drinking test with the Calgary police. I'm going to tell you again that at .05 I felt pretty tipsy. At .08 it felt like a Friday back in my university days. I had no business driving in either instance. If you don't believe me, let's go and look at what some of the media have had to say. Quote: none of us could imagine driving at .05. Dawn Walton, *Globe and Mail*. "Let me tell you, at .05 you are drunk . . . Hand over the keys and find a different way home." Bryce Forbes, *Calgary Herald*. Nobody has any business driving at .05.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. I want to thank the minister for those efforts, but I wonder what else he might be doing to deal with the issue of impaired drivers.

**Mr. Denis:** Well, first, I want to highlight again, Mr. Speaker, that the matters between .05 and .08 do not actually clog the courts because these are administrative penalties, unlike what the opposition keeps on telling us here. Regardless of what the opposition has to say, we will not stop our crackdown on drunk drivers.

**Mr. Donovan:** You're soft on crime. You're soft on impaired driving.

**Mr. Denis:** This opposition is soft on crime. This Premier is strong on crime as is this government.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Lesser Slave Lake.

#### Tank Site Remediation Program

**Mr. Rowe:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Municipal Affairs stated that the tank site remediation program is winding down and that sites can no longer enter the program. In fact, this program has not accepted new sites for the past four years. This program has helped to mitigate contamination of the environment by leaky underground fuel tanks, and this government's abandonment of the program is a concern to Albertans. To the minister of environment: what is your plan to deal with the current and former gas station sites contaminated by leaking underground tanks that are not a part of the tank site remediation program?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the hon. member for the question. It's an important question. We continue to work with municipalities and with communities when there are contaminated sites. It's an ongoing concern for all of us, and it's one that we want to work on with them. As you know, that particular program that you talk about is no longer in place. Again, it's one of those where we have to make choices. It's not been in place for some time, but we continue to work with communities because we know it's a tough issue for them.

**Mr. Rowe:** The fact is that there are still many of these brownfield sites throughout the province. Given that the tank site remediation program has not accepted any new sites since 2009 and given that there are still contaminated sites and there are sure to be more in the future, Albertans are wondering: does the government even have a plan to remediate these sites, or will these tanks just stay in the ground?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member, I'm sure, is aware, we've been working very closely with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the rural counties as well on a strategy for how we address these issues. We know that it's a complex issue involving many players: municipal governments, provincial governments, departments, developers, and others. It's something that we're coming together on, working with municipal leaders as well, to come forward with a brownfield policy on this issue.

**Mr. Rowe:** Given that municipal leaders have been asking for over a decade where the plan is to ensure that all contaminated brownfield sites in the province are cleaned up and given that this government clearly does not have a plan in place to deal with the current and future contaminated gas station sites, how are Albertans or anyone else scrutinizing our environmental records supposed to believe that this government takes the protection of our environment seriously?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this hon. member would know after spending a great deal of time, which we actually spent together, on the Alberta urban municipalities board, we are taking action with municipalities. Both rural and urban associations have asked us and the Department of Municipal Affairs to work with them so that we can actually develop this together. We are taking action, but we're doing it with our municipal partners because they have asked us to do that.

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

#### Continuing Care Services for Wabasca-Desmarais

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you. The community of Wabasca-Desmarais has a population of 5,500 people. It does not have an extended care facility. Elders are being moved to surrounding communities like Slave Lake, High Prairie, Athabasca, Mayerthorpe, far away from home. Of course, people are concerned. My question is to the Minister of Health. What does the community of Wabasca-Desmarais have to do to get an extended care facility built?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the hon. member knows, our government is committed to providing quality continuing care spaces that allow our seniors to age in place in their communities, with their family and friends close by. Over the past two years alone we've opened more than 2,400 new spaces, making it possible for more people to get the care and supports they need closer to their home. The process for opening new continuing care spaces starts with the identification of need. The hon. member is starting that process in asking her question today. I would encourage the community to keep working with Alberta Health Services to provide their input on service planning in that area.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that one of our priorities is to invest in families and communities – and, of course, this is not a pet project – what can be done to ensure that Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services take into account the need that I've just described within our communities so that we can begin to see and address the circumstances of Wabasca-Desmarais?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Horne:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is on the right course. The process for identifying locations where we add continuing care spaces in the province is through a formal needs assessment. Identifying community needs is the place to start. The community of Wabasca-Desmarais can continue, I would advise, to discuss with government and AHS the needs in their community and contribute to the needs assessment work.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Calahasen:** Thank you. That's wonderful news, Mr. Speaker. My final question. I know we are such strong supporters of P3s. Given the fact that the municipal district of Opportunity No. 17 is willing to partner with us to build an extended care facility, can you, Mr. Minister, tell me what we need to do in order for your staff to work with the people within the MD of Opportunity?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we certainly applaud municipalities and others who partner with government in order to make additional continuing care spaces possible. Their role is absolutely critical. From what the hon. member has said, the community is certainly on the right track. The needs assessment, of course, is the first step that needs to be completed. Exploring the partnership opportunities around the actual construction of a facility is also very much supportive of her efforts.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we take a 30-second break and finish off Members' Statements, might we have your unanimous consent to revert to introductions briefly?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** Please proceed, Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some of the hard-working staff we

have at the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. These folks have been integral in helping to put together Bill 15, the Emergency 911 Act. They're here today to watch second reading. I would ask them to rise and receive our support as I call their names: Dave Galea, Andrew Renfree, Shelley Davies, and Amanda Dalton. Thanks for all your hard work.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements and hear the final one.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

### Memorandum of Understanding with Physicians

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in honour of the significant milestone reached by this government and the Alberta Medical Association. In this memorandum of understanding Albertans are seeing the responsible change that they voted for. This has been a long and challenging process, and we're all very proud of the hard work done by this government, the Alberta Medical Association, and, most importantly, the doctors and patients across this province who've helped us to find a way to make this deal possible.

This is arguably one of the most important agreements with a medical association in the country in recent years. There's no question that this has been a long negotiation, spanning multiple ministers over a two-and-a-half-year period. While the opposition has wasted this time engaging in their usual fearmongering, this side of the House has focused on workable solutions and collaboration with Alberta's hard-working doctors. This agreement provides support for cost reductions in our health care system over time, a series of pay increases for doctors, and stability over a seven-year period.

It also recognizes the Alberta Medical Association as the representative body for physicians in our province. We're excited for opportunities for partnership between government, the Alberta Medical Association, and Alberta Health Services to do what we all want to do and that is to make the health care system work better for patients. We've been successful in arriving at an agreement that improves access and quality of care for patients and at the same time recognizes the very real fiscal realities facing both parties and addresses challenges for physicians' practices such as climbing overhead costs.

We were elected to live within our means, and that is just what we're doing. Thank you very much.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) to advise the House that on Monday, April 22, 2013, written questions 34 and 35 will be accepted.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

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



**Bill 18**  
**Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act**

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 18, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act.

Mr. Speaker, this act will allow pooled registered pension plans to be established here in Alberta. Currently only 1 of 6 Albertans working in the private sector participate in an employee pension plan. This legislation will allow all working Albertans, including those who work for small enterprises or are self-employed, to have more choices when it comes to retirement savings, including a low-cost pension plan option. I look forward to discussing this bill as it moves forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a first time]

**Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I rise quickly just to remind you to be as succinct as possible. I recognize that there are a number of tablings today, and several members are offering more than one, so let's please be patient with each other.

Let us start with Edmonton-Centre to set the example.

**Ms Blakeman:** Oh, the pressure is on. All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. These tablings are from me in the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre. Fiona Lauridsen writes with her concerns, vehemently opposing the appointment of Gerry Protti as the energy regulator on the grounds it is contrary to the public interest.

An e-mail from Jodi Kashmere, who is a physician, is looking for me to "promote fair government negotiations with physicians." I hope she's pleased with the outcome.

The third one is from constituent Dianne Molstad, who wants the concern expressed to the Minister of Education and to the Premier about the violation of the Human Rights Act in the province by fundamentalist, extremist Islamic schools. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

Also directed to me is an e-mail from Grant Kemp, who is concerned about the destruction of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, a world-class location. He loves Canada and many of the things it stands for, particularly freedom, but as a scientist he doesn't feel welcome. Thank you.

This next one was sent to my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. She is very angry about the attack on postsecondary education and research and feels that there's an unfair flat tax and would like to see the progressive tax reinstated.

Then, sent to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, someone was compelled to express their significant disappointment and concern with the funding cuts to education in the province of Alberta.

I'm going to table the rest of them as a big chunk, but I'll give you the names. These are all people that are writing with terrific concern about the cut to the theatre and music programs at Mount Royal University. Coming from that community, I can tell you the effect this is going to have on the city of Calgary, especially since it was named the 2012 cultural capital of Canada. These are from Al Tinholt; Siobhan Cooney; Sheldon Zandboer; Daniella Rubeling; Sharon Owens-Rubeling; Ben Miles; Nicole Yukiko Sekiya, who is a grad; Loraine Fowlow, who is a parent; Trevor Rueger, who is a playwright that I know; Joe-Norman Shaw; and

Nicole McIntyre. All of them are very concerned with what this is going to do to Calgary, to artists and wish to express their concerns.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings that I will very succinctly bring forward here. The first is 50 more copies of e-mails that I have received in regard to the Michener Centre closure. They call on the Premier to honour her government's promise to Albertans not to evict Alberta's most vulnerable citizens from their home in Michener Centre. This is an ongoing theme of the broken-promises budget that we've seen.

