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The 28th Legislature
First Session

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Issue 61

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

First Session

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Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC),
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Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (Ind)
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
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Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W),
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Weadick, Hon. Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W)
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC),
 Government Whip

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Progressive Conservative: 59 Wildrose: 17 Alberta Liberal: 5 New Democrat: 4 Independent: 2

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Chair: Mr. Amery
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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

Amery	Eggen
Anderson	Kubinec
Casey	Sherman
Dorward	

Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Rogers
Deputy Chair: Mr. Quadri

Blakeman	Leskiw
Eggen	McDonald
Goudreau	Saskiw
Lemke	

Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

Chair: Vacant
Deputy Chair: Mr. Luan

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

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Cusanelli	Leskiw
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Fritz	Swann
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Forsyth	McDonald
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Anglin	Luan
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Hale	Sarich
Hehr	Stier
Jeneroux	Webber

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Hale	Vacant

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 29, 2013

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Dear God, help us to remember our purpose and our mission as servants of the people who elected us. Help us in our duties and obligations and in the discharge of our authorities, both inside and beyond the walls of this hallowed Assembly. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a moment we'll begin with school groups, but could I please remind all of you to keep your introductions as short as possible. We have approximately 20 to do today, and some of us are getting a bit long in our intros, so, please, let's keep them short and to the point. I'm sure folks will understand.

We'll begin with school groups and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Mr. Young: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of students from l'école Notre-Dame. They're here with Mr. Paulin Larochelle. If I could get them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 60 outstanding students from George McDougall high school in Airdrie. They're here with us today learning about democracy and what goes on in this House, and I'm sure they're going to have a real earful today and will enjoy it. I'd like them to stand as well as their teacher, a former classmate and a friend of mine, Mrs. Devon Sawby, who's with them, and their parent assistants: Ms Stacey Carefoot, Ms Leona Esau, Ms Shannon Mauro, Mr. Earl Hubley – hi, Earl – and Mrs. Nicole Angelozzi. I hope I said that right. If we could all give them a warm welcome, that'd be great.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to rise and introduce to you and through you students from Mundare elementary school. They are here with their teacher, Adrienne Mills, and parents Jaime Burghardt, who has just been re-elected to council, Robin DeJong Jarvis, and Jo-Ann Pawliuk. These students attended School at the Legislature from October 18 to 22 and are back with us again today. If I could ask us to give them the warm greetings of the Legislature.

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

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce you to 32 students and teachers, including Ms Sech, from St. Gabriel School, which is about three blocks from my community. They'll be joining us at 2 o'clock.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there other school groups?

If not, let us proceed with other guests. The Minister of Education.

Mr. J. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a very special guest and a former colleague of ours. There are many words to describe this gentleman. A few that come to mind are passionate, enthusiastic, loyal, fun, never boring, and definitely a friend, but not reserved; that's for sure. Luke Ouellette served this province very well for many years as an MLA and most recently as our Minister of Transportation. I know question period was definitely one of his favourite times. When we heard, "My question is to the Minister of Transportation," we all knew we were in for an exciting exchange, and we knew that his communications director would be glued to the TV as well. Some could argue that the province's theme in the tourism ads, Remember to Breathe, was inspired by Luke. [interjection] He's already standing, I see, and I think he deserves another great round of applause from you.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't beat that introduction.

To you and through you to all members of this Legislature I would like to introduce three individuals from Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions. Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions is a research agency funded by the government of Alberta through our ministry, Enterprise and Advanced Education. It is part of the Alberta Innovates group and has a mandate to invest in science and innovation. With us today seated in the public gallery are board chair Art Froehlich, chief executive officer Dr. Stan Blade, and communications director Marie Cusack. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and leader of the ND opposition.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my guests from the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees local 54, representing roughly 7,000 workers in the health care sector. My guests work with lab services as AHS employees and are here today because they're extremely concerned with the PC government's plan to privatize lab services in Edmonton. I would ask my guests to rise as I call their names and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Lyn Morrison, Tasha Quaghebeur, Sharlene Mitchell, Karen Dietrich, and Jennifer Sainte.

The Speaker: The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour for me today to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly guests who are in the Legislature Building today to celebrate for the first time in this Assembly Diwali, the festival of lights. Seated in your gallery today from the Hindu Society of Alberta is a very dear friend of mine, a very personal friend but also the president of the Hindu Society, Amar Bhasin, and his wife, Monika. I might add that Amar and Monika are constituents of Edmonton-Whitemud. Accompanying them was to be the society priest, Acharaya Shivshankar Dwivedi. Amar and Monika, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

A second introduction, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour again to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly guests from the Maha Ganapathy temple. The temple is actually in Twin Brooks, which was in the beautiful constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud but has now transferred jurisdiction over to Edmonton-South West. I have the honour and privilege of introducing president Dr. Sutha Suthaker and Mr. Yogasundaram from the temple. I've had a long association with this temple. It's a wonderful organization with wonderful people, and I was very sorry that the temple is no longer in my constituency, but I still consider them to be honorary constituents of Edmonton-Whitemud. They are seated in the members' gallery and are standing now, and I would ask that we give them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta, followed by the Member for Airdrie.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's also my pleasure to introduce to you and through you members of the Hindu Society of Calgary that have joined us today for this historic Diwali event. I'll start with the president, none other than Mrs. Neena Obhrai, who also happens to be the spouse of Mr. Deepak Obhrai, the Member of Parliament for Calgary East. Accompanying Mrs. Obhrai is Mr. Jitender Sharma, a long-time family friend; Mr. and Mrs. Arora; and Mrs. Brij Bala. I'd ask them all to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie, followed by the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a wonderful advocate for health in our province, Mrs. Nicole Angelozzi, and her sons Jesse and Jacob. Nicole has been a great advocate of passing and proclaiming the Member for Calgary-Lougheed's private member's bill from a while back that prohibited smoking in cars with children. She really feels that this is something that needs to be proclaimed into law and hopes that the government will do so very quickly as it is affecting children today. I would ask them all to stand and please receive the warm applause of this Assembly.

1:40

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two very dear friends of mine from the constituency of Vermilion-Lloydminster, Greg and Laurie Hnatuk, that are today seated just above me. Greg and Laurie have been friends for a long, long time. They sit behind me every Sunday in church, which is better than in front of me because then they'd have to listen to me sing. Greg is here because of his long-standing support for Bill 207, the tissue and organ transplant act. He himself was a kidney transplant recipient just before Christmas of 2011 and is doing very, very well, and we're very pleased to have him here. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Wellness, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Rodney: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Later today it's my honour to table the 2012-2013 annual report for the Alberta College of Occupational Therapists. In the meantime, it's my pleasure to introduce two of their fine, fine representatives. This past Sunday, October 27, was the fourth annual World

Occupational Therapy Day. Since 2010 it's become an important date in the occupational therapy calendar to promote and celebrate the profession internationally. Occupational therapists do invaluable work in helping people whose ability to function in everyday life is disrupted by physical illness or injury, by developmental problems, the aging process, mental illness, or emotional problems. The college has the important task of regulating the profession of occupational therapy in the province of Alberta and ensuring that Albertans receive competent, ethical occupational therapy services from the 1,500 professionals employed in the field.

Joining us today are the incoming president, Mrs. Gina Kroetsch, and the college's registrar, Dr. Maggie Fulford. They are seated in the member's gallery, and I would ask our guests to rise and invite all of our members to provide them with the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my honour and privilege to rise today to introduce to you and through you some wonderful individuals who are here today to witness a very historic day in this province, where we're celebrating Diwali in the Alberta Legislature for the first time. Representing the Bhartiya Cultural Society of Alberta is their president, Dharmender Sharma; his wife, Subhash Rani Sharma; and their priest, Pandit Pankaj Dixit. May I ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

Mr. Speaker, for my second introduction I have representing the Garvi Gujarat Association of Canada president Ashok Patel. Representing the Alberta Gujarati Association is Ashvin Bilimoria and his wife, Mrs. Bilimoria. May I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

Mr. Speaker, for my final introduction I have two young ladies, youth from the community. First is Priyanka Chandan, who explained the significance of Diwali, and of course joining her is Kanika Bhatara, who did the translation from Sanskrit to English all by herself. May I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Webber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 15 individuals who are here in support of Bill 207, the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Amendment Act, 2013, which will go into Committee of the Whole this afternoon. I would ask that they stand as I read out their names: Barb Esdale, who is the co-chair of the Alberta Donates Life Coalition and also the wife of a double lung recipient; Leigh Allard, who is the executive director of the Lung Association; Dr. Lori West, who is a professor of pediatrics, surgery, and immunology and the research director at the Alberta transplant institute. Hi, Lori. Nancy MacDonald is the executive director of the Alberta Donates Life Coalition and was a huge resource for me in the work on Bill 207. Sharon Marcus is the co-chair of the Alberta Donates Life Coalition and the mother of a son with a kidney transplant. Tammy Fifield is the program director of the Kidney Foundation of Canada and a kidney transplant recipient herself. Dr. Greg Powell and Linda Powell are Calgary advocates, and they have been a huge, huge resource for me as well. Dr. Powell is also the founder of STARS air ambulance here in the province of Alberta, and he is currently waiting for a liver transplant. Karen Korchinski is an advocate and

is also waiting for a liver transplant. She is the lovely lady who introduced me to this community of transplantation and donation and enlightened me on what was going on, and I thank her for enlightening me throughout this process. Dr. Patricia Campbell is a professor of medicine and director of the HLA laboratory. Her specialty is in transplant nephrology. I hope I pronounced that right. Chantal Lacroix is a recent kidney recipient, and Ryan Davis donated that kidney to Chantel, a live donor. Jung-Suk Ryu is the communications manager for the CNIB, Marc Workman is the national manager of the CNIB, and Audry Martyn is a volunteer at the CNIB and a cornea transplant recipient.

Sorry for taking so long, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that all of them stand and that we give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my friends and outspoken advocates, Murray McRae and Melodie Helm. They are both here today to support Bill 207, the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Amendment Act, 2013. I'd like to also honour them for the very important work that they have done and continue to do in the founding, organizing, and operation of the Annual Bionic Golf Tournament at Gull Lake to raise money and, more importantly, awareness about the need for organ donation in Alberta. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly guests that have joined us today in the public gallery to show their support for Bill 207, brought forward in this House by my friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills. All of our guests today are great advocates of Bill 207 as they've lived first-hand the difference this bill will make. I introduce Mr. Tony White, who lives in Twin Brooks, which I'll take the opportunity to remind the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is in my constituency of Edmonton-South West, and has been a strong advocate for this bill and has received a liver transplant; Mike Cunningham, a double lung recipient; Ingrid Rose, whose son is waiting for a kidney transplant; and Jill Comeau, a recipient of a cornea. Thank you for being here today.