The second tabling I have today is the appropriate number of copies of a letter calling on Premier Redford to fulfill Alberta's responsibility as a fossil fuel producer and one of the world's wealthiest economies to meet the challenge of climate change. This letter has been signed by 22 organizations, including the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. It calls to make real progress towards averting the more than two degrees of global warming.

The third tabling that I have here is the appropriate number of copies of postcard submissions that Albertans made to our New Democrat budget tour that visited seven cities, some examples of people talking about putting less money towards punitive measures in our society and more towards social programs. Submissions like these clearly show the priorities of Albertans and how out of touch this PC government actually is.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies of a tabling here. It is a letter from the O'Chiese First Nation. The letter was also CCed to the hon. Minister of Finance and the hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations. The O'Chiese band is seeking to take control of their financial future. This will be the subject of a debate, hopefully, sometime in the near future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health, followed by Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today. The first is the appropriate number of copies of a letter I received earlier today from Mrs. Sheila Weatherill, former CEO of Capital health, regarding a topic that was raised in question period this afternoon. In the letter Mrs. Weatherill takes responsibility for approving a medical expense for a former Capital health executive. The letter includes a \$7,800 cheque to the Alberta treasury as repayment for that expense.

My second tabling is a copy of a letter I sent today to the hon. Allan Wachowich, former Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta, requesting his opinion on

the options available to the Government of Alberta and/or Alberta Health Services . . . to recover any funds that may have been improperly paid to current or former employees of Alberta Health Services or the former health authorities.

Mr. Speaker, my third tabling is the appropriate number of copies of a letter I received on April 17, 2013, from the president

and chief executive officer of Alberta Health Services regarding reimbursement of medical expenses incurred by Ms Alison Tonge.

The last tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a letter I received dated April 11, 2013, from Mr. Chris Mazurkewich, executive vice-president and chief operating officer of Alberta Health Services, detailing increases in the area of continuing care in the AHS proposed budget for the year 2013-14.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by Little Bow.

**Mr. Donovan:** I'm just going to table his for him.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you. I'm tabling the requisite five copies of a letter from the Minister of Health to the Member for Strathmore-Brooks referencing a letter dated June 27 and regarding his question earlier in question period.

I have five copies of a news article from last April during the campaign, where the Premier was in Coaldale telling the people at the PDD centre down there the great job they're doing on their day program. There's even a colour photo of her shaking hands in the facility.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by the Minister of Human Services.

**Mrs. Towle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the letter from the Respiratory Home Care Association of Alberta in which they give statistical information. They also go on to talk about the changes coming into effect July 1 and the impacts they are going to have on those who receive oxygen. They go on to talk about why those impacts are going to hurt those who receive oxygen and that the government's own 2007-2008 report from Keefe Taylor Associates clearly stated that the government should not move to this type of process and should keep the highly regarded current program.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services, followed by the Member for Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the requisite number of copies of a letter I've written to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, and I've provided him with the original letter. It's in response to some comments he made and a news release he issued after the estimates of Human Services in which he, in my view, misapprehended my response relative to the definition of poverty and how we understand poverty. I thought his comments were unworthy and needed response.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is the requisite copies of over 20 e-mails that came to our office with concerns around the changes to the pharmacy agreement and the viability of pharmacies going forward.

My second tabling is the requisite copies of almost 70 letters from constituents again concerned about the changes to the pharmacy agreement and the ongoing viability of pharmacies going forward.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? If not, hon. members, permit me to table with you the Legislative Assembly of Alberta 2011 annual report *Advancing through Engagement*.

Thank you.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Horne, Minister of Health, responses to questions raised by Mrs. Forsyth, hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek; and Mr. Mason, hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, on March 7, 2012, the ministry of health and wellness 2012 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Johnson, Minister of Education, return to order of the Assembly, Motion for a Return 5, asked for by Mr. Hehr on March 18, 2013, a list of fees charged to parents by each of Alberta's 62 school boards for the 2011-12 school year as collected by the department.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I believe that concludes the Routine and that we can move on to the points of order. We had a point of order raised by the Member for Airdrie.

The hon. Official Opposition deputy House leader on his behalf, I assume.

### Point of Order Factual Accuracy

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today under standing orders 23(h), (i), (j) as well as (l) in response to a statement made by the Minister of Health that drug prices are only going down. Of course, we've heard in this House on many occasions that there can be differences of opinion. Different individuals can look at certain facts and conclude different outcomes based on those definitive facts.

Unfortunately, in this case, Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Health said was absolutely, flat-out false. It was patently untrue. I will just go over some of what I would say are obvious increases in the price of drugs, and I will refer to an Apotex *Advancing Generics* document – I believe this has been tabled before – dated April 4, 2013. At the bottom it says, "Price change." I'm going through the list of drugs. It states that the old price for the first line item was \$8.69, and now it's \$18. That's a price increase. We see another line item here, where \$25 became a \$47 price. Again and again, if you look through this document, it's very clear that the prices have gone up.

3:00

Why is this important? Perhaps this is better raised as a point of privilege. If this minister, knowing these facts here, is stating the complete opposite, it's, in essence, misleading the House. The question would be whether he's intentionally misleading the House. Why that's important is that if you're misleading the House, you're also misleading Albertans on the price of drugs. The evidence is clear.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the minister either withdraw that incorrect, false statement or clarify his position. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Government House Leader, briefly, in response.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is what happens when you have people who want to be lawyers and then go get elected and then try to be lawyers again. He's being absolutely too technical on this whole process. If he reads the context of the remarks, the minister was obviously talking about generic drugs. That's what the question was about. That's what the answer was about. The minister has indicated to me that I can assure the House that that was what he meant, that for the price of generic drugs in Alberta the policy is that those prices will go down and that those prices are going down. That's what he said in the context of the question and answer.

The hon. member, if he'd been listening clearly, would understand that rather than trying to intervene all the time, not this member but the member who raised the point of order, loudly in the middle of a question to disrupt the question, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, which is not the way we normally raise points of order in this House, to leap to your feet and yell loudly to interrupt the flow of the question and the flow of the answer. This is something that we've seen happen over the last couple of days in this House with respect to the way points of order have been raised. There's clearly a process happening here. It clearly has nothing to do with the hon. minister's answer because the hon. minister's answer was clearly in context.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. We've been around this particular maypole before, and I'd like us not to go around it again. We all know and you know exactly what I'm going to tell you. There's frequently a disagreement between members or among members in this House as to what they perceive to be the case or the truth or whatever the question might be. I've referred to this probably half a dozen or more times, as early as April 8, for example, wherein I said: let's take a look at page 510 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. It says:

The Speaker, however, is not responsible for the quality or content of replies to questions. In most instances, when a point of order or a question of privilege has been raised in regard to a response to an oral question, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is a disagreement among Members over the facts surrounding the issue. As such, these matters are more a question of debate and do not constitute a breach of the rules or of privilege.

Now, hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, if you wish to raise a question of privilege, which you've alluded to, that is an entirely different process, and you might want to review that.

In looking at the question, the question from the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition at 1:59 was clearly about generic drugs. The answer, however, at 2 o'clock this afternoon was a little more generic. It talked about drug prices in general. So it's a question of how you interpret one question in relation to the answer that was just given and vice versa.

As such, there is no point of order, but a point of clarification has been made on both sides of the House, and with that, we're going to move on.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 14 RCMP Health Coverage Statutes Amendment Act, 2013

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 14, the RCMP Health Coverage Statutes Amendment Act, 2013.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation is necessary to provide Alberta health care coverage to RCMP members appointed to rank within the RCMP who live in Alberta. The legislation is also necessary to ensure that Alberta is in compliance with the Canada Health Act. Until recently these RCMP members maintained a separate nation-wide health program. That's because RCMP members, like the military, were excluded from the Canada Health Act definition of insured persons, changed in June 2012, when the federal omnibus Bill C-38 received royal assent. The bill amended the definition of insured persons under the Canada Health Act so that members of the RCMP appointed to rank are no longer excluded as insured persons. That means that roughly 3,000 RCMP members in Alberta who are appointed to rank will now need to be insured under the Alberta Health Act.

The RCMP Health Coverage Statutes Amendment Act that is before us makes necessary amendments to two Alberta statutes, the Health Insurance Premiums Act and the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act. The amendments are necessary to require RCMP members appointed to rank within the RCMP to register for health care coverage in Alberta and to extend Alberta health coverage to these RCMP members.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for your support of the RCMP Health Coverage Statutes Amendment Act so that Alberta can be in compliance with the Canada Health Act and so that we can provide Alberta health care coverage to the dedicated men and women who bring law and order to our communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now move to adjourn debate on Bill 14.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 15 Emergency 911 Act

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and move second reading of the Emergency 911 Act.

I'm sure all of us can agree that effective and reliable 911 service is a cornerstone of strong communities. We have heard from stakeholders like 911 call centres, emergency response agencies, and municipalities that 911 call centres are faced with funding challenges, increasing call volumes, and the need to adopt new technologies. This legislation helps 911 call centres address these challenges and provides an opportunity to make 911 services in Alberta even better. This will help Alberta's 911 centres continue to provide Albertans with effective service today and tomorrow.

I'm excited about this legislation, Mr. Speaker, and look forward to partnering with our stakeholders, which include our 911 call centres, our emergency responders, and the wireless industry, to enhance 911 services across Alberta. The Emergency 911 Act includes a monthly 911 levy on wireless devices that will ensure that cellphone users contribute to the cost of 911, the same as land-line users do now; the ability for the government in collaboration with stakeholders to create standards, processes, and procedures for 911 call-taking; the establishment of liability protection for people involved with 911 services and penalties for frivolous and vexatious use of the 911 system.

Mr. Speaker, some of the challenges facing 911 centres stem from the increased numbers of cellphones in Alberta. Unlike land-

line users, cellphone subscribers have not been directly contributing to 911 call centres. This has led to a decline in funding for 911 call centres as more and more Albertans opt for cellphones instead of land lines. The proposed 911 levy would be the same amount as the one on land lines, just 44 cents per month. That's \$5.28 per year, about the cost of a new app on your smart phone. This will ensure all land-line and cellphone users contribute to Alberta's 911 call centres. It'll be a monthly fee, not a per-call fee, and no one will have to pay for making a 911 call when they need help.

This legislation will require wireless telecommunications providers to collect the 911 levy from Alberta wireless subscribers. The funds from the levy will then be remitted to the province for distribution to 911 centres. The funding will be done through a statutory appropriation, which means that the collected funds can only be used for 911 call centres and administration of this act. I think we can all agree that this is a nominal amount of money to support our 911 centres and that it is important for all cellphone and land-line users to contribute.

The legislation will also allow for the creation of standards for 911 call centres. The standards will be developed over time in collaboration with 911 call centres and all other stakeholders. We'll be certain that everyone's perspective will be heard and that standards will work for our stakeholders. These standards will help ensure consistent processes and procedures for 911 call-taking across the province. We will work with our partners to find ways to make 911 service delivery across Alberta even more effective and consistent than it is today.

**3:10**

The legislation will also introduce new legal protection. Extending legal protection for 911 call centres will help 911 operators focus on serving Albertans in their time of need. This provision will establish liability protection for all 911 centres so that staff have the legal protection they need while providing 911 services in good faith. This will also limit the liability of wireless telecommunications providers and the province while acting under the authority of this act and regulations.

The legislation also involves new penalties for frivolous 911 calls. Frivolous 911 calls can waste the time and resources needed to address real 911 calls from Albertans in need. This legislation establishes offences and fines for the intentional abuse of 911 services. The intent of establishing offences and penalties is to deter those individuals who may be inappropriately using the system. We've all heard stories of people making frivolous 911 calls asking for help to do their taxes or complaining about a coffee they bought somewhere, Mr. Speaker. These fines, with amounts set to make people think twice about making frivolous 911 calls, will help prevent this wasteful and potentially harmful activity. The maximum fine for first-time offenders is \$5,000, for repeat offenders up to \$10,000.

Another key element of the legislation is that it will enable 911 call centres to keep up with emergency technologies. Earlier this year the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission, or the CRTC, began consulting with Canadians to find out their thoughts on the future of 911 services at a national level. This consultation is expected to take a number of years. The CRTC is also requiring all Canadian telecommunications companies to upgrade their systems, Mr. Speaker, with text-to-911 capabilities by 2014 for Canadians with hearing or speech impairments.

Here in Alberta we're proposing to help our call centres move in that direction with this proposed legislation, which will provide an additional source of funding that can be used by call centres to

move towards next generation 911 technologies. At the same time, we are participating in the CRTC's effort to ensure Alberta's jurisdiction and interests are considered throughout the consultation and any resulting federal regulatory frameworks.

More details regarding the implementation of this legislation will be contained in the regulations. These will be drafted later in 2013. The key aspects of the regulations will enable the billing, collection, and remittance of the 911 levy and outline how the collected funds will be distributed. This is a flexible and responsive approach that can respond to Albertans' and 911 centres' needs over time.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize how important this legislation is to the men and women who provide 911 services each and every day throughout this province. For any kind of emergency in this province they are our first point of contact with Alberta's emergency response system. We depend on them to be there for us, and they are there 24/7, 365 days a year. Their services make our communities stronger and more resilient. I am confident that this bill, by providing new supports for 911 operators, will help improve these services.

This proposed bill is the culmination of the work of many, and in many respects it is just the beginning. However, I do want to recognize at this stage the extraordinary efforts of Dr. Craig Mahovsky, who first while working for the city of Calgary and more recently for the government of Alberta has distinguished himself by his selfless focus on public safety.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to further discussing this important legislation that will enhance and ensure the safety and security of all Albertans.

With that, I would move that we adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 19

#### Metis Settlements Amendment Act, 2013

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 19, the Metis Settlements Amendment Act, 2013.

Bill 19 is vital to the success of the recently announced Métis settlements long-term arrangements. 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 productive relationship between this government and the settlements. Bill 19 is doing what the Métis settlements' leadership has asked us to do.

Before we start debate on the bill, I'd like to highlight some of the provisions that will help us achieve our goals when it comes to a successful future for the Métis settlements. There will be a requirement for annual three-year business plans. An official code of conduct for settlement councils will be required, and the Metis Settlements General Council will be given policy-making authority to develop the code. Their legislated policy-making authority is their law-making authority. It is similar to provincial regulation and binds all eight settlements.

There will also be an amendment to the current requirement for an election every three years to one every four years. This is consistent with the recent move to a four-year cycle for other local governments.

A provision will require the councils to operate under a standardized financial reporting structure, which will allow for better planning and greater transparency.

The general council will have policy-making authority to establish an independent committee to review and make recommendations about council salaries to the central governing body, the Metis Settlements General Council. The provisions will also give the general council the power to set the remuneration rates following receipt of the committee's recommendations. The provisions will allow the general council to set a ceiling on council remuneration based on the committee's recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 19 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. I now move to adjourn debate on Bill 19.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### **Bill 12 Fiscal Management Act**

[Debate adjourned April 11]

**The Speaker:** Speakers on Bill 12? Shall we begin with the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre?

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka would like to go in front of me if that's okay with you.

**The Speaker:** It's fine by me.  
The hon. member.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak to Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act, which is now in second reading. Now, as I read this bill, one thing really jumped out at me, and that was the complete repeal of the Government Accountability Act. When this act was passed in 1995, the province of Alberta was a leader. We were the first province in the country to adopt a publicly reported, results-based, performance-measured framework into our budgeting process. That act was designed to improve accountability between civil servants, elected officials, the government, and the citizens of Alberta. It was so well regarded by Canadians that all other provinces introduced similar legislation, with the federal government finally following suit in 2006, giving royal assent to the Federal Accountability Act.

Mr. Speaker, it's important, I think, to look back at 1995 and really examine what the Government Accountability Act was all about. The Premier of the day, Mr. Klein, made quite an impact on how finances were done. He epitomized the era. Knowing that Mr. Klein not only led the charge on eliminating the deficit by 1995 but also the province's net debt by 1999, it comes as no surprise that he coined the phrase "Alberta advantage." Something else that comes as no surprise is that this government has done away with not only his vision of a debt-free Alberta but also, in the same breath, destroyed the Alberta advantage, too.

Mr. Speaker, what's happened with Bill 12 is that this government seems to have us in a race to the bottom. Future government budgets need no longer list any of the following requirements from the Government Accountability Act except in terms of operations: total revenues from all sources, total expenses with breakdown, accumulated debt, planned payments, reconciliation of expenses, and revenues for deficit or surplus; in other words, a dramatic shift away from the reporting of performance measures in past budgets. Wow. What a policy shift.

3:20

When the Government Accountability Act was passed, it was glowingly proclaimed that with the positive impact of reporting publicly on the government performance, it enhanced transparency, strengthened accountability, provided motivation for civil servants to improve services and programs for Alberta's citizens, and was reported as an immense improvement to our democracy.

It would be prudent, I think, to remind the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that the use of performance measures in government accounting has not always happened. An article written by a political scientist, Kimberly Speers from the University of Alberta and the University of Manitoba, shows insight into the original purpose of initially implementing performance measures into government financial reporting.

Designed to measure a variety of activities in government, the development and implementation of performance measures was also to monitor a government's performance, and in weak areas of performance, to draw attention to where the government should improve. It has also become a way to communicate to the general citizenry about the government's performance at the department and government-wide level. In a public effort to become more accountable and transparent, the reporting of performance measures is considered to be an educated way for citizens to judge a government's annual performance.

Mr. Speaker, I find it quite disturbing – and I'm sure most Albertans will as well – that Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act, is a step back because it removes many of the performance measures that were required to be reported under the Government Accountability Act. Through its total repeal, it is worth noting over the last few years, well, the last few deficit budgets that performance reporting has become something of a risky endeavour for this government. It's no wonder the PC government wants to repeal the Government Accountability Act. We have watched the challenges of these performance measures for this government lead to a dilemma of legitimacy and authenticity in its reporting.

Here we are looking at the 2012-2013 budget, a work of propaganda written for a then upcoming election, and the 2013-2014 budget, where the truth is attempted to be masked and hidden in cloudy and opaque documents. It is something to note that the performance measures are not of themselves beacons of accountability. Simply put, "the authenticity of performance measurement is questioned because of the subjectivity of performance itself."

The Speers report goes on to outline reasons which I believe are indicative of this government's desire to do away with the accountability act under Bill 12.