I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I beg your indulgence to conclude with three more, starting with Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by Edmonton-Decore, and then the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my honour and my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you the wonderful people who have witnessed this very historical day in the history of this province, that we celebrate Diwali for the first time. I'd like to introduce to you the Sri Sri Radha Govindaji Vedic Temple president, Bala Krishna Das, who's also a leading petrochemical engineer in the province of Alberta, joined by Priest Sudama Gopa Das. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

1:50

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly 10 representatives from the Chinese Freemasons Society of Canada, here in celebration of their 150-year history in our great country. My guests are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask them to please rise as I mention their names. Mr. Howie Mah, president, Chinese Freemasons Society Edmonton chapter; Mr. Wing Jock Lee, executive director, Chinese Freemasons Society Edmonton chapter; Mr. Bill Mah, executive director, Chinese Freemasons Society Edmonton chapter; Mr. Sein Mah, executive director, Chinese Freemasons Society Edmonton chapter; Mr. Wing Jong, secretary, Chinese Freemasons Society Edmonton chapter; Mr. Chuck Ming Chow, treasurer, Chinese Freemasons Society Edmonton chapter; Mr. Gary Hui, president, Jin Wah Sing Musical Society; Mr. Henry Fung, president, Hung Mun Athletic Club; Mr. Ken Kwong, chairman, Dart Coon club; Mrs. Barbara Fung, public relations.

With regret, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Lap Check Kwong, former national chairman, Chinese Freemasons Society of Canada, and Mrs. May Kwong, chairman, Chinese Freemasons Society women's recreation club, could not be with us today.

I would now ask the Assembly to join me and honour my guests with the traditional welcome.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview and Minister of Transportation, your guests are not here yet, so let us conclude with the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with high honour and great distinction that I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two extraordinary Albertans, Sheldon Kennedy and Bonnie Johnston. These individuals were instrumental in the establishment and the continued operation of the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre in Calgary. This government is grateful for the work that they and their staff and volunteers do. The centre provides a level of care to support the children of abuse that is unparalleled. I have visited this facility numerous times, and I can say that it is nothing short of world class. It also has raised the profile of child abuse in the Calgary community and across the province. I ask that both of them please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, 30 seconds. I understand your guests just arrived.

Mr. Young: Yes. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the three newest members to join government caucus research and communications. Mr. Speaker, these bright and intelligent young adults have joined our team and are extremely excited for their first session here at the Legislature. Our newest research and communications team members consist of Adrienne South, Krysten Bachmier, and Keith Gacek. If they could just stand and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. We are three minutes over our time period here, so please review *Hansard* and see where we can tighten up our intros for tomorrow. Nothing at any-one in particular but just, all of you, review it.

Oral Question Period

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

Health Care Wait Times

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in defending the government's record on wait times, the Health minister bragged about the supposed progress being made in waits for four procedures: cataract, hip surgeries, knee replacements, and urgent coronary bypasses. Now, I am certain that the minister knows the unpleasant facts about these wait times, and I find it hard to believe that anybody, let alone the Health minister, could confuse them with progress. To the minister. Last chance. Is he really proud of the government's record of wait times on these procedures?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, it matters not to me what the hon. member believes or not. What are the facts? The fact is that we are the fastest growing province in the country. We grow by over a hundred thousand people a year. We're over 4 million today. We have, obviously, the fastest growing health system in the country. As I mentioned yesterday, over the last three years we've seen hip surgery wait times down by 9 per cent, knee surgeries down by 9 per cent, 700 additional cataract surgeries, and wait times for those down by 22 per cent. I could go on. The record is clear. Our health system is working for Albertans, and we are continuing to make improvements.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, here are the real facts on wait times. Cataract surgery: target 25 weeks, current wait 30 weeks. Hip surgery: target 22 weeks, current wait 37 weeks. Knee replacement: target 28 weeks, current wait 43 weeks. Urgent coronary bypass: target 6 weeks, current wait 23 weeks. This is a dismal record. This is this minister's record. What is his explanation for this unprecedented failure to treat patients?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, these sorts of challenges in elective surgeries can be found across the country. Patients are waiting longer, I think, than all health ministers in the country would like to see, but they are very high-demand procedures, and they're influenced by the growth of our population and the aging of our population. The fact that we're seeing steady improvement in Alberta and the fact that this member can go home tonight and tell her constituents that wait times for cornea transplants in this province are going from three years to three months is something I think she should boast about.

Ms Smith: It's a record that's simply not good enough.

Yesterday the minister expressed shock at the Wildrose wait time guarantee, saying that it would be extreme to allow patients on the wait-list to get treatment and then get paid back out of the out-of-province fund. Well, maybe the minister can help me understand this. Why does he think allowing people to get the care they need when they need it is extreme but forcing people to wait six months for an urgent coronary bypass is not extreme?

Ms Redford: I was so pleased yesterday to see the Leader of the Opposition actually stand by a policy that she talked about in the last election. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that 18 months ago, when Albertans were asked whether or not they wanted to have a two-tier health system or thought that the solution to fixing health care was to privatize health care, they resoundingly said no.

Wait times are certainly improving. We continue to make drastic improvements, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to do that because that's how you build a publicly funded health care system that Albertans can trust.

Ms Smith: I don't think that's a leader who should be talking about changing policies every day.

Flood Mitigation

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we are now less than eight months away from the next flood season, so I'm going to repeat a question that I asked on March 21, three months before the flood. Maybe now the Minister of Municipal Affairs will have some appreciation of why I asked it. I asked this. Former MLA George Groeneveld's flood mitigation report called for a plan to help 66 communities that are at risk of flooding. When will the government provide a detailed, comprehensive priority list of flood mitigation plans so that I can tell High River where they stand on that list?

Ms Redford: It has been absolutely incredible in the last four months to see communities come together and talk about how to deal with what was not only unprecedented in terms of volume but also in terms of pathways for flooding. You may know, Mr. Speaker, that approximately a month ago there was a symposium in Calgary that was convened with the minister and the chair of our task force and all of the ministers that are responsible for rebuilding flood-affected areas to talk about exactly that. I did say in my comments yesterday that we have a plan, we've contracted engineers, that work is being done now, and we are listening to Albertans because that's how you build a plan that people can trust.

Ms Smith: In fact, Mr. Speaker, this government has let communities down.

There are a variety of possible mitigation projects across 66 communities identified in the Groeneveld flood mitigation report. To the minister: how many of these communities have had their flood mitigation projects approved and completed, and how many of those 66 communities are at a lower flood risk today than they were in 2005, when the report was issued? That's eight full years ago.

Mr. Griffiths: Well, Mr. Speaker, that sounds more like a written question. I don't have those details on hand, but I can tell the member that out of the over \$300 million that the Groeneveld report recommended, \$82 million of it has been done.

I can tell them something else, too. The member might want to go to her community of High River and explain to them how she's going to do any of that or support their schools or support rebuilding the community when they're going to cut \$5 billion out of our infrastructure plan.

Ms Smith: They had to spend \$350 million to renovate MLA offices. We certainly would've been able to get it done.

The minister is clearly not on top of his file, but he can reassure Albertans by undertaking a simple task. The minister must instruct his department to immediately create a detailed list of the mitigation projects for the 66 communities at risk in Alberta, which includes the nature of the project, the cost, and the expected completion date. When can we expect him to table that list in this Assembly?

2:00

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, it's been well recognized that disasters are a shared responsibility. The federal government has even recognized that they contribute a significant amount of the money to rebuilding communities. So we need a co-ordinated plan between municipalities, the province, and the federal government to share the responsibility on mitigating disasters before they happen. I met with the federal minister. We've talked about it several times on the phone. He agrees completely that we need to work on a co-ordinated national strategy. We've got the Groeneveld report. We're going to be announcing things through the fall as we do our engineering analysis on those plans. So stay tuned. It's coming.

The Speaker: Hon. leader, your third and final set of questions.

Premier's Office Staff Compensation and Severance Payments

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, despite clear and direct instruction the Premier continues to fight tooth and nail to hide information related to severance and compensation for key members of her political team. The office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner stated in its report, quote: the confidential nature of remuneration is not a given for individuals who hold key positions in the Premier's office. Unquote. Now, I'm not a lawyer, but these instructions seem pretty clear to me. So why does the Premier continue to hide the details of her staff's severance and compensation from Alberta taxpayers?

Ms Redford: We're doing exactly the opposite. We're committed to transparency, Mr. Speaker. We have made a commitment to put in place not ad hoc release but a full system, which is very similar to what we've done with respect to government MLA expenses. I remind the opposition that they still don't disclose their expenses. We will continue to do better every single day. We've made that commitment to Albertans, and we'll stand by it.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, in a speech in August of 2012 the Premier said, and I quote, if what we're doing doesn't pass the highest level of scrutiny, then we shouldn't be doing it. I can only assume that the Premier must define accountability and transparency differently than every other Albertan. Albertans expect their Premier to follow the law and obey the directions of the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. So will she release the details of her staff's severance and compensation today?

Mr. Scott: Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of this Premier Alberta is delivering unprecedented transparency. Under the leadership of this Premier we brought in an expense disclosure policy that is the gold standard across . . . [interjections] Under the leadership of this Premier we are continuing to lead Alberta and all of Canada. The Premier is not stopping there. She has instructed me to bring forward a new policy on salary and severance disclosure. That's what we're going to do.

The Speaker: As viewers and other participants can see, there's a lot of love in the room today. Let's just try and contain it a bit so we can hear the questions and the answers.

The hon. leader. Final question.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the gold standard of spin.

We know from media reports and Twitter that her ex-chief of staff claimed he was paid \$130,000 in severance after being on the job for a mere six months. Then she rushed him out the door of the

Premier's office and into her PC Party campaign war room. Since her office continues to hide the full details of the contract, can the Premier confirm today that the \$130,000 payment he received was the only payment he received when he left?

Mr. Scott: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we're continuing to lead Alberta in expense disclosure. We're going to be leading all of Canada with the processes we're undertaking in open and transparent government. [interjections]

The Speaker: I'm going to allow the hon. associate minister to start all over, and I will continue giving him the floor until you allow him the proper 30 seconds to respond. Is that clear?

Hon. minister, please take your first 30 seconds.

Mr. Scott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, under the leadership of this Premier we are delivering an open and transparent government. We're going to continue to deliver that. The Premier has instructed me to bring forward a new policy to do with severance and salary disclosure. We're going to be doing that by the end of the year. We've already done an expense disclosure policy, which is the gold standard. We're going to continue leading for Albertans.

What I would appreciate – if you're going to have X employees who are part of the Wildrose caucus, if you're hiring employees, then I would like to know: what are those employees making? If people run for the Wildrose caucus and are hired by you, what are you paying them?

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Minister of Municipal Affairs

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, Happy Diwali.