Indeed, the process of measuring performance is a highly subjective task depending on the stated expectations, the established targets and goals, external variables, the quality of leadership, and a variety of other reasons depending on the assessor's values and biases. The subjectivity of performance is inherent to a political environment, which makes performance reporting a risky endeavour for any government. Indeed, reporting to the public in a political environment is risky given the traditional role of the Opposition to critique the party in power and the media to report on issues that will attract customers which tend to be those that expose the government's wrongdoings.

Essentially, Mr. Speaker, this boils down to one simple fact. A government that wants people to drink the punch that their performance measures are inherently indicative of accountability is not only wrong but reasonably can be seen to be manipulative of the public, the media, and the opposition parties as well.

Performance measures have to be real and substantive. They have to be strong enough to show real results so that every Albertan can either rest assured knowing that the government dollars are being spent wisely and with good results or, alternatively, Albertans can be properly and fully informed of the waste or potential for waste. It is not up to the government to dictate to Albertans how they should view the government by using ploys such as playing with performance measures in the annual reports and business plans.

The Government Accountability Act was designed to be a public effort to become more accountable and transparent in its reporting and an educated or intelligent way for its citizens to judge their government's annual performance, something this budget released now just doesn't do.

I want to quote a March 7, 2013, news article from *Beacon* news, and it quotes the Minister of Finance. It says that the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance

admitted the new budget format made it difficult to compare last year's numbers with this year's, made all the more difficult by only showing a \$451 million operating budget deficit that was in fact closer to \$2 billion after factoring in different costs and cash adjustments.

The Government Accountability Act was a communication and management tool. Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act, is a tool that does nothing more than bring smoke and mirrors back into Alberta politics, Mr. Speaker.

At a basic level the Government Accountability Act put into the provincial budget a quantitative and qualitative measure designed to assess performance against goals. Well, the Health Quality Council report on EMS hit this one on the head. I'm quoting from page 44 of that report. There is a "lack of AHS long-term vision and goals." In future reporting these kinds of abysmal results won't be required in the province's financial documents. One must wonder if this is only to hide such results from Alberta taxpayers.

An example of this loss of transparency is found under section 7(3) of the Government Accountability Act.

- (3) The government business plan must include the following:
  - (a) the mission, core businesses and goals of the Government;
  - (b) the measures to be used in assessing the performance of the Government in achieving its goals;
  - (c) the performance targets set by the Government for each of its goals;
  - (d) links to the ministry business plans.

That's very clear language about the performance measures required of the government.

In section 10(3) in the replacement, in Bill 12, it reads: "The business plans must be in the form determined by the Treasury Board and must be made public at the same time as the responsible Minister makes the fiscal plan public."

This language, Mr. Speaker: well, it's about as clear as mud. What if the minister for one purpose or another determines that the form for business plans ought to be vague and designed to put a fog over the true affairs of each ministry? Without clear, articulated, measurable, and understood performance expectations there will never be sustained improvement in government programs and services.

Let me leave you with this. Effective decision-making in our democracy requires that Albertans have access to all the information in a reasonable, recognizable, and responsive format. Mr. Speaker, it is never good for democracy when citizens question the authenticity and the accuracy of any government document, which inevitably leads to the perception that their government as a whole has failed them.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, then let us go back to the regular order. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on this bill. What's troubling about this bill is how it was proposed and why it was proposed. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation complained I think about three quarters ago about some of the reporting that this government did. They put forward an allegation that this government wasn't being transparent according to the law. Now, it's just an allegation, and anyone can argue either side of it, but the fact is that as we move forward into the election, this government, this party did not campaign on what we have here today.

As a matter of fact, in this House after the election statements were still made that our operational budget would be balanced. It wasn't too difficult, in my view, to ask of this government: will you, can you balance the operational budget? When they were asked that question multiple times, they stood up and said: yes, it will be balanced. There are multiple quotes to support that, yet when the budget was tabled, it was not balanced, totally contrary to the statements made by government members, who should have known better at that time.

I will give the people credit, both the elected members and the bureaucrats responsible, for being a bit more competent than what this budget showed or what it came to be because it should not have been a surprise that the operational budget was not going to be balanced. It should not have been a surprise at all.

What else is troubling about this bill is that it's absolutely necessary. This budget would be basically an illegal budget under our current laws. We need to change that, so we are repealing the Government Accountability Act and the Fiscal Responsibility Act to put forth this new law. What's troubling about that is that not a single member in here knocked on any door and said: if you elect us, we will repeal the Government Accountability Act, and we will repeal the Fiscal Responsibility Act.

These were the legacy of the Klein era. This was the thing, that if history does anything in the memory of our former Premier, they will always show that one picture of the debt removed. He is known for that. He is hated for that; he is loved for that. He did it, and it is his legacy. What we're doing here is removing that. That is what I say is problematic. In some ways it's still very difficult for Albertans to understand how we got to this point.

**3:30**

The other thing that I find troubling. It is the right of government to decide how it wants to present its books, and I will defend its right to do that. When any entity, generally a government or corporate entity, does this, it is well established what they're going to do going forward, and they prepare the marketplace: we're going to change the way we're going to report. So there's always that indication. Accounting rules and accounting laws basically say that when you do that, when you change your accounting method, then you restate at least one prior year so there can be some sort of comparative analysis of what you're proposing to do in this current budget, and you can compare that to previous years to start that track record. That is a common practice. That is the law under our accounting standards.

What this government did is that it tabled a budget with a new reporting methodology, which is its right, but it did not restate anything behind this so we could have some sort of comparative analysis. That, to me, is fundamentally wrong. We should be able to have that not just as an opposition. We should have that as Albertans so we can keep track. In other words, this government is

making commitments; we can see a little historical value to this, how it would have compared to last year's. We don't have that.

Unfortunately, that seems to be a systemic problem right now. I pointed that out in my own estimates a few days ago. There was a small footnote in Alberta Environment that basically just bluntly stated: the methodology has changed, so you can no longer compare what our targets are this year to previous years. That to me is an accounting issue. There's absolutely no reason that we should be tolerating that. There's absolutely no reason we should be doing that.

Now, one good thing that did come out of some of the debates, not just on this bill and the budget, is that the Government House Leader has admitted that we actually are not going to borrow money and then lend it out on the market at a lower interest rate. I noticed that a lot of the members have stopped saying that, and I'm glad for that. I know that that's not what's going to happen. He made that very clear. It makes no economic sense to think that we could go out and compete with the markets in that sense. Companies or institutions that can qualify for much lower loans can get them at the same rate we can get them. That's not the biggest issue.

What is a problem is the idea that we're going to borrow money to save. Could we do that? It's an interesting question. Lots of people have tried. It's never worked, but it will be interesting to see if this government can make it work. I'm not sure it can. I'm not sure it can at all, and since no one else has ever been able to make it work, the future doesn't look that promising here.

We have a budget that came down that is in deficit. We are going to borrow money going forward for our infrastructure. That's what this law provides for. It allows us now to do that on a consistent basis. I guess I probably should point out that there are some positive aspects. I mean, it's not totally negative. The majority of it is negative, but there are some positive aspects to it. It talks about savings. Unfortunately, the idea of borrowing to save doesn't make sense to me. I would love it if we could put some amendments forward – and the members could all clap as you accept all of the amendments from the Wildrose – so we can be a little bit more responsible.

I do want to address some of the issues that the members have brought forward beyond the rhetoric, beyond the chastising, the hostility, the humour that goes on in this Chamber. The fact is that we take in roughly \$40 billion in income, just a little bit less than \$40 billion. Nobody is talking about not spending money and taking care of the province's needs. What is fundamentally missing from this bill – I would hope that the members would see a motion coming forward dealing with the issue of priority because we've talked about that, and that has not happened yet.

When you're spending billions and billions of dollars, as this bill will allow us to do, the idea to put in a priority list of what your major priorities are, particularly with infrastructure – all municipalities do. We did that. We just list them top to bottom. We argue about which is more important than the other, and we have a funded line and an unfunded line so we know going forward what we're going to do this year, what we're going to plan on doing next year and the year after and the year after. That's what this budget does but without the priority list, and in this act it's not there.

It would make this act stronger and more responsible if we were to impose that upon this government, which is to say simply this. Your capital expenditures should be prioritized in the sense that we know what the priorities are for this government to spend on infrastructure. That is a good working tool. That allows these communities – and I will use a particular example. The

community of Rocky Mountain House has been waiting for a hospital, and when I meet with the community leaders, when I meet with the council, they're not necessarily saying that they would like it this year. They understand that there would be higher priorities. They just want to know where they would be on the list, when they could expect the funding for the new hospital and then plan accordingly, knowing full well that this is not an easy decision, but it is something that will have to come down.

Now, I want to talk about the benefits of actually having a priority list because that's what can make this bill stronger. If we were to put something like that in this bill and allow communities to see where their major projects were, if there was a project that was presented high on a priority list, then many in the public, particularly in the civic community, the various boards, councils could say: "Whoa. Wait a minute. That is not a high priority above, say, a hospital in this community, a school in that community, or a seniors' lodge in that community." That would assist this government in many cases if these communities were able to look at a list that showed them the priorities, and the government could get better feedback from a broader range of politicians, not just: what is funded, and we have no idea where these other projects stand and what priority they might be in.

That is something that we have consistently talked about in this Legislative Assembly. It's something that has never been answered. Unfortunately, what we do get from the various ministries is: there's a list, and the members can go to the website. That seems to be the standard response today when there are no answers. Go to the website. The fact is that the website doesn't have a priority list. It is so important in managing a budget that we know what is the highest priority, what is a low priority, and that we argue about the priorities that surround that funded and unfunded line. Good on those that make the best arguments to get their projects funded. But it does help us manage our expenditures better. It does help us in the sense of making sure that the billions and hundreds of millions of dollars that we are going to spend we spend more wisely. It also helps in the sense of managing the budget and hitting our targets, and that is really important to me.

Another thing I want to talk about in what we've been doing here – and this has been brought up in a number of different parts of our debate – is this bitumen bubble. One minister – and I won't mention the minister because it was an error, and I think it was an honest error – mentioned that we lost \$6 billion on the bitumen bubble when the spread was wide. Well, that's really not true, and there's no such thing as a bitumen bubble. What we had was a spread that actually got quite wide, and this government had every right to be concerned about that spread widening. Absolutely. But it's not normal for any type of differential to be static. It's dynamic. It always moves every day. That's mark-to-mark accounting. As soon as that was made quite widely known by this government, and rightfully so, that there was a wide spread, what happened? The market addressed the issue, and that spread narrowed significantly to the point that I think it went the other way on the pendulum swing and went way too narrow, and I think we should see it widen again. But at the end of the year this should be an average spread.

3:40

I think that when this government looked at that differential – it should be around that \$22 mark plus or minus. That spread should average out right over the year. I don't think we're off target for that. So that's not an excuse for how we budgeted, and that's not an excuse to bring this bill forward to change the way we do

budgets and the way we spend. That's where I have an issue with how this was brought forward.

The Government Accountability Act was a good act, and it was a good move by this former government to do that. The Fiscal Responsibility Act was a positive step to proper financial management, in my view. Here it is being removed to make way for a new system of spending, which I think is borderline irresponsible. I won't go as far as some of my counterparts and say that it's totally irresponsible, and I'll tell you why. We haven't done it yet. But I will call it irresponsible if we go deeper into debt and spend more than we should have. Then it would be irresponsible. I'll withhold my judgment until the results come in. But I still don't believe that the future is as optimistic as we're proposing it is, and I say that this law that we are passing here, this legislation that we're about to pass, is set up to give us more problems in the future than to provide responsibility, accountability, and transparency. That's why I definitely will be opposing the legislation.

However, if the government were to decide to accept some of the amendments we will be bringing forward – who knows? – I might be able to actually support it and vote for it. I would love to be able to do that. We'll see as that time comes if that is a possibility.

With that, I think I'll finish here, and maybe somebody might like to ask me some questions.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I was just curious to ask the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre two things, actually. First of all, you had mentioned that you would conceivably support this bill if you saw amendments. I'm having trouble. I'm struggling with what we could possibly do with this bill. If you had any suggestions as to what we could do to perhaps patch the holes that seem so apparent to you and perhaps to me, too.

**Mr. Anglin:** Mr. Speaker, anything's conceivable. It is a possibility. How they would construct it on amending it would be the critical aspect, of course.

I will say something because everyone knows we differ in our fiscal views except for one thing. If you look at the parties in opposition, we talk about a balanced budget here in the Official Opposition, but we don't think we need to raise revenue. We think the revenue is there. It's about priorities so that we can actually balance our budget. The third and fourth parties would raise revenue to balance the budget. I think that's a legitimate debate for the public. I think that's a legitimate debate in an election. I like that debate because I think I can win that debate. I think I can win every debate. What we didn't have a debate on was that we will go into operational deficit, that we will go into deficit, and that we will borrow money to save. That we never debated, and we should have going into the election.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. We have a number of speakers, so thank you for keeping your questions and answers brief.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre whether or not his party has any specific plan with respect to the use of the funds in the heritage fund. We've heard some rhetoric over there about the fact that all the revenue from the fund has been

squandered over the years. In reality, it's been used to build Alberta. It's been used to keep the taxes down, personal and corporate taxes, very low, to attract new business and enterprise to the province. What does he envision as the ultimate purpose of the heritage fund and its income?

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

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really do enjoy the question. I can tell the hon. member this. The money would not be going to AHS executives' expenses, that's for sure. The money would not be going to carbon capture. The money would not be going to private corporations. I agree – I know where he's going with this, and I'm not going to dispute it – that we put money away for that rainy day, and we make good use of it. Actually, that's how a former Premier, Mr. Klein, actually balanced and paid off the debt. He had the money sitting there to make sure he could say that we're debt free. I won't get into the specifics of that, but that was why it was there.

The fact is that it's nonrenewable resource revenue. In other words, there's no other way to get that, and that will eventually run out, so to put that money aside is, I think, a great idea, but we've not done a very good job of it. That fund has been quite small and has been reduced, reduced, reduced. Now, the reason we've been reducing that fund is because we've not been spending wisely. That's my issue. We have a historical problem with overspending and not getting spending under control and thereby withdrawing these funds. We're on track to make a mess out of that and go into a negative balance or just empty the fund altogether.

**The Speaker:** Are there others under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, let us move on to the next main speaker, Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, everyone. Folks, while I may not be an accountant, I would like to take this opportunity to rise here today to speak briefly to Bill 12 on behalf of the constituents of my riding, Livingstone-Macleod. Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act, apparently repeals the Government Accountability Act and the Fiscal Responsibility Act and amends the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act as well as a handful of others, I'm told. However, it seems to ignore a 20-year-old established format for budgets and quarterly updates as well as strict rules around debt, I've observed.

This seems to be a true reflection of how this government plays the game. When the rules don't suit their needs, they change them. Not only does the government change acts on a whim to suit their needs; they attempt to blindside stakeholders, members of this Assembly, and, more importantly, Albertans.

I'm told that when the previous Government Accountability Act was passed, it was glowingly proclaimed that with the positive impact of reporting publicly on government performance, it had enhanced transparency, strengthened accountability, provided motivation for civil servants to improve services and programs for Alberta's citizens, and was reported as an immense improvement to our democracy. Although the system wasn't perfect, the process was honest and was done with the intent of improving the reporting structure.

The Government Accountability Act was designed to be a public effort, become more accountable and transparent in its reporting, and be an educated, intelligent way for citizens to judge the government's annual performance. At a basic level the Government Accountability Act put into the provincial budget a



qualitative and quantitative measure designed to assess performance against goals. It was a communication and management tool. That act was designed to improve accountability between civil servants, elected officials, academics, and the citizens of Alberta. It was so well regarded by Canadians, Mr. Speaker, that other provinces introduced several legislation filings, with the federal government following suit in 2006, giving royal assent to the Federal Accountability Act.

While the Government Accountability Act was a communication and management tool, the new proposed Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act, appears to be a tool that does nothing more than bring mystery back into Alberta politics. From my standpoint, what's happened with Bill 12 is that except in terms of operations future government budgets need no longer list any of the following requirements that were present in the Government Accountability Act: total revenues from all sources, total expenses with breakdowns, accumulated debt, planned payments, reconciliation of expenses, and revenues for deficit or surplus. It is quite disturbing to me and most Albertans, I think, that Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act, seems to be a step back because it removes many of those performance measures that were required to be reported under the Government Accountability Act.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, as members of the Legislature and as members of the government there should always be a push to maintain the integrity of this House and live up to the standards Albertans expect of us and this office. This government should not be attempting to confuse Albertans. They should be seeking to proactively disclose and inform in a manner which can be understood and easily accessible by all. Unfortunately, this time, however, Albertans are left going here and there and around the square trying to simply figure out how much Alberta is in debt.

After this deficit budget was released, stakeholders, news agencies, financial firms were left scrambling to figure out what the total debt was. I think the following day there were about 10-plus different totals, and not one matched the government's. I ask members to consider this as they vote on this Fiscal Management Act. When financial firms and agencies cannot state with certainty what your budget means or what it will reflect, is this truly accountable?

Mr. Speaker, in contrast, an example of this loss of transparency is found under section 7 of the Government Accountability Act, where it states:

- (3) The government business plan must include the following:
  - (a) the mission, core businesses and goals of the Government;
  - (b) the measures to be used in assessing the performance of the Government in achieving its goals;
  - (c) the performance targets set by the Government for each of its goals;

And finally,

- (d) links to the ministry business plans.

That was very clear language then about the performance measures required of the government.

However, section 10(3) is the replacement in Bill 12, which now reads:

- (3) The business plans must be in the form determined by the Treasury Board and must be made public at the same time as the responsible Minister makes the fiscal plan public.

This new language is very unclear. Mr. Speaker, it's my opinion that without clearly articulated measurable and understood performance expectations, there will never be sustained improvement in government programs and services. There is

virtually no shared understanding of what the budget means in terms of a bottom line.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, the proposal to take capital out of the bottom line seems to entirely remove accountability. The proposal to fund capital spending almost entirely out of debt seems like folly. It drops the reporting requirement for important nonoperating numbers, in other words total revenue, and borrowing details.

On this note I'd like to leave you with an interesting comparison made by Derek Fildebrandt of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation: this new reporting structure makes about as much sense as taking out an RRSP with money you borrowed from your credit card.

To conclude, it seems very deceiving to be touting a savings account that appears to contain no debt repayment plan. This entire plan is only one of spending and savings while running up a far larger debt account. I will not be supporting Bill 12 without substantive change to include real accountability.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, are there any other speakers? Let's go on to Calgary-Shaw, please.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a couple of weeks of anticipation waiting to rise to speak to Bill 12, and I'm happy to do that here today. The speech I've prepared for you is titled *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*. Let's start with the good. It was very encouraging to see a savings plan... [interjection] I thank the Member for Edmonton-Centre for her commentary. Yes, theme music would always be nice to have in the background. It would keep us all motivated, especially on a Thursday afternoon, before we get to go home to our families and constituencies.