The Premier promised big-city charters when she ran for leader. She promised big-city charters when she ran during the election. Her Minister of Municipal Affairs signed an MOU with Edmonton and Calgary committing to introducing legislation on big-city charters in the spring of 2013. Yesterday, however, her minister told this House he couldn't keep his promise because of the flood. To the Premier: do you condone your minister using Alberta's worst-ever natural disaster as an excuse for your latest broken promise?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the hon. member was yesterday. I think I did update the House on the fantastic meeting that we had with the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary on Saturday morning where we actually talked about the fact that we're making great progress on the charter. The mayor of Edmonton has asked for some time to work on their perspective on this with his council, which we're happy to give him. We'll keep moving forward because it is the right thing to do. We did make the commitment, and we're keeping it.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, given that our urban Premier repeatedly promised big-city charters, it's interesting to note that her rural Minister of Municipal Affairs repeatedly talks about civic charters, which would treat Calgary like Carstairs and Edmonton like Edson. To the Premier: whose vision for municipal relations will prevail, yours or your minister's?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, the vision of this government is a vision which is a commitment to communities and to big cities to

make sure that we're putting in place relationships that respect their autonomy and ensure that they can be leaders in our province. There is no difference between my perspective and the perspective of our Minister of Municipal Affairs, just as there is no difference with anyone else on this bench. We want communities to thrive, and I'd appreciate it if that leader did not try to split people up in this province.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, the question is about the Premier keeping her word and not breaking her promises. Maybe the minister isn't challenging the Premier's leadership but is simply confused given that he keeps talking about the Municipal Government Act when we ask him about big-city charters. To the Premier: is this like Calgary's mayor said, that your minister "really hasn't been a part of the conversation." Well, perhaps that explains your meeting the mayors on your own.

A sup question: does this mean that you're actually taking over the file?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, there's incredible work that we do together as leaders in this province. I am very happy to meet with mayors throughout this province. I've met with Mayor Nenshi, I've met with Mayor Iveson, and I've met with mayors in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer. What we do every day is work to build those partnerships to ensure that we can provide the support because mayors and councils need to give the direction. I don't know what this hon. member is talking about or what he's trying to suggest, but I'll tell you that we have a clear plan to move forward to build Alberta, to support families and communities, and to respect leadership across this province, and that's what we'll do.

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

Medical Laboratory Services

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This morning I released a letter from 16 pathologists at the University of Alberta hospital raising serious concerns about this PC government's massive privatization of lab services in Edmonton, including their independence and the, quote, widespread use of public dollars for private gain. Most importantly, they're worried about timeliness and quality of patient care should lab services be privatized. They are very serious concerns. The government continues to privatize health care and to risk the health of Alberta families. To the Premier: why?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, this hon. member's characterization is absolutely ridiculous. I am so proud of this Health minister. He's done incredible work in the past four months to ensure that we have patient safety and effective acute and long-term care as well as primary care and preventative care. That's an integrated health system.

It's unfortunate that this hon. member, if he has those concerns, would suggest to anyone that they should be afraid. We want to make sure that patient safety is honoured. We want to make sure that patients are protected, and that's why this Health minister will make the right decisions in consultation with professionals to actually improve the health care system.

2:10

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I will quote from the letter signed by 16 pathologists, many of them professors at the university medical school. They are concerned that this will "impair timely patient care in an acute setting, and reduce patient safety along with

overall quality of care." The Premier has characterized this as scare tactics on my part, but I have a question for her. Why is the government not taking this seriously?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, that's a ridiculous characterization. Those concerns which those professionals may have are exactly the same concerns that this minister will have and that this government will have when a decision is taken about whether or not to do what this member suggests is already happening. It isn't. Of course we will listen to professionals. We're not going to create any uncertainty. We're going to move forward and build this province, respond to people that need help, ensure that that happens. I have every confidence that this minister will do exactly that.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to an earlier question from the Leader of the Official Opposition the Premier said that Albertans in the last election had rejected private health care, yet AHS is now planning to privatize medical lab services in the Edmonton region with a \$3 billion contract to one private operator. Can the Premier explain the difference between her words and her actions?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, 18 months ago this government, this Progressive Conservative government, said that we stood by the fact that we believed in a public health care system. We will continue to do that. That is what Albertans rely on. They can have confidence in that commitment. We do not change our minds from Monday to Friday. We are not committed to ideology that would actually allow us to make decisions that didn't make a lot of sense. We will ensure that we have a publicly funded health care system that ensures patient safety and delivers services to Albertans.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the first five spots for the leaders, who are allowed preambles according to my ruling. Please, if you have questions coming up after this, curtail your preambles to any of the supplementaries to give all 15 others who have questions a chance to speak.

Provincial Fiscal Policy

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, a new study released last week reported that annual deficits have cratered Alberta's net financial assets by 65 per cent in just six years. That's a \$22 billion loss. If my financial planners lost 65 per cent of my financial assets in six years, well, I'd fire them and ban them from ever being able to touch my money again. Since Albertans won't have the opportunity to fire this Premier or Finance minister until 2016, minister, is the plan to entirely evaporate our financial assets by then, or is this just another part of your government's new debt is hope strategy?

Mr. Horner: Well, I had an opportunity to review some of the literature that the hon. member is referring to. It's a Fraser report that talks about a reduction in our net financial assets. But what the hon. member is not telling Albertans in his preamble is what that reduction was. Let's have a look, Mr. Speaker. Five billion of that reduction was the increase in unfunded liability for pensions. You know what? This government is addressing that. Ten billion dollars of that difference was assets that we put into the ground, things like the Calgary south hospital, which evidently they now don't want us to build with cash because then that changes the net financial assets of the province. The hon. member obviously doesn't understand the financial statements.

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, we can build what we need without robbing our kids blind.

Minister, can you please show me in any campaign document or government statement prior to the last election where you or your Premier promised Albertans that by 2016 the Alberta government would be \$17 billion in debt, would have spent the entire sustainability fund, would have lost all of our net financial assets, and would not even have balanced the consolidated budget once. I must have missed that campaign commercial. Point it out for us so that I can take a look.

Mr. Horner: You know, Mr. Speaker, what Albertans understand is that a good way to build your future is to invest in your home. They also understand that in most cases you take out a mortgage to make that investment and you create net assets through the equity. They also know that savings are important, and they've told us. The Wildrose Alliance obviously does not know how to read a financial balance sheet, because if you take the cash to build an asset, you reduce your net financial assets. That's exactly what they're talking about doing in their \$5 billion-a-year capital plan. I hope that they'll come clean with Albertans and tell us how many teachers, how many nurses, how many hospitals they are going to close to pay for \$5 billion.

Mr. Anderson: Yeah, it is hope, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that this government's handling of our finances is akin to a piece of junk. I would never say that. But my question is this. If this kind of financial planning isn't a piece of junk, then what the heck is it?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's look at the record. The Alberta Chambers of Commerce endorses our plan. The Alberta Enterprise Group endorses our financial plan. All three of our rating agencies that give us that triple-A credit rating endorse our financial plan. The Auditor General has talked about the value-for-money calculation. If I'm making 8 per cent in my savings and I'm borrowing at 3 per cent, even the hon. member should be able to understand that kind of math. The strongest economy in North America, the most jobs created, the most people coming to the province: we must be doing something right.

The Speaker: You know, there's an interesting section in some of our practices and procedures, some of the books, that says that you shouldn't do indirectly what's not allowed directly. Let's all be reminded of that – shall we? – given the episode that occurred yesterday.

Let us move on to Calgary-Bow, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat. Please curtail your preambles to your sups.

Flood-related Insurance Claims

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's been more than four months since severe flooding ravaged much of southern Alberta, and many Albertans, including some of my constituents, lost everything. Understandably, these Albertans are anxious to begin rebuilding their lives. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Why are Albertans affected by the flood finding it so difficult to get answers from their insurance companies?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The flooding in June was devastating for a lot of families, and we want to help every single one of them rebuild as quickly as possible. We, in fact, have already processed thousands of the DRP applications

and provided support. But the member is right. Close to 2,500 of the 9,000 applications are delayed because the homeowners haven't received definitive answers from their insurance companies. We need that information, too, so that we can do the DRP applications. We continue to work with the insurance companies to make sure that they work very quickly to help service their clients, and we'll continue to push them to do that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. What are you doing to help advance these files and get dollars into the hands of flood-affected Albertans?

Mr. Griffiths: Well, Mr. Speaker, we reached out to the insurance industry in the early days of the recovery because we knew we needed to work together to get the job done. We need to work hand in hand in order to make sure that we service clients. In some cases we had insurance companies like TD Meloche that did an exceptional job of aligning their system with ours. We have other insurance companies that haven't quite done that, and we're continuing to encourage them. We've actually streamlined our disaster recovery program application process substantially, and we continue to encourage the insurance companies to do the same thing so that they can serve their clients very well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. Is there anything government can do to force insurance companies to move faster?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, in conjunction with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, as he mentioned, we have been in touch with the insurance companies. This Premier stood up for Albertans when some of the insurance companies initially refused to honour some of their policies. We will continue to do that. We'll stay in communication with the insurance industry. We know that they are committed to moving forward. But let me be clear. We expect all companies to honour their contractual obligations to Albertans, and we expect them to do it soon.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by Lesser Slave Lake.

2:20

School Construction Financing

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week Albertans learned that the PC government will be unable to deliver on its promise to build 19 schools. After all the cheerleading for returning into debt and after all the political hay that was made about supposedly building Alberta, this government can't get the job done. To the Minister of Infrastructure: isn't it time to reconsider this government's preoccupation with debt-financed P3s, admit the procurement model is flawed, and go back to the traditional procurement so our children don't have to be in crowded classrooms?

Mr. Drysdale: Mr. Speaker, again, I don't know where this member gets his information from, but nothing that he said is close to the truth. Our Premier and this government are committed to building Alberta by investing in infrastructure, ensuring that Alberta families and communities have the quality of life they deserve now and in the future, and we're going to do that by

building schools. We fully intend to build the schools that the Premier said we were going to. I don't know where he's getting that from.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Auditor General has said that the Alberta government has overstated its savings on P3s, will the Minister of Infrastructure admit that the practice of paying out losing bidders and awarding the winner an exclusive contract rather than letting our very reliable small and medium-sized companies bid on single schools just does not work? Please admit it.

Mr. Drysdale: Mr. Speaker, to date we've saved over \$2.2 billion by using P3 models, and I'm not going to apologize for saving the Alberta taxpayers' dollars and getting good value for money.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, to the Finance minister: given that the P3 procurement method isn't getting the job done on these 19 schools, will the government admit that P3s are just a way to hide the debt from our kids and our grandkids?