The good part of Bill 12: it has in it a savings plan. You know, truthfully, when I heard that, I was reflecting on what I was doing just before we came back into session, which was potty training my toddler. You get used to saying things like "hurray" and "fantastic" and "good job" as you encourage them along. Quite truthfully, when I first heard about a savings plan, those were the first things that popped into my head, a good "hurray" and a bit of "fantastic."

You know, it's funny how past generations truly believed in what we were doing in Alberta. The pride around the heritage savings trust fund was something that was tangible when I was growing up. My parents spoke about it, their friends spoke about it, and that translated into a great sense of pride. They made those sacrifices to save future generations. I think that that's something that we should be doing as well.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill earlier asked one of our members what we would be doing with the heritage savings trust fund. Well, I would remind the hon. member that had this government chosen not to skim the interest since the late '80s, that fund would now sit at roughly \$136 billion. The simple answer to that question is that we would use it to create another source of revenue, and that is exactly what our plan would be, Mr. Speaker, to use that heritage savings trust fund, to invest in it, as opposed to only leaving in...

**Mr. Dorward:** That's a big number.

**Mr. Wilson:** I'm not sure if the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has something wrong with him, Mr. Speaker, but there are some rather unpleasant noises coming from that part of the Chamber today. We may want to bring medical in to have him checked out. It's kind of nonstop.

Anyway, the creation of a stable revenue source. Being able to save money and do it the way that our party has planned to do it would allow us to keep interest in the fund and not take it out until it equalled the value of the resource revenue that the province took in that year. What we can all accept here is that there will be a point in time, Mr. Speaker, when resource revenue either dries up in this province or the world has moved on. If and when that time comes – and we know it will come – our province had best be ready for it. That was the vision that Peter Lougheed had when we started the heritage savings trust fund, to build that equity and that wealth for the future generations so that they would be sure to enjoy it.

It's interesting that part of the savings plan that this government has is simply suggesting that they're only going to take 75 per cent of the interest from the fund in the coming years, and that's now apparently savings. Then we have the Premier stand up and suggest that this is the first time in 25 years that this province has had a savings plan. Well, that's just simply not true. Anyone who's been around from the time of Ralph Klein will recognize that the sustainability fund that he started in 2003 was a savings plan.

**Ms Blakeman:** And a Liberal idea.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, sure, a Liberal idea and a good one at that.

It was very unfortunate to see, you know, that this budget has dwindled what at one point was \$17 billion in savings down to just under I think \$700 million. It's very sad that that's happened since 2007, Mr. Speaker. The other side of this budget is that we now look at going further into debt roughly at about the same rate as we depleted the sustainability fund.

I reflect on the problems that we hear sometimes of lottery winners, where they get this windfall of cash and they think it's going to change their lives and that everything is going to be fantastic and great, and then a few years down the road they're bankrupt, they're depressed, and they're trying to figure out some way to recover. Well, that's exactly what we see this government having done, a \$17 billion windfall that they fell into after the fiscal policies of Ralph Klein. They have now found a way to absolutely blow through it, and here we are.

When I was knocking on doors during the campaign, quite often people would ask me why I wanted to get into politics, Mr. Speaker. You know, I grew up knowing about the Alberta advantage, and I really did and do today truly understand that Alberta is the best place to live. It is the best place to raise a family, to work, and to play, and it's absolutely true. It is absolutely true.

Earlier in this session one of the ministers on the other side referred to the time period that we're in right now as AB, after bubble. I would suggest that the time period we're in now is truly AR, after Ralph, because had we just continued on the path that he had us on, we wouldn't be having the conversations we're having today.

The reason why I wanted to get into politics and the reason why I'm here today, Mr. Speaker, is because I truly did believe that what we saw after Ralph was a process of mortgaging our children's future with the way in which this government was spending its money. I decided that if you're passionate about something and you want to do something about it, you better put your name in the hat, step into the ring, and do some fighting, so that is why I'm here.

That pretty much takes us out of the good. Now let's talk about the bad. When you reflect on what was probably known as the low point of the 42-year dynasty, I think most members opposite

would agree that that was probably the Getty era. Dick Johnston, when he was the Minister of Finance, had a way of reporting the books that gave him the moniker of Tricky Dick because he, quite simply, was cooking the books, so to speak. He was reporting in a way that was not transparent and was not open. Where did we find ourselves? At \$23 billion in debt.

**4:00**

Quite honestly, I'm sure that most members opposite would look back on that and recognize that that legacy is the one legacy of this party that they want nothing to do with. Well, I have some bad news for you, friends. That is now going to be your legacy when you go to the next election. By 2016 we're going to have \$17 billion in debt according to this budget, Mr. Speaker. I would not want to be one of my hon. colleagues across the floor knocking on doors and presenting that case to Albertans because that's certainly not what they campaigned on just last year.

**Ms Blakeman:** You're assuming they knocked on doors.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, you are correct.

On budget day, Mr. Speaker, honestly, it felt like someone had punched me in the stomach. It was a very uncomfortable feeling. I required some self-medicating that night just to get through the reality of what we were going to be putting our kids through and where we were going over the next few years.

It's funny to hear members opposite as well comment on our capital plan, which they do so often. The Premier likes to suggest that we would build absolutely nothing under our plan, which is just plain wrong. I would point out to the members opposite that not only is your government now employing some of the ideas that we campaigned on with regard to capital plans, which is extending some projects so as to allow that capital to go further and for it not to be so front heavy – but that's okay. We don't need to take any credit for that. You guys just continue doing what you're doing.

I would remind you, though, that the 10-year debt-free capital plan that we've put forward is a responsible plan. About three years from now our plan and your plan are going to meet at right about the same number, that same dollar figure. So go right ahead and pretend, you know, that you guys are going to be spending through the roof and building Alberta and using interest to build Alberta or borrowing to build Alberta. At the end of the day, if the Wildrose 10-year debt-free capital plan were employed, we would be building more. Maybe not this year and maybe not next, but we would be continuing to increase spending on capital.

Another thing that we hear of over here quite often is how during maiden speeches in the first couple of weeks that party had the gall to ask for \$1.5 billion in spending. Well, I have a couple of thoughts on that. First off, it really shouldn't surprise you that during a maiden speech a member of this House would stand and advocate for their constituency. I mean, that really is the crux of why we're all here.

Another thing that I'm going to share with you all is that there was a time when we over here received an e-mail from the Associate Minister of Finance directly asking: "What are your priorities? We're coming up with our capital plan, and we really want to know. Golly gee, what do you guys want to build?" Well, of course, it's all just in jest because now we hear that, well, we shouldn't have actually responded to those e-mails, that we shouldn't have actually told the minister what it was that we were hoping to have in our constituencies, about whether or not we thought that was something that we would want next year, the year after or what the priorities are for the next four or five years.

But, again, on the \$1.5 billion we just get told that we're irresponsible, yet we have a party opposite who believes that going further and further into debt is really what Albertans are asking them to do. Clearly, why 61 of you are here is because that's what you told your constituents as you knocked on doors during the last campaign.

Again, this whole concept of calling debt revenue: it's no different, Mr. Speaker, than taking out a line of credit and pretending that it's income. You know, if a guy who's making \$80,000 a year wants to say that he's pulling in six figures and he goes and gets himself a line of credit for 20 grand, is that a six-figure salary? It certainly isn't. But if you look at the way that the books are presented in this budget, that's how this government thinks Albertans would interpret that. I think that the government seems to be in that same lost headspace as this individual that I used in the example.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'll get to the ugly. What we've got in Bill 12 is long-term intergenerational harm without a repayment plan, and that, again, is in the form of debt. The members in our party might – might – be able to take the idea of some debt if there was actually a plan to pay it off and there was actually a plan that would work to pay it off. But that certainly was not presented, nor does it seem to be presented.

Yeah, you're right. We're not going to agree with what you guys have planned, and we're probably not going to support this bill. I know I'm certainly not going to support this bill as it's written. You know, it can be summed up when you look at exactly what this bill is doing. It's repealing two pieces of legislation. One is called the Government Accountability Act, and the second is the Fiscal Responsibility Act, two very aptly named pieces of legislation which are being thrown out. Government accountability and fiscal responsibility: it says it right in the names alone.

But that's just, I suppose, the way it is. It demonstrates that this government can pass legislation, can repeal it at any time. That goes for a number of the finer details inside Bill 12; for example, the idea of a debt ceiling. "Well, if you don't like the debt ceiling that we set in 2013, we'll have to just go back and change it." Based on the fact that you're repealing the Government Accountability Act and the Fiscal Responsibility Act, why should anyone believe that you wouldn't just go back and change it? We've seen this happen with our friends down south.

This bill and this budget were anything but open and transparent reporting, Mr. Speaker. It comes down to something that you've heard us say quite often in this House, and that is: promises made, promises broken. That is what has been delivered in this. If there is only one thing to take away from this budget and this bill, it is that this government cannot be trusted. That's the only thing that Albertans know for sure.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, followed by Drumheller-Stettler.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I asked the Member for Rimbeey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre a question, and he artfully dodged it. I believe he said that he was practising to be a cabinet minister, learning how to avoid questions.