Mr. Horner: Well, it's interesting that this question would come from that hon. member because this fall I was actually in his community, and he attended one of our open houses for the budget consultations. You know what? We asked the question of the people in that room: if we are going to build the infrastructure, do you want us to continue using alternative methods of financing, which include P3s, which include debt financing, which include sometimes cash? Overwhelmingly in the room, in his constituency, Mr. Speaker, they said: yes, build it because we're growing. We are growing far faster than you could ever accommodate on a pay-as-you-go system. They should know that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake, followed by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Northland School Division

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 21, 2013, many citizens had the opportunity to vote for their preferred candidates for municipal governments and school boards. This was not the case in Northland school division. Yet section 10(3) of the Northland School Division Act stipulates that "members of the board [shall] hold office for 3 years and shall remain in office until the organizational meeting of the board following the next ensuing election of local school board committees" arises. My question is to the Minister of Education. As elections were held for local school board committees, why is section 10(3) not being enacted to have a corporate board for constituents of Northland school division? Is it because they're predominantly aboriginal people?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, all Alberta students deserve a quality education that prepares them for their future, and the students in Northland school division are no exception. Now, that being said, I do want to commend the member from Lesser Slave River. [interjection] She's an incredible advocate for the aboriginal students in our province and for her constituents, and I thank her for the question.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to ensure this school division continues to make progress on the 48 recommendations that came forward from the inquiry report. We've got an official

trustee who was appointed and will be in place until we can change some legislation to put a proper board in.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I didn't love that minister so much, I'd throw my moccasin at him.

To the same minister: given that these communities have been patient and understanding in addressing the educational issues of their children, their patience and understanding are running out. When can they have a board of trustees in place?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I do regret the delay, and I appreciate their patience. It isn't about rushing to get the job done. It's about trying to make sure that we're working to get the job done right. In order to meet the requirements that came forward in the inquiry report and from the engagement team – and there are 48 of them – we do need to change legislation. We haven't had the opportunity to do that yet but hope to do that in the year to come. I do want to underscore, though, that there have been many improvements made already in the work that's taken place with the official trustee, including the development of a literacy strategy, full-day kindergarten, and a dramatic reduction in complaints from parents and community.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Given that the release from the Northland inquiry team had been already done and we had the Northland Community Engagement Team, which was represented by a lot of people within that community who expended a lot of energy and a lot of blood, sweat, and tears, can you tell me when we can expect the release of that Northland Community Engagement Team report?

Mr. J. Johnson: I hope very soon, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, it's on my desk as we speak. You know, one of the reasons this thing has taken a little bit longer than we hoped is because of a lot of great work that's been done through the MOU, that has been led and championed by our Minister of Aboriginal Relations. There have been some great advancements and great developments made with the treaty chiefs right around the province, and this folds into that work. I don't want anyone to think that there haven't been great strides made. It's just that the legislation isn't ready which would have allowed us to put a proper board in place. But for many of the 48 recommendations we've got action. Like the other examples I just gave, there's some good work happening there with your community.

School Construction

Mr. Hehr: The Premier promised stable funding for our public education. She promised to build 50 new schools and modernize 70 more. She also promised that there would be no service cuts. Broken promises is what the Premier has delivered to the children of Alberta. The government has yet to build a single school in its mandate in two years. Today we see 51,000 more kids crammed into the schools, with 2,000 fewer teachers than three years ago. To the Minister of Education: despite the spin cycle, will you admit that Alberta schoolchildren are facing a steep and unprecedented service cut?

Dr. Sherman: Good question.

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, it is a good question, but the answer is: absolutely not. We've got one of the best education systems in

the entire globe, and international tests prove that. That's not being changed now with the current actions that we've had to take, the difficult actions with the budget. But let's be clear. The education budget is one of the very few budget lines in this government that was protected and actually increased, so let's not let Albertans believe or perpetuate myths that there were actually cuts to the education budget.

Now, does that mean any particular school or any particular school board has the same amount of money to work with this year as they did last? Quite possibly not. But this Premier has been focused on building Alberta and keeping our promises. We look at the \$107 million that she put back into the system. We look at the Education Act, the ATA deal. We look at the removal of PATs. Those are promises made and promises kept.

Mr. Hehr: It is unconscionable that the Minister of Infrastructure has not yet started the building of these new schools instead of messing around with P3 schemes. Will the minister get on with the business of building schools in neighbourhoods where kids live and acquire the financing to start building these schools tomorrow?

Mr. Drysdale: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where this member has been, but I've been to all kinds of school openings in the last year and half. I don't know how he can say that in only a year and a half, less than halfway through the term, we're not going to get this done. I'll guarantee you we'll get our 50 schools built and our 70 modernizations. I've been to lots of ribbon cuttings and grand openings of schools already this year.

Mr. Hehr: Just to bring the minister up to speed, those were schools promised by Premier Stelmach, not by Premier Redford, so let's get on the same page.

Anyway, given that that answer does not satisfy me, how come it's taken you virtually two years to get an answer on P3 proposals? Why haven't you been out there building these schools instead of sending out proposals?

Mr. Drysdale: Well, for one, Mr. Speaker, we haven't been elected two years yet, and for another, we made our first announcements of 30 schools this spring. You don't announce a school one day and start building it the next. The planning and all of the design and research has to go into that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Postsecondary Education Funding

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seven months after this government took a hatchet to our colleges and universities, the casualties are mounting. Every day we hear about opportunities for Alberta students stolen by a government that appears genuinely hostile to higher education. To the minister of advanced education: can you explain to those Albertans who care about their education and that of their children why they should ever again trust a Premier who promised them a 2 per cent increase and then gave them a 7 per cent cut?

2:30

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, because they know that our Premier will make difficult decisions when difficult decisions need to be made, they know that this Premier and this government have a history of commitment to advanced education and, frankly, K to 12 education as well, they know that this government has invested

more than 40 per cent in increases in education over the last 10 years, they know that Alberta advanced education is one of the highest funded advanced education systems in Canada, and they know that they're getting world-class education in this province from kindergarten till whenever they choose to stop educating themselves.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that these government cuts have eliminated at least 2,000 postsecondary spaces for Alberta students since April and given that at least 61 college and university programs have been cut in the same period, why won't the minister admit that his anti-education, pro knuckle-dragging plan is going to drive Alberta learners out of the province and cripple our potential for decades to come?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Well, it's refreshing to know that at least another party in this House believes in evolution. That is really good. They must have had a convention last week.

Mr. Speaker, they also know that when difficult decisions are made by government, those are not decisions of choice, but they are simply decisions that the government has to make in view of changing financial situations. They know that they have chairs and presidents in those schools who are committed to students' education and also have had to make difficult decisions during that time. But let's be honest with our students. Programs are eliminated every year even when budgets go up. That's how our institutions stay current and deliver world-class education.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this government's cuts have shut down over 2,000 student spaces across the province while at the same time the U of A is forced to contemplate increasing spaces for international, high-paying applicants to raise dollars, why won't the minister commit to making space available for every willing Alberta student instead of slamming the door on them and converting our colleges and universities into international fundraising machines?

Mr. Lukaszuk: Mr. Speaker, that clearly shows that this member knows nothing about advanced education. International students are not raising money for our postsecondary institutions. As a matter of fact, their tuition is set in such a way that it simply covers the cost of educating international students in our schools. Why do we do it? Because it gives a richer educational experience to our Alberta students on campuses, having different world view perspectives on campus, and it also opens markets because those individuals go back to their home countries and do business with our province.

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

Rural Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural Albertans continue to be upset about their ambulance situation, producing more calls, letters, and visits than any other issue. They're hurt, disappointed, and angry. I've met with several, and the colourful language that they used would be inappropriate in this Chamber. The volunteer system worked. Care was provided in a timely, cost-effective way. Lives were saved. Communities were strengthened as neighbours and friends pitched in to help one another. The system wasn't broken, but the AHS fix is. To the minister: when will you admit the mistake and restore common sense to the rural system?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly respect the hon. member for bringing forward the concerns of his constituents, but I can tell you that what we are interested in is a state-of-the-art EMS system that is part of health care. That involves planning for growth, it involves planning to make sure that we have the best in equipment, and it involves as well, as the hon. member points out, preserving partnerships with municipalities, including fire departments and first responders. We are doing all of those things. The consolidation of dispatch services in the province will help move that forward.

Mr. Bikman: Mr. Speaker, given the current inefficient, ineffective rural ambulance service being provided as a result of AHS's heavy-handed meddling, people outside the cities may face dangerously long wait times for needed assistance. Will the minister tell us how and when he intends to correct this?

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, we have more ground ambulance resources today throughout the province than we had when the original policy decision was made to make EMS part of health care. It is vitally important that all dispatch services in the province are consolidated in the three major centres that have been identified. That's what allows dispatchers to see all of the ambulance resources in the province, and when an ambulance is called out of the home community, it allows that ambulance to be repatriated to the home community as quickly as possible.

Mr. Bikman: If only, Mr. Speaker.

Given that many Albertans live and work significant distances from hospitals and that, thanks to the dysfunctional rules of centralized dispatching, often their ambulances are away on non life-threatening transfers, will the minister please listen to their concerns and make the reasonable changes they're calling for?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with all municipalities in the province to optimize EMS services for all Albertans, but the days of the 1950s and '60s and '70s, where we can have literally dozens of dispatch services across the province and expect to operate a first-rate EMS system that functions as part of health care, are over. There are five dispatch services alone between Edmonton and Calgary along highway 2, and in many cases in the past those ambulances have not been known to one another. This is progress in health care. It involves partnership and co-operation, and I look forward to the hon. member's co-operation with that.

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

Assistance for Calgary Flood Victims

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past June we all witnessed the disastrous flooding in southern Alberta. It affected some areas in my constituency, and my thanks go to the first responders: the RCMP, the military personnel, and many caring volunteers. In Calgary tens of thousands of people were displaced from their homes in the downtown core. Even now there are some still displaced. My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what efforts are being made to help those people who remain displaced?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is dedicated to making sure that Calgary residents and residents from

every single community that were displaced by the floods have a safe, comfortable place to stay while they either repair their home or they rebuild. Residents in Calgary in particular have the option to go to the Great Plains new temporary housing community. It can accommodate up to 700 people right now, and we don't anticipate that we're going to need more than that. Residents simply need to register with the Calgary Housing Company by November 30, and they'll be located in that residence, or they can make their own housing arrangements, and some of those costs will be eligible for DRP assistance.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what sort of relief is being provided for residents whose insurance did not cover the flood damage?

Mr. Griffiths: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we received more than 2,200 applications from Calgarians alone out of the 9,000 that we received from across the province. Approximately 1,600 home evaluations have been done. We have 700 payments, give or take a couple, that have been issued, which is \$4.3 million worth of advance cheques that have gone to Calgarians alone to help them in the rebuilding or the repairing process.