But back to the question about what his party would do with the income from the heritage fund. As he's aware, after inflation-proofing, we've used the income from that fund for quite a few years now to fund government operations and programs and build infrastructure. Would he not concede that had the PC government

not used the income from that fund to build infrastructure and to provide for operational funding, we would not have the lowest taxes that we have right now, nor would we have the tremendous infrastructure that we have in the province of Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for his question. You know, there's no question that having a source of revenue has allowed this government and this province to reap the rewards and the benefits of that. I think, you know, that if you're asking me what we would have done with it, we would have probably managed it a little bit more wisely than what we've seen.

Again, for me, it goes back to: what was the original intent of this fund? I'm sure that if you go and look through what Peter Lougheed thought he was starting when he started this fund, it was to create a sustainable, long-term source of revenue. In fairness, you chose to use that revenue. That was the choice that the government made. The electorate has put you back in office to continue down that path. That's the choice that they made, and that's what you chose to do with it.

Our party would choose to save it. We would choose to make sure that if and when we run surpluses, we mandate that 50 per cent of those surplus dollars go into the heritage savings trust fund year in, year out. Using the magic of compound interest, for the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, the number that I quoted earlier was \$136 billion had you just left the fund alone and let the interest grow. It is somewhat sad and upsetting.

To answer the hon. member's question, we would leave the money in the fund. We would allow the fund to grow. We would mandate and legislate around not touching the interest on that fund until it equalled in an annual year what the province brought in in resource revenue.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Drumheller-Stettler, do you want to go next?

**Mr. Strankman:** Mr. Speaker, during the budget estimates the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance made the comment that he would not be leaving his children a debt-free house. In your dissertations earlier, Mr. Member for Calgary-Shaw, you talked about your family history and your pride in the belief in a savings fund, so I wondered how you would relate to hearing the Minister of Finance of the province of Alberta make a comment that he would not leave his children a debt-free house. I'm anxious to hear your opinion.

4:10

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you for the question. It's an interesting question, and I guess it comes down to different parenting styles, for one. I know that with my son the last thing that I want to do when it's time for me to pass is to have him be responsible for mistakes that I made and have him carry debt as a result of decisions that I made. I would do and will do everything in my power to ensure that that doesn't happen. I can't speak, necessarily, to what the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board spoke to specifically around why he thought that he would not leave his children in a debt-free situation. I don't know if that's some sort of life lesson that he's looking to teach them.

I know that in this province it is simply irresponsible – irresponsible – for us to have had six years ago \$17 billion in the bank in a sustainability fund, that's now going to be renamed the contingency fund because you don't want to actually mesh those

two. You want to make sure that people forget that the sustainability fund even existed. You know, we've spent that \$17 billion, we're going to have \$17 billion more in debt, so in a matter of – what will that be? – a whole 10 years you're going to have spent \$34 billion more than what you brought in. You can shake your head over there all you want, and you can . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Sorry to interrupt, but we must move on.

We're going to go to Medicine Hat. Hon. Member for Medicine Hat, you have the floor.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today to Bill 12, the Fiscal Management Act. I must say: what a difference a year makes, especially when it comes to budgets in Alberta. I'd like to just make a quote here from the Budget 2013: Responsible Change speech, and it's something that was presented by the Minister of Finance. What he says is:

It's no secret. We have our challenges: immediate, serious challenges that Budget 2013 speaks to.

For example, for the past 10 years, on average, we have increased spending by 7.3 per cent and this year zero because it was the responsible thing to do in light of our fiscal situation.

When you look at that, it's interesting because in 2013 the fiscal challenge is no secret, as stated by the minister, but in 2011 and 2012 it was probably the worst-kept secret by the PCs. I would say that it was used only to hang onto power. I think that they're being judged for that decision today.

Mr. Speaker, there is no comparison between the election budget and the current budget, that we are dealing with today. The election budget had promises to spend, and the current budget breaks all these promises and cuts front-line services. The old budget was talking about increasing spending in all areas. They wanted to add 140 family care clinics. That was announced by the Premier after the budget. They also promised to build 50 new schools, refurbish 70, again added after the budget, and many people thought that those promises would add another \$4 billion to \$6 billion to the budget. So you already have a high spending promise budget, you have more promises into the election, and then once you get through the election, you find out: oh; there was a secret. You just have to wonder, you know, about the integrity of what is presented in the budgeting process from government past and today.

This is the back-in-debt budget, and the Premier talks of it being a once-in-a-generation budget. We're seeing that. It's going to possibly put this generation back two generations. It took a generation to pay off the debt that the Getty government put us into, and we're headed in the same direction, Mr. Speaker. We are witnessing some of the biggest squandering of wealth in our province's history, and again this budget, that's presented this year, is full of broken promises based upon previous commitments. It is interesting that it's touted from the other side, the government side, that the capital plan is where they shine. They talk about spending billions of dollars. The trouble is that they've moved that off what was normally the regular reporting side, and now all that money is being borrowed.

I think that for any one of us, had we been elected: give us a platinum card. We'll go spend. We'll make people happy. But then you come home. You deliver the bill. That's when decisions need to be dealt with. That's when we have to decide: was that in the best interest of Alberta at that time? Mr. Speaker, I think that that question is going to linger over the next three years.

When you compare what the government wants to spend on capital, on debt, by the way, it's interesting when you look at it. They are very proud to say that over the next three years they're going to spend on average \$5 billion, but it's front-end-loaded spending. They're talking about spending \$5.2 billion in this year and just under \$5.2 billion in the following year, but by 2015-2016 their spend is down to \$4.6 billion. When you compare that to what our plan was, we start off smaller, but our rates actually grow. As the Member for Calgary-Shaw mentioned, there is an intersection in about year 3 or 4, and as the PC spending drops, ours accelerates. The interesting thing is that ours is not debt. We're not adding debt to the future generations.

**An Hon. Member:** No services either.

**Mr. Pedersen:** I'm just telling you, Member. We're spending, we're building, and in year 3 or 4 we'll surpass the PCs. It's a sad fact that the government takes and promises big up front . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** We're just about there, guys.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting that the PCs will front-end-load their spending promises using debt, which is going to last and last and last, while we promote spending in a responsible fashion. We bypass them, and we deliver it with no debt. I think that they should review their budget on that.

Again, when you look at the budget on the capital plan, just reading from there,

amounts required for capital debt servicing costs are being drawn from current-year revenue. The amount of direct borrowing for the Capital Plan is subject to a legislated limit in the Fiscal Management Act. The Act stipulates that Capital Plan debt servicing costs cannot exceed 3% of the average of Operational Revenue of the current year and two prior years.

We're glad to see that there is a limitation and a bit of a ceiling there.

The problem is that when you look at the numbers, from what I can read – and maybe I could be corrected, or I might not be right – coming up to the year 2015-2016, Mr. Speaker, the debt-servicing costs as listed are shown at \$593 million. That's based on 3 per cent of the three-year average of operational revenue of \$1.2 billion. If I'm to interpret that correctly, we're already going to be at almost 50 per cent of our borrowing limit in only three years. I think that's very troubling. It's very worrisome, when you see a spending cap or a spending limit set out, that we have hit half of that in three years. You know, it's going to take a lot longer to pay it off. It's easy to spend, easy to rack it up, but we all know it's painful and takes a long time to pay it back.

Mr. Speaker, as was mentioned before, too, what used to be called the sustainability fund was built up to quite a considerable amount – I think it was \$14 billion, \$15 billion at the high – and has gradually been taken down in substantial quantities almost every year. As of 2011-2012 there was over \$11 billion sitting in that fund. By the time we get to 2014-2015, the anticipated balance is going to be under \$700 million, so we're basically 16 and a half billion dollars used up over the next couple of years from '11-12. That's a substantial amount of money. They're anticipating that that fund will begin to rise by then, and of course it's going to be called the contingency fund, which is an interesting change. We'll see if their numbers hold true or if we have any problems.

4:20

Some of the real numbers for the budget from 2013-2014, Mr. Speaker. There's going to be about \$3.5 billion in new debt this year. That's going to be doubling to about \$8 billion by next year by what is said in the budget. Again, we're looking at a total budget deficit in spending of about \$17 billion on the capital side. That's going to be there by the time we face the next election, and I do think that's going to be one of the Achilles heels of this government because it is certainly not one of the things they did campaign on nor went to the voters and asked approval for.

There's a 5-and-a-half-billion-dollar cash deficit in the 2013-14 budget, and that's after we've taken \$2 billion out of the sustainability fund, now called the contingency fund. The operational deficit, from what we can figure out by working the many, many different figures and books and columns, is about \$1.4 billion for this year. It's pretty dramatic, and it's going to be concerning for us this year as well as next year, when we're looking at \$451 million for an operational deficit.

The problem with the budget, too, we feel, is that it still leaves the door open for taxes. Now, we've asked, and they've said that there will not be new taxes, but again when you're treading water, when you're fine-lining things so closely, the way this government is, there are very few options. If there is a hiccup in the revenue stream and they wanted to stay committed to their spending stream, it does limit their options. Taxes are obviously one of those options that is open to them. We think that that is still something that's on the table for them, and we're concerned about that because they say that they won't do it, but we'll have to see.

Their plan, again, as mentioned before, to borrow to put into savings I'm a bit skeptical of. I'm not sure that's the best idea, but that's the decision the government is making, and we're concerned about that, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are many broken promises. We're talking about education funding, you know, being promised before and cut. That's on the regular

education system. The advanced education system, or postsecondary, is experiencing a 7 per cent cut when they were expecting an increase, as promised by the government in the previous budget. Again, the 50 new schools and 70 modernizations: now it looks like they're going to be built over five years instead of four. We'll see if that actually comes through or not.