Mr. Speaker, I can't even list in an hour all of the things that we have done over the last four months to help people. We have had information sessions in Calgary where people can go find out about DRP, about the rebuilding process, about the housing accommodations, about the standards they need to repair their homes so that they know what they can do going forward.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what forms of assistance are being provided to small businesses that were badly affected by the flood?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, our disaster recovery program initially only applied to businesses of between one and 20 employees. We made a very strategic and immediate decision that we needed to expand that to cover 21 to 50 employees as well because many of those are small businesses that were heavily impacted by the flood. We had 2,200 disaster recovery applications from Calgary, and 374 of those were for small businesses. We know that it doesn't matter what the size of the community is. We needed to create some sort of program to assist small businesses and make sure that they got back on their feet as quickly as possible because they are a foundation of many of our communities.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Banff-Cochrane.

School Construction Priorities

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Schools are bursting all over the province, and the schools in my area are no different. Sylvan Lake has grown by 17 per cent in the last two years. Two elementary schools are at 120 per cent capacity, the library moved to the hallway, and there is no longer a music class. [interjections] The public school board has identified an elementary school for Sylvan Lake as their top priority. No one is asking to jump the queue. However, they are asking for a timeline of when they can expect some relief. [interjections] Will the Minister of Infrastructure tell Sylvan Lake where my community is on the priority list?

2:40

The Speaker: Hon. members on the government side, I had trouble hearing that question. I'm sure some others did, too. Then, of course, you baited the hon. Member for Airdrie to chime in, and then that baited someone else over here to chime in. Please, we're not doing too badly this afternoon. Let's not run into the ditch here.

Hon. member, I hope someone got your question. Who was it to?

Mrs. Towle: The Minister of Infrastructure.

The Speaker: Minister of Infrastructure, did you get enough to respond? Please.

Mr. Drysdale: I think so.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, they asked for a priority list. Our list is our capital plan. It's on our website. Everybody can see. It tells you all the schools that are going to be built in the next three years. The plan is there. If the school is on the list, that's where it is.

Mrs. Towle: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, that isn't even remotely what I asked for, and I assume that my constituents in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake deserve the same respect as everyone else's.

Given that in the Red Deer Catholic school system kids from Innisfail are being bused to Red Deer, with an hour-and-a-half bus ride just to get to the classroom, doesn't the minister agree that families have been patient long enough and deserve to know where their communities are on the priority list?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the member brings up a good point. We've got incredible growth pressures all over the province, so I know there are many families and many communities wondering where they are on the list and when we might announce new schools. What I can tell those constituents of the members and those Albertans is that they elected the right Premier. We're going to continue building this province. We've got a commitment to announce 50 new schools and 70 modernizations, and we're well on our way. You're going to see some more schools announced by the end of this calendar year, in the next month or so, and those will be primarily modernizations. Then you're going to see another round of new schools in the spring. I think many communities will be very happy, and they deserve these schools.

Mrs. Towle: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that nobody gets feedback unless they're selected, and since we know that across the province communities from north to south all submit their capital lists, which are public information, why does this PC government continue to hide their list from parents, teachers, school boards, and communities and prevent them from doing proper planning for all Albertans?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the only secret lists in here are the secret lists the opposition have, all the infrastructure projects they've promised to cut, and they won't tell us. In addition, of course, they also announced here recently that 30 per cent of the schools we're building we shouldn't be building. Well, I would sure like that feedback so we can build that into our capital plans and take that under consideration.

Mr. Speaker, we work closely with the school boards. They build their capital priorities. They send them in to us. We work with Infrastructure and try to prioritize those across the province, which is not an easy job and something we take very seriously. Once we make those decisions in co-operation with Infrastructure

and those school boards, they become public, and they're part of the capital plan.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, followed by Little Bow.

Flood Recovery Contracts

Mr. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been thousands of files processed through the DRP by LandLink, the contractor responsible for administering the program. However, there is confusion around the role and relationship of LandLink to the government. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: since LandLink has had a multiyear contract with the province, can the minister confirm that a competitive process to award this contract and to renew this contract was followed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Griffiths: Yes, Mr. Speaker. LandLink has been contracted as a service provider for the disaster recovery program since 1995. Actually, the contract has gone out to tender several times: in 2003, in 2005, and again in 2008. In 2012 it went out, and again they were one of two vendors to apply to the request for information. We've always used it as a competitive process and will continue to do so.

Mr. Casey: To the same minister: can the minister confirm how much LandLink has been paid to date and on what basis compensation is determined?

Mr. Griffiths: Mr. Speaker, LandLink gets paid for actual expenses at an hourly rate for their various levels of staff. The contract has actually given the government very good value over the last 17 years. Because LandLink's costs are eligible under the federal program, we've actually gotten reimbursed from the federal government for half the contract for LandLink, which has saved taxpayers of this province \$21.7 million, so we've gotten incredible value for that. On top of that, LandLink's administration amounts to 11 per cent of the total costs. The Insurance Bureau of Canada says that insurance companies look to 25 to 30 per cent of it as administration costs. That's good value. We're getting exceptional value.

Mr. Casey: To the same minister: when dealing with the public, are LandLink employees required to identify themselves as such and to correspond on LandLink letterhead?

Mr. Griffiths: I know, Mr. Speaker. I saw the same column the individual did, that made some wild accusations about what LandLink was doing. Because LandLink is a contracted service and it communicates with applicants, it can't use its own letterhead. It needs to use Municipal Affairs' letterhead so that applicants aren't confused with who they're dealing with. At the bottom of every single letter it identifies LandLink as a contractor to Municipal Affairs, so it serves very well to make sure that there's no confusion with applicants.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, just before we go on with the Routine, I want to specifically commend Calgary-Bow and Calgary-Fort and Banff-Cochrane for no preambles whatsoever to their questions. I also want to commend Cypress-Medicine Hat and Cardston-Taber-Warner for doing their best to keep the "given" part to a minimum. Well done.

Might we just briefly revert to Introduction of Guests? Someone sent me a note here saying that they had a guest who had just arrived, and it was Edmonton-Decore.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (continued)

The Speaker: Please proceed, then.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions if you don't mind. It is an honour and privilege for me to rise again today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two very special representatives who attended today's Diwali festival of lights celebration here at the Alberta Legislature. They include Mr. Jay Kumar, president, Fiji Sanatan Society of Alberta, and Mr. Anil Raju, vice-president, Fiji Sanatan Society of Alberta. I would ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. You have a second introduction?

Mrs. Sarich: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for your indulgence. It is an honour and privilege to rise again to introduce to you and through you two incredible representatives who also attended today's Diwali festival of lights celebration at the Alberta Legislature, the inaugural celebration. We have Mr. Jim Ishwari Prasad, president of Fiji Multicultural Centre, and Mr. Rajesh Bali, member, Sanatan, Fiji Multicultural Centre. I ask that they also receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, in 20 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements, starting with Edmonton-Decore.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by Calgary-Fish Creek.

Chinese Freemasons of Canada Sesquicentennial

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour and privilege to rise today as this year marks the Chinese Freemasons of Canada 150th anniversary. Established before Canada was recognized as a nation, the Chinese Freemasons, also known historically as the Hongmen or Vast Family society, are today a successful not-for-profit international organization. Benevolent societies such as the Chinese Freemasons formed an important foundation within early Chinese Canadian communities. The first chapters of the Chinese Freemasons in Canada were formed in the 1870s in British Columbia at Quesnel, adjacent to the goldfields of Barkerville, and in Victoria at their point of entry. Services to its members included mutual aid and support, the celebration of traditional annual Chinese festivals and ceremonies, charity events, and fundraising efforts for their members' funerals.

Notably, the early settlement history of pioneer Chinese immigrant labourers and merchants to Canada also includes the first Chee Kung Tong building of the Hongmen society at Barkerville. This building is unique for it represents the society's architectural wooden structures during the gold rush period and today is recognized as a national historic site in Canada. It truly is a

celebration of Chinese Canadian history, culture, and traditions, providing a valuable visual representation of how pioneer Chinese immigrants lived in the 1870s.

I would like to congratulate the Chinese Freemasons of Canada for their organization's century and a half of leadership and commitment to supporting the Chinese communities across Canada. Through their long-standing efforts the Freemasons of Canada have thrived, without question, Mr. Speaker, and have made a significant contribution to society. Their past, present, and future history is immeasurably valuable to our communities, province, and great country. I wish them continued success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Grande Prairie-Smoky.

2:50

Service Dogs

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I introduced members of the House and the public to my hearing aid service dog, Quill. For those who weren't aware, I have been suffering from hearing loss over the last several years. My hearing loss gave me the opportunity to speak with the wonderful people from the Lions Foundation of Canada. Their mission is to provide service dogs to assist Canadians with medical or physical disabilities. Success story after success story lets us know that they are not just giving people a service but a new lifelong friend.

For myself that has certainly been the case. Quill has been with me every day since May and is currently trained on eight different sounds, like my phone, the doorbell, and tells me when someone is talking to me by lifting his paws and taking me to the sound. Since then we have developed an intense emotional bond. He's always at my side, loyal and, with some long days of debate ahead here at the Legislature, a tireless worker.

With Quill at my side today it's hard not to think about Quanto, the Edmonton Police Service dog who was cruelly stabbed while serving the great people of this city. Our officers did not just lose a dog that day, but they lost a faithful, loyal friend. This is why I am so thankful that the Prime Minister and our federal friends are putting forward Quanto's law to protect service dogs. I think we can all agree that these faithful and loyal dogs deserve better protection and that those that harm or kill them, quite frankly, deserve to be treated severely for their horrendous crimes.

I'd like to thank all members of the House for their support of Quill. I promise he will be on his best behaviour, and if you can, please take a moment to visit or donate to the Lions Foundation of Canada and help promote the amazing work they do, and please support Quanto's law.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, and a special welcome to Quill. He was particularly well behaved yesterday, we noted, and it was a pleasure for me to work with you on this file and to authorize and approve it. It's a historic first not only for us, ladies and gentlemen, but it's also likely a historic first right across the nation and perhaps even in the Commonwealth for this particular type of service hearing dog. Good on you, hon. member.

All right. Let's move on, then, to Grande Prairie-Smoky, followed by Calgary-Currie.

Tourism Framework

Mr. McDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everyone who lives here knows, Alberta is undoubtedly one of the most breathtaking

places on earth, as vast as it is varied in landscape and experiences. We have so much to offer travellers: the iconic Rocky Mountains, the alluring badlands, peaceful prairies, placid lakes, a diverse cultural history, and urban and rural areas.

Tourism has a huge potential to diversify our economy and build Alberta. Today we introduced the new Alberta tourism framework. Our goal is to grow the province's tourism industry from generating \$7.8 billion in annual expenditures to over \$10.3 billion by 2020. The Alberta tourism framework will maximize the potential of tourism and create jobs and investment in communities across our province. Having a common plan to guide all the players in the tourism industry will help to make a stronger impact in a very competitive marketplace and attract even more visitors to showcase Alberta to even more potential residents and visitors.

The Alberta tourism framework sets out clear, specific targets and takes a new approach to building a stronger and more unified tourism industry. It's about better alignment between all sectors of this industry, focusing on what travellers want and expect. Collaboration among all players in the tourism industry is key to expanding a sector that currently generates \$1.15 billion in tax revenue and employs over 130,000 people. This is Alberta's first-ever long-term tourism plan that brings all the players together, and I applaud the efforts of all involved in taking this sustainable industry forward to a new level that will benefit all Albertans everywhere.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm truly honoured to rise today and bring attention to an organization that I've developed a strong connection to in Calgary-Currie. The Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities is a nonprofit organization that helps individuals with disabilities reach their full potential by providing unique residential services in Calgary and the surrounding areas.

Mr. Speaker, clients of the Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities and, indeed, all persons with developmental disabilities live in a world that often seems not made for them. What is often taken for granted by the average person is a challenge to those who must overcome a disability. There is a simple message that I wish to convey today in the House. I will be tabling CSPD's annual report as a symbol and example of the challenges that exist for the disabled that we cannot begin to immediately conceive of. A simple staple placed through the centre of the report will undoubtedly illustrate to my colleagues that the world we take for granted is a very different place for those with developmental disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the day when we fully embrace the spirit and possibilities that persons with disabilities can teach us. I wholeheartedly know that we are moving in this direction through the delivery of a solid social policy framework that is going to reshape the current governance model for PDD and a new generation of persons with disabilities so they may live in a world that sees them as able contributors within our own unique communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by Strathmore-Brooks.

Diwali

Mr. Bhardwaj: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to extend warm greetings on this historic day as we celebrate Diwali for the first time in the history of this province and to recognize the outstanding organizations that assisted in the successful celebration that was held here today.

Diwali is India's biggest and most important festival of the year. The festival gets its name from the row of clay lamps that are lit outside the homes to symbolize the inner light that protects them from spiritual darkness. Diwali originated as a harvest festival that marked the last harvest of the year before winter.

India was an agricultural society where people would seek the divine blessing of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, as they closed their accounting books and prayed for success at the outset of a new fiscal year. Today this practice extends to businesses all over the Indian subcontinent, which mark the day after Diwali as the first day of the new fiscal year.

Diwali is celebrated with families gathering, glittering clay lamps, festive fireworks, strings of electric lights, bonfires, flowers, sharing of sweets, and worship. Over the centuries Diwali has become a national festival that is enjoyed by most Indians, regardless of faith, for different reasons.

Mr. Speaker, Diwali is celebrated over five days. On the first day the homes and businesses are cleaned. Of course, on the main day of the festival families gather together to pray, enjoy a meal together, and watch the spectacular fireworks. This is the first day of the new year as well, when friends and relatives visit with gifts and best wishes for the season. On the last day family members visit one another and welcome each other into their homes to share a very lavish meal.

As we celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights, I'm reminded of how fortunate we are to live in a province where all citizens are able and encouraged to celebrate their heritage. I'm so proud to live in a province that has welcomed people from all over the world and provided the kind of opportunities that many can only dream about.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Government House Leader has caught my attention. Please.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, today was a magnificent day celebrating Diwali and the visitors that came with it, but that will require that we ask for unanimous consent to extend Routine past 3 p.m.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Government House Leader has requested your unanimous consent to proceed with the Routine so we can conclude it. That means going beyond 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Let us continue, then, and hear a statement from the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

XL Foods Inc.

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over a year ago an unfortunate event shook the community of Brooks and all of Alberta when contamination was linked to a beef processing plant. As we all know, the plant shut down temporarily, and questions were raised about the safety of the beef industry. Now, over a year later, we can look back and take stock of what happened.

The community of Brooks did so last month at the Alberta beef celebration. It was a great day full of community spirit, celebration, and – you guessed it – Alberta beef. The challenging events of last year's temporary plant closure brought out the best in the community as people came together to provide assistance where needed and worked hard to get the plant back online with a renewed commitment to food safety.

3:00

Since the plant reopened, Brooks has fully restored its reputation as a producer of the world's greatest beef products, thanks in large part to the work of the new ownership and its hard-working employees. These past months have seen renewed energy in ensuring that the strongest food safety measures in Canada are enforced. Alberta beef is more than just a world-class product. It is more than a staple of the Alberta economy. It is part of our culture and heritage, as it will be for generations to come. We must never forget the events that unfolded in Brooks, and we must ensure vigilance in protecting such an important part of our economy and culture.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize all the hard work that went into this beef celebration. The city of Brooks, the County of Newell, Eastern irrigation district, JBS Food Canada, Bow Slope Shipping Association, ABP, local 4-H clubs, and many, many other industries and stakeholders all pitched in to help this event become a success. I would also like to say thank you to all of Alberta's agricultural producers for your commitment and perseverance through good times and bad, for playing your role in providing not only Alberta but all the world with quality food products.

The Speaker: Hon. members, just before I recognize the Member for Airdrie for his notice, might we revert briefly, with your consent, to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly Ms Karen Lloyd and Ms Jillian Miller Drysdale. Ms Lloyd and Ms Miller Drysdale have been working tirelessly to promote traffic safety in their community. Through their work with the Calgary Association of Parents and School Councils they have organized and promoted school traffic safety week in September, reminding both children and parents to be aware and stay safe on their back-to-school commutes. Mr. Speaker, we share a common goal of keeping our roads and our children safe. That's why later today I will introduce a bill in the House that will give municipalities the authority to set local rules for playground zones, allowing municipalities to align school zones and playground zones. Ms Lloyd and Ms Miller Drysdale are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Did you have a second one, hon. Minister of Transportation?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I do. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members the traffic safety services staff who have dedicated countless hours to the bill I will introduce

today. I will ask each of them to rise as I introduce them: Mr. Alan Thomas, Ms Colleen Delany, Mr. Michael Selig, Ms Marlaina Klaver, Ms Mychele Joyes. I'm very proud of the work that they have done, and I'd ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: Notices of Motions has been called, and I'm going to recognize the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Airdrie I rise today in accordance with Standing Order 15(2) giving notice of my intention to raise a question of privilege today, and I do have the requisite copies of the notice to provide to members of the Assembly.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Bill 32

Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 32, the Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act, which amends the Traffic Safety Act and the Highways Development and Protection Act.

This bill will increase safety on Alberta roads by granting municipalities the authority to set times that playground zones are in effect; by granting the minister the authority to designate lane usage on all provincial highways; by making administrative and housekeeping amendments to ensure consistency, to align with the federal Criminal Code legislation, and to strengthen and clarify Alberta's legislation.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of this year's annual report from the Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities. A copy of this has been made available to all members today, and I encourage them to look at this document as an example from my member's statement today.

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, your first of two, I understand.

Mr. Dallas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have two documents to table. I'm pleased, first, to table five copies of the written responses to several questions during consideration of the International and Intergovernmental Relations main estimates on April 17, 2013.

I'd also like to table five copies of the Asia Advisory Council annual report 2012-2013, submitted on June 27, 2013.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services for your first of two, followed by Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance I'd like to table in the House today the requisite number of copies of a letter to the leader of the Liberal opposition in response to Written Question 22. I understand the original was provided to him earlier.

I'd also take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to table on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance again the requisite number of copies of the Alberta Securities Commission 2013 annual report. The annual report, called *We're Here Because*, reflects ASC's mandate, which is to protect investors, foster the integrity of the Alberta capital market, and contribute to the success of Canada's securities regulatory system. In 2013 the ASC continued to improve the effectiveness of its enforcement activities, including 772 investigations, issuing 111 cease trade orders, and leveling stronger sanctions against offenders. Court appearances tripled in 2013. The ASC can impose administrative penalties up to a million dollars and can also pursue offenders in Provincial Court, seeking jail terms up to five years and fines up to \$5 million. The ASC continues to issue investor alerts and provide investor education materials through its website and weekly radio shows. In tabling the report, I'd like to take the opportunity to express appreciation for the commission and the important work it does on behalf of Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by the leader of the New Democratic opposition.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of 67 of hundreds of e-mails. I ran out of photocopy ink, so I can only post 67 to table. They're all in support of Bill 207, urging the government to pass the bill and to establish a well-funded, accountable provincial agency immediately here in the province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, leader of the New Democratic opposition.

Mr. Mason: Can you come back to me, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Why don't I come back to you, hon. member, after we listen to the tablings from the Associate Minister of Wellness.

Mr. Rodney: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of our hon. Minister of Health it's my pleasure to table the requisite number of copies of the 2012-2013 Alberta College of Occupational Therapists annual report. The college has over 1,500 members within the province of Alberta, and their primary role is to enable clients to fulfill their needs and purposes, interact with their environment, look after themselves, enjoy life, and contribute to the social and economic fabric of their community. The college also exists so that Albertans will continue to receive competent, ethical occupational therapy services. This report outlines their activities in the past year and illustrates the outstanding work that they do to promote the health of Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, are you ready with yours now? Please proceed.

3:10

Mr. Mason: Sure. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. First, a letter that I referred to in question period today, dated October 9, 2013, from 16 faculty members in the department of laboratory medicine and pathology at the University of

Alberta hospital. They have very serious concerns about the planned privatization of lab services in Edmonton. So that's the first one.

The second is a letter being sent to the Minister of Health and to Dr. Cowell, expressing important concerns about the planned privatization of hospital-based medical laboratory services in the region. The letter says in part: "I am concerned that centralizing all medical lab services in a private, for-profit facility will be less efficient, more expensive, and provide inferior service than the current hospital-based labs." This is part of a letter campaign that has been arriving at my office during the past week and has been copied in hundreds of letters that we've received.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I have the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by Calgary-Mountain View, and wrapping up with Edmonton-Strathcona.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of an *Edmonton Journal* article dated August 26, 2013, entitled *Province to OK Fort McMurray, Drumheller Floodway Development*. During an interview at that time the Minister of Municipal Affairs said: "We need to put measures in place to protect the community, but it would be fiscally unreasonable to move entire urban areas or not allow future development." I thank the minister for providing Fort McMurray residents much-needed property protection while acknowledging that the community of Fort McMurray needs to redevelop its lower townsite in order to facilitate growth.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona, and also Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today, the first on behalf of the leader of the Liberal opposition. It's a memorandum of understanding between the government of Alberta, the city of Calgary, and the city of Edmonton, dated June 2012, with a commitment to deliverables in a year, signed by the two mayors and the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The second, related, is an article from *Metro News* entitled *Big Cities or All Cities: Nenshi and Griffiths Square Off Again over City Charters*.

The third is entitled *Municipal Government Act Review*, submitted recommendations from the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, where they recommend the following three principles: first, local governments are open, responsive, and accountable to their citizens; two, the respective roles and responsibilities of provincial and municipal orders of government must be clear and appropriate; and three, local governments have predictable, diverse, and sustainable revenue sources to deliver programs, services, and infrastructure.