I think, you know, in closing, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 12 is designed for one purpose, and that's really to hide the true nature of what the PC government has planned for us not only this year but over the next three years. It's certainly not making any great strides to get their spending in order. We've seen that the actual spending reductions are actually affecting front-line services, front-line workers. They haven't really gone after bureaucracy. They haven't gone after any of the spending on themselves, and I think that's the issue that we take most seriously. As it is presented, I personally cannot support this bill without significant amendments.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question has been called, then. No other speakers? Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a second time]

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

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing that, let's call it 4:30 and adjourn until 1:30 on Monday, April 22.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:26 p.m. to Monday, April 22, at 1:30 p.m.]



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

**Activity to April 18, 2013**

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

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

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

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

First Reading -- 8 (May 24, 2012 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 177 (Oct. 23, 2012 eve.), 193-96 (Oct. 23, 2012 eve.), 233 (Oct. 24, 2012 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 336-39 (Oct. 29, 2012 eve.), 354-71 (Oct. 30, 2012 aft.), 373-80 (Oct. 30, 2012 eve., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 476-84 (Nov. 1, 2012 aft., passed on division)

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

### **2\* Responsible Energy Development Act (Hughes)**

First Reading -- 207 (Oct. 24, 2012 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 263 (Oct. 25, 2012 aft.), 424-43 (Oct. 31, 2012 aft.), 445-57 (Oct. 31, 2012 eve.), 526-46 (Nov. 5, 2012 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 563-71 (Nov. 6, 2012 aft.), 593 (Nov. 6, 2012 eve.), 644-48 (Nov. 7, 2012 aft.), 649-69 (Nov. 7, 2012 eve.), 731-53 (Nov. 19, 2012 eve.), 777-94 (Nov. 20, 2012 aft.), 795-853 (Nov. 20, 2012 eve.), 902-05 (Nov. 20, 2012 eve., passed on division, with amendments)

Third Reading -- 921-41 (Nov. 21, 2012 aft., passed on division)

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

### **3\* Education Act (J. Johnson)**

First Reading -- 155 (Oct. 23, 2012 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 219-31 (Oct. 24, 2012 aft.), 238 (Oct. 24, 2012 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 380-407 (Oct. 30, 2012 eve., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 669 (Nov. 7, 2012 eve.), 688-94 (Nov. 8, 2012 aft.), 753-63 (Nov. 19, 2012 eve., passed on division)

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

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

First Reading -- 352-53 (Oct. 30, 2012 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 423-24 (Oct. 31, 2012 aft.), 593-614 (Nov. 6, 2012 eve.), 627-44 (Nov. 7, 2012 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 975-80 (Nov. 22, 2012 aft.), 1057-74 (Nov. 27, 2012 aft.), 1075-101 (Nov. 27, 2012 eve.), 1127-137 (Nov. 28, 2012 aft.), 1139-161 (Nov. 28, 2012 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 1161-166 (Nov. 28, 2012 eve., passed on division)

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

### **5 New Home Buyer Protection Act (Griffiths)**

First Reading -- 261 (Oct. 25, 2012 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 354 (Oct. 30, 2012 aft.), 457-59 (Oct. 31, 2012 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 546-49 (Nov. 5, 2012 eve.), 571-83 (Nov. 6, 2012 aft.), 585-93 (Nov. 6, 2012 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 853-55 (Nov. 20, 2012 eve., passed)

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

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

First Reading -- 155 (Oct. 23, 2012 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 209 (Oct. 24, 2012 aft.), 264 (Oct. 25, 2012 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 459-62 (Oct. 31, 2012 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 855-56 (Nov. 20, 2012 eve., passed)

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

- 7\***      **Election Accountability Amendment Act, 2012 (Denis)**  
First Reading -- 774 (Nov. 20, 2012 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 972-75 (Nov. 22, 2012 aft.), 1015-41 (Nov. 26, 2012 eve., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1166-167 (Nov. 28, 2012 eve.), 1191-92 (Nov. 29, 2012 aft.), 1221-43 (Dec. 3, 2012 eve.), 1261-79 (Dec. 4, 2012 aft.), 1281-1300 (Dec. 4, 2012 eve., passed, with amendments)  
Third Reading -- 1315-37 (Dec. 5, 2012 aft., passed on division)  
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10, 2012 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2012 c5]
- 8**      **Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2012 (Hughes)**  
First Reading -- 156 (Oct. 23, 2012 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 233 (Oct. 24, 2012 eve.), 316-36 (Oct. 29, 2012 eve, passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 857-902 (Nov. 20, 2012 eve.), 943-53 (Nov. 21, 2012 eve., passed)  
Third Reading -- 953-56 (Nov. 21, 2012 eve., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10, 2012 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 10, 2012; SA 2012 c6]
- 9**      **Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2012 (\$) (Horner)**  
First Reading -- 156 (Oct. 23, 2012 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 209-10 (Oct. 24, 2012 aft.), 272 (Oct. 25, 2012 aft.), 311-16 (Oct. 29, 2012 eve., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 462 (Oct. 31, 2012 eve., passed)  
Third Reading -- 856-57 (Nov. 20, 2012 eve., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10, 2012 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates, SA 2012 c4]
- 10**     **Employment Pension Plans Act (Kennedy-Glans)**  
First Reading -- 261 (Oct. 25, 2012 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 521-26 (Nov. 5, 2012 eve., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 668-69 (Nov. 7, 2012 eve., passed)  
Third Reading -- 857 (Nov. 20, 2012 eve., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 10, 2012 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2012 cE-8.1]
- 11**     **Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2013 (\$) (Horner)**  
First Reading -- 1424 (Mar. 6, 2013 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1480-86 (Mar. 11, 2013 eve., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1534-41 (Mar. 12, 2013 eve., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1583 (Mar. 13, 2013 aft.), 1559-60 (Mar. 13, 2013 eve., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 21, 2013 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 21, 2013; SA 2013 c2]
- 12**     **Fiscal Management Act (\$) (Horner)**  
First Reading -- 1438 (Mar. 7, 2013 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1479-80 (Mar. 11, 2013 eve.), 1560-78 (Mar. 13, 2013 aft.), 1579-83 (Mar. 13, 2013 eve.), 1785-90 (Apr. 11, 2013 aft.), 1877-85 (Apr. 18, 2013 aft., passed)
- 13**     **Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2013 (\$) (Horner)**  
First Reading -- 1456 (Mar. 11, 2013 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1527-34 (Mar. 12, 2013 eve.), 1556 (Mar. 13, 2013 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1583 (Mar. 13, 2013 eve., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1695-1700 (Mar. 21, 2013 aft.), 1695-1700 (Mar. 21, 2013 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 21, 2013 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 21, 2013; SA 2013 c1]
- 14**     **RCMP Health Coverage Statutes Amendment Act, 2013 (VanderBurg)**  
First Reading -- 1690 (Mar. 21, 2013 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1875 (Apr. 18, 2013 aft., adjourned)
- 15**     **Emergency 911 Act (\$) (Weadick)**  
First Reading -- 1762 (Apr. 10, 2013 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1875-76 (Apr. 18, 2013 aft., adjourned)
- 16**     **Victims Statutes Amendment Act, 2013 (\$) (Denis)**  
First Reading -- 1762-63 (Apr. 10, 2013 aft., passed)
- 17**     **Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2013 (Kubinec)**  
First Reading -- 1779 (Apr. 11, 2013 aft., passed)
- 18**     **Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act (Fawcett)**  
First Reading -- 1873 (Apr. 18, 2013 aft., passed)



- 19 Metis Settlements Amendment Act, 2013 (Campbell)**  
First Reading -- 1803 (Apr. 15, 2013 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1876-77 (Apr. 18, 2013 aft., adjourned)
- 201\* Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act (Quest)**  
First Reading -- 92 (May 30, 2012 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 291-301 (Oct. 29, 2012 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 716-22 (Nov. 19, 2012 aft.), 1725-26 (Apr. 8, 2013 aft., passed with amendments)  
Third Reading -- 1726-27 (Apr. 8, 2013 aft., passed)
- 202 Public Lands (Grasslands Preservation) Amendment Act, 2012 (Brown)**  
First Reading -- 130 (May 31, 2012 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 501-13 (Nov. 5, 2012 aft.), 1723-25 (Apr. 8, 2013 aft., defeated on division)
- 203 Employment Standards (Compassionate Care Leave) Amendment Act, 2012 (Jeneroux)**  
First Reading -- 473 (Nov. 1, 2012 aft., passed)
- 204 Irlen Syndrome Testing Act (Jablonski)**  
First Reading -- 968 (Nov. 22, 2012 aft., passed)
- 205 Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2012 (Calahasen)**  
First Reading -- 1117 (Nov. 28, 2012 aft., passed)
- 206 Tobacco Reduction (Flavoured Tobacco Products) Amendment Act, 2012 (Fraser)**  
First Reading -- 1350-51 (Dec. 6, 2012 aft., passed)
- 207 Human Tissue and Organ Donation Amendment Act, 2013 (Webber)**  
First Reading -- 1690 (Mar. 21, 2013 aft., passed)
- 208 Seniors' Advocate Act (Towle)**  
First Reading -- 1315 (Dec. 5, 2012 aft., passed)



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