The fourth tabling, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our Member for Calgary-McCall is a report from the Law Society with respect to the government of Alberta's review of the Alberta land titles system in its results-based budgeting process in which they're very clear about rejecting the privatization of land titles, stating that land titles should remain "a government owned and operated model" to avoid the dangers that have been experienced elsewhere across the world with privatization.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the Blues in front of me, but this afternoon in question period the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education stated something to the effect that international students were not revenue generating for universities and colleges, and I think he actually went on from there to suggest that I did not know anything about advanced education for having suggested that. The minister is mistaken on both counts, and I am tabling the requisite number of copies of the University of Alberta Action Plan: Budget Presentation to General Faculties Council dated October 28, 2013. Slide 16 states that the U of A's plan for generating new net revenue includes – and it's at the top of the list, in fact – increased enrolment of international students. That slide show was prepared by the acting provost and vice-president academic and the vice-president of finance and administration. I presume they know something about advanced education. I certainly hope that the minister might consider responding to that error in question period tomorrow.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings. The first is a copy of a news release from the *Sherwood Park News* dated Tuesday, October 29, at 11:45, with a picture of the Minister of Transportation as well as the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, outlining a media announcement of Bill 32 as well as the speech that the minister had given. I have the requisite copies of that.

The second tabling is a copy of a sign that was affixed publicly that states, "Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads (Bill 32)," which was displayed apparently this morning prior to the introduction of that bill.

The third tabling is another press release, dated October 29, 2013, which outlines the Minister of Transportation's views on Bill 32, again, prior to the bill being introduced here in the Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, tomorrow I'll make a brief statement with respect to tablings, and it also will apply to petitions and how we need to keep brevity in mind for both. No reflection on anyone in particular today, but it's just another part of the process that sometimes gets a little bit lengthy, and we ought to revisit what the rules surrounding the purpose of those tablings and petitions are really all about. Thank you.

We have, I think, an historic moment, no points of order.

An Hon. Member: The day is not over yet.

The Speaker: The day is not over yet; I may have spoken too soon. Hopefully not.

However, we will proceed with the arguments in favour of or not regarding a point of privilege. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand here on behalf of the Member for Airdrie under Standing Order 15(2). Of course, Mr. Speaker, you have said on many occasions as well as the Government House Leader that points of privilege are very serious matters. Any time you raise a question of privilege or contempt, it is a serious matter and must be addressed seriously.

The notice that has been provided states that the Member for Airdrie believes that

as a result of the government's public advertising of a bill not yet presented to this Legislature, the government deliberately prevented the Members of the Legislative Assembly from fulfilling their duty and, as such, breached the rights of the Members of the Legislative Assembly and thereby committed a contempt.

I'll briefly outline the facts as I see them or as we have them here and then provide argument based on precedent both in Canada and here in Alberta.

I tabled documents earlier today. We had seen a sign, obviously in the orange and blue colours, displayed publicly outlining Bill 32. We've seen press releases and public statements outlining the details of Bill 32. We know, of course, that Bill 32 was on the Order Paper yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and it was not yet introduced until earlier today.

My first precedent goes to *Erskine May*, 22nd edition, on page 108. It describes that

any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

We have a very detailed precedent here that is pretty much bang in line with the facts in this case. It was actually an argument made by Dr. Pannu here in this Legislature – he was a member of the New Democratic opposition – on March 4, 2003. In it he made many arguments to the Speaker at the time, Speaker Kowalski, and referred to different submissions and referred to a situation in the federal Legislature where the then Member of Parliament Vic Toews had made an argument on the fact that the government at that time had released details of a bill that was not yet introduced in that Legislature but was on the Order Paper.

In the submission – just indulge me, if you will – is the ruling that the federal Speaker provided in that case.

The House recognizes that when complex or technical documents are to be presented in this Chamber, media briefings are highly useful. They [must] ensure that the public receives information that is both timely and accurate concerning business before the House.

... However, with respect to material to be placed before parliament, the House must take precedence. Once a bill has been placed on notice, whether it has been presented in a different form to a different session of parliament has no bearing and the bill is considered a new matter.

3:20

The Speaker then went on to state, in finding a contempt:

Thus, the issue of denying to members information that they need to do their work has been the key consideration for the Chair in reviewing this particular question of privilege. To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about that very business, is a situation this chair cannot condone.

The House of Commons Speaker continued.

Even if no documents were given out at that briefing, as the hon. government House leader has assured the House, it is undisputed that confidential information about the bill was provided. While it may have been the intention to embargo that information as an essential safeguard of the rights of this House, the evidence would indicate that no effective embargo occurred.

I will state that in this situation the complete opposite happened. There was not only no embargo; the minister held the press

conference giving detail on this bill which was not provided to you, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly, was not introduced to you.

Of course, we need to find a prima facie case of privilege, and there's a threshold. I'll refer the Speaker to Joseph Maingot, who stated at page 221 in his work *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition:

While the Speaker may find that a prima facie case of privilege exists and give the matter precedence in debate, it is the House alone that decides whether a breach of privilege or a contempt has occurred, for only the House has the power to commit or punish [such] contempt.

Then Speaker Kowalski stated, in summarizing and looking at all the different precedents, that in essence Speaker Milliken found that once a bill is on notice, media briefings are not allowed. I'll state that again. Once a bill is on notice – in this case Bill 32 was on notice yesterday – media briefings are not allowed. Speaker Kowalski quoted from Speaker Milliken's ruling:

The convention of the confidentiality of bills on notice is necessary, not only so that members themselves may be well informed, but also because of the pre-eminent role which the House plays and must play in the legislative affairs of the nation.

He then goes on to state that, of course, that was a federal precedent and that it need not necessarily apply to an Alberta Legislature. In that case, in the federal situation, the minister apologized while still noting that, of course, he had not provided written materials to the media.

Speaker Kowalski then stated that "the role of the chair cannot be to lessen the dignity and respect of this [Legislative] Assembly or its members." He stated that he agreed entirely with Speaker Milliken's ruling when he states:

To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House . . .

in this case Bill 32,

. . . while at the same time providing information to media that will likely be questioning members about that business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.

Speaker Kowalski then referred to the final paragraph of the House of Commons standing committee report, which states:

The rights of the House and its Members in this role are central to our constitutional and democratic government. This case should serve as a warning that our House will insist on the full recognition of its constitutional function and historical privileges across the full spectrum of government.

Speaker Kowalski then stated:

Accordingly, the department briefing provided to the media concerning [then] Bill 19 when the bill was on notice but before it was introduced constitutes a prima facie case of privilege as it offends the dignity and authority of this Assembly . . . Strictly speaking, this constitutes a prima facie contempt of the Assembly, although it is treated in the same way as a breach of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, once this notice was provided, we saw some communications that the minister had offered to provide a technical briefing to, you know, one member of the Official Opposition and perhaps members of the other opposition parties. Some were able to get a technical briefing in such a short time frame. Others, I understand, weren't able to get the technical briefing.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very clear case. We have a minister here who is providing technical details of a bill that has not yet been introduced to this Assembly. It's an absolute disrespect to every single Member of this Legislative Assembly. He went to the media, provided these details. Of course, the media is calling opposition members. Constituents are calling opposition members and other members of the Assembly. Well, we don't know what's

in the bill because it hasn't yet been introduced. That is a complete disrespect for this House. Speaker Kowalski was unequivocal in this regard. He noted that materials – documents themselves, the bill itself – may not have been provided to the media, but technical details and details surrounding the bill in that case were in fact provided.

Again, I will just close with what I would call the leading precedent on this exact situation. The facts mirror themselves identically.

To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about that business, is a situation the Chair cannot condone.

In Speaker Kowalski's situation he had provided the member of the New Democratic Party the opportunity to put forward a motion, but at that time the minister, rather than going through the formal process of a motion to a committee, just apologized for his actions, and that was deemed sufficient in that case. I would suggest that that is the remedy in this case that should be followed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I have two members who rose at the same time. Hon. Government House Leader, would you like to hear from Edmonton-Strathcona first? I think she was motioning in her direction to rise.

Edmonton-Strathcona, will you proceed, please.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of this motion, that we find that there is a prima facie breach of privilege today that was raised by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. The member went through some of the key points in terms of some of the authorities that we adhere to in this House, but I'd like to just highlight a couple of them because I'm not sure if they were exactly the same ones that I would have used.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice at page 82 talks about contempt and what amounts to contempt of the House.

Any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties;

And then here's the key piece, Mr. Speaker:

or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House.

I would go on to page 85.

By far, most of the cases of privilege raised in the House relate to matters of contempt.

Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, talks about the meaning of privilege. It talks about at page 14 and page 225 that

contempt of Parliament may be more aptly described as an offence against the authority of the House.

Those are sort of two things that I think are really quite critical to this issue, Mr. Speaker. It comes down to the authority of this House and the respect with which we treat it. Now, it's interesting. The Member for Edmonton-Calder and I were discussing this issue earlier today. He pointed out that there was a great deal of discussion yesterday from the Speaker's chair around the need to respect the authority of this House as it relates to the back and forth between members, and the chair himself was talking about respecting the authority of this House.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that the actions of the minister with respect to the process around which this bill has been introduced and members have been briefed and the media has been briefed and signs have gone up on highways actually

offend the authority of this House in a way that all members of this House should be very, very concerned with.

3:30

Now, there are two things that have happened that raise the concerns of certainly members in our caucus. One is the fact that there are apparently billboards out there that have been put up with nonpartisan, we presume, public funds advertising Bill 32 and talking about the impact of Bill 32 and how this highway is the result of Bill 32. That's the first thing, and then the second thing is that we have a minister meeting with the media this morning at, I believe, around 9 to talk to them about what was in the bill.

Mr. Speaker, that is a problem for two reasons. First of all, the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills talked about the precedent that was set by the former Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, my predecessor, Dr. Pannu, and of course in that one we talk about what happens when the media is briefed before members of the Assembly. Now, it may well be that the Government House Leader is going to argue that that wasn't a briefing; that was a press conference. But you know what? Here's the thing. What's happened recently is that the government has decided to very actively ensure that members of the opposition are kept in the dark about when press conferences are.

So not only did we not get briefed on this bill, but we also are now in a position where we are having to deal with active efforts on the part of ministers to keep us from going to media events that other members of the public or at least the media are aware of. We didn't even get the opportunity to learn about the details of the bill at the same time as the media, which is something that's kind of happened in the past, but that practice is now done, too, because the government has decided that it's going to send out press releases and media notices without letting all members of the Assembly know that that is happening. That's another issue that I believe you'll be hearing about in the future. So that's the first thing.

The second thing, Mr. Speaker, is that putting nonpartisan public dollars into telling Albertans that Bill 32 has passed before we have even seen it let alone debated it doesn't quite follow the precedent that was set by Dr. Pannu, but that in and of itself is a profound affront to the authority of this Assembly. Either bills get debated and amended in this Assembly on the basis of democratic representation and reasonable debate, or they don't. And either you insist that this government respect this Assembly, understanding that that's the way the situation and the processes are supposed to work in this Assembly, or you don't.

For this government to use government funds to go out there and talk about a bill as though it has been passed before members of this Assembly have even seen it let alone exercised their democratic right and, indeed, the democratic right of all Albertans through their members to have input on the bill and to put forward amendments to the bill and ultimately to vote on the bill is a fundamental breach of the privilege of each and every member of this Assembly, even members of the government caucus, because as much as they may have had an opportunity in caucus to talk about the details of this bill, they have an obligation to their constituents as well to come into this House and to participate and to debate and to cast their votes accordingly.

The fact that there is an assumption that it's a done deal and that Ministry of Transportation dollars can go to throw up signs on the highways saying, "Yay, look at us; Bill 32 is a done deal" before this House has even seen it is an affront to the authority of this House and, as such, amounts to contempt under the precedents

and therefore amounts to breach of privilege. I hope you will find that that has occurred in this case.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think that both of the hon. members who have spoken have taken it just a tad too far. There's no question that the House has to own its own work and that bills are the property of the House and members are entitled to see bills before anyone else sees those bills once they're put on notice. I think that is a time-honoured tradition of the House and one that this government has followed rigorously.

What we also have done, though, Mr. Speaker, is talked with the public about what they can anticipate: where government is going, what government is doing, what government is proposing. Governments actually get elected to govern, and then they come into the House to get approval for legislation and approval for the spending. But governments are elected to govern, and they are expected to go out and talk to the public about what they're doing.

Now, obviously, with respect to legislation coming before the House, there are essentially two stages. One is the conceptual stage. We often talk in public about legislation that will be coming before the House in a conceptual way, what's going to be in the legislation. It was not unusual – well, maybe this year it would be unusual – in previous years for the Government House Leader to put out a session news release ahead of session and list all the bills that were coming before the House with a brief description of what's in those bills. That is a perfectly time-honoured tradition of this House, and I think that in every House that kind of communication happens.

In fact, that did not happen for this fall session, and I got nothing but grief for that from some people. In fact, the Premier was speaking at a chamber of commerce luncheon on Monday, and who should show up but the leader of the New Democratic Party to decry the fact that the Premier was not telling them what bills were going to be on the agenda.

The fact of the matter is that the government caucus does see bills before they come to the House, not in their final printed form but in terms of the concept, in terms of what we call a three-column document or a document which talks about the concept of the bill.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, also a time-honoured tradition in this Assembly, at least in the period of time that I've been Government House Leader, is encouragement to ministers or to bill sponsors to brief their opposition critics with respect to the concepts and content of a bill, not to share the bill, not to share any drafting of a bill but to share the concepts and content of a bill in terms of that process so that they can be properly prepared because quite often the sessions are such that you put a bill on and you expect to be able to debate it, yet it can be fairly complex. It is not done in every circumstance, but it's certainly something that I encourage and something that I understand the Minister of Transportation took some pains to do, to brief the opposition critics with respect to the content of the bill, not the details, not by providing documents, not by even referring to those documents but by discussing the content.

In fact, there is nothing inherently wrong with advising the public as to what's coming before the House. Now, if you look at the specifics of this case, the news release that was put out, the copy that I have in front of me starts after the headline with the words: "If passed, the Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act will let municipalities set local rules." If passed. It doesn't give the specifics or the details. It doesn't have the content of the bill. It

doesn't share that either formally or informally. It basically says that we're going to bring a bill in this afternoon, it's going to be the Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act, and it's going to do these sorts of things. It's a conceptual piece, as you might expect in a news release. There are not any details that would be too exciting for anybody that was familiar at all with the concept and certainly wouldn't be exciting to any opposition member who availed themselves of the opportunity for the prebrief.

Mr. Speaker, there's a distinction here that's very important, the distinction that the House owns the bill and that no draft of a bill is shared with anybody but the House first. There's also a very important side to it, which is that public discussion of matters that are going to come before the House is very important, letting the public know what impact a bill might have because in every member doing their job in this House, there's another aspect to it. It's not just reading the bill and coming here and debating it. Every member's ability to do their job is enhanced by the fact that the public knows what we're going to be talking about.

We try to maintain a very tight time frame, where by the time you've finalized what you're going to be bringing to the House and after you've heard all the input that goes into developing a bill and all the processes that go into developing a piece of legislation, you then let the public know generically what's going to be before the House so that if they're interested, they can contact their member, raise their issues, and be ready to discuss with any member of the House what's in the bill. They can't do that unless they know what's going on.

3:40

So I would think the Minister of Transportation should be applauded, actually, for getting out there and raising in public that this bill is being introduced. It's likely going to be debated maybe as early as tomorrow in second reading, and the public should know about it.

Now, in terms of the details of the bill, in terms of printed copies of the bill, whether the actual document has been shared or not: of course he didn't share any of that. What he did was that he went out to the public and said that they should be aware of the fact that the Legislature is going to have a bill. It's going to be about enhancing traffic safety, and this is what it's about. It's about time zones in playgrounds. It's about reversible lanes. It's about aligning with the federal impaired driving legislation. That's what it's about, and if you're interested in that, you should contact a member of the government or a member of the opposition or somebody to let them know what you think so that they can properly engage in debate, having been informed.

This is a very big distinction, sharing the concepts of what it is we're going to do and sharing the details, which are owned by the House. The Minister of Transportation shared the concepts quite appropriately to make the public aware of what was going on, and I think the members of the opposition should applaud him for that because it makes their job easier. People now who don't think they're going to like it will know that they should call right away so that the opposition can be informed of their view and raise it in debate.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. leader of the New Democrat opposition.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, since the hon. Government House Leader has mentioned me in his comments, I feel compelled to rise and just make a couple of comments. First of all, with respect to my attendance at the Premier's speech yesterday at the chamber of commerce I think

that is entirely consistent with the position that we're taking here in supporting the hon. Wildrose House leader's motion of privilege. Specifically, the fact that a member of this Assembly has to buy a ticket to attend a chamber of commerce luncheon to hear a speech from the Premier about her plans for the session and her plans for the province for the coming period of time is, I think, a travesty. It shows real contempt for this Assembly. It says, quite frankly, that she is accountable to a business audience to a degree much higher than her accountability to the public of Alberta as represented by this House. I think it's entirely consistent with the point of privilege we are faced with today.

There's a point I want to correct the hon. Government House Leader on. His defence was that the minister had offered a briefing in a general sense to the opposition. We had two scheduled meetings for that briefing yesterday, and on both occasions no one from the minister's office showed up. We rescheduled it an hour later, and again they didn't show up. We finally had a briefing less than an hour ago, Mr. Speaker, on this particular bill. So I just want to correct the Government House Leader. Since he based his defence on the fact that opposition parties are provided with a briefing, I think it's important to note that we were unable to obtain a briefing prior to the introduction of this bill. I think that that's very significant.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Forsyth: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise on the point of privilege that the hon. member has brought forward to the Legislature. I've listened very intently to this point of privilege, and I find it very interesting, especially from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, who I had the honour and privilege to actually sit with when I was with the government. It's funny how things change within the government in regard to that what was then is not so much now for a government that talks about their openness, accountability, and transparency.

I have been trying to think from my 20 years when I was with the PC government when and if or where we ever did any of the things about putting bills forward. I'm going to challenge the House leader on the other side to show me when this change came, that all of a sudden we're talking about bills and debating bills before they're even introduced in the Legislature, and we have this big, splashy press conference. I know that when he was the Justice minister and I was the Solicitor General, we were very conscientious about allowing all members in the Legislature the privilege of sharing the bills at the same time. I don't recall – and I will challenge the House leader and, for that matter, the government to show when this new procedure changed. From what I recall, it seemed to have changed about the time that the Member for Calgary-Elbow became the Premier. I would assume – and I will stand up publicly in this House and apologize if I'm wrong on my assumption – that it changed probably when she became the Premier of the province.

I am going to be brief, and I'm going to ask you – and I know that you have all sorts of resources, Mr. Speaker, and very good resources as your table officers sitting around this Legislature – to check and find out when this changed. The House leader talked about the fact that they've always done this and it's always been a practice. I honestly, honestly cannot remember in the 20 years when I was with the government that this was occurring. I could be wrong. I hope that when you're making your decision in the Legislature, you will track back when this practice started. Hopefully, you have the ability to say: "Look. We talk about openness, we talk about transparency, and we talk about democracy,

and the Premier campaigned on how she was going to change things and do things differently in the Legislature, that she was going to have all of these all-party committees.”

I look forward to your ruling. I honestly think that, truly, if we really want to make a difference in this province, then things have to change, and how we table our bills in this Legislature is part and parcel of that. I can tell you that I spent, as I indicated earlier, a long time in the government. I can share with you what has happened since I left this government because of some of the things that were happening in 2010. The amount of work that opposition members have to do to get ready for a bill – and when you have a minister of the Crown go out in the morning and make all of these announcements, it’s truly, quite frankly, disturbing.

So I will look forward to your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak this afternoon. I think that there are a few remarks that need to be corrected here and clarified, certainly. I think that the hon. Government House Leader was quite succinct and quite accurate when he talked about the fact that the media release that went out started with the words “if passed,” no assumption that this House didn’t have the power to make the decision, none whatsoever.

On the remarks that I gave this morning, early on in the remarks there was a phrase to the effect: only if the Legislative Assembly agrees with us and lets this happen.

Mr. Speaker, I hear protests from the leader of the NDP that there wasn’t an opportunity to be briefed, but we briefed the critic from the Official Opposition in a meeting room. With him we went through clause by clause by clause, and the critic had staff with him who made notes and was able to ask questions. We answered all of the questions that they asked. It’s a little disingenuous for the Official Opposition to suggest at this point that they were kept in the dark. Quite the opposite is the truth. In fact, they made a point of saying that the bill itself has to be first introduced in the House. It’s interesting that the critic from the Official Opposition actually asked for a copy of it and was refused. Just an interesting point, Mr. Speaker.

Right after I met with the critic from the Official Opposition, we met with the critic from the Liberal party and again, same thing, clause by clause. They got to ask questions; they had people there to take notes. Again, asked for a copy of the legislation, and none was provided.

Right after that was scheduled the meeting with the NDP. They weren’t there. We tried to reschedule. I hear from the leader of the NDP that they tried to reschedule an hour later. Mr. Speaker, honestly, my understanding is that they couldn’t make the meeting.

3:50

Ms Notley: Point of order.

Mr. McIver: I hear a different version of that. Mr. Speaker, I could even acknowledge that as a potential misunderstanding.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, did somebody rise on a point of order here? Was that Edmonton-Strathcona?

Ms Notley: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rose on a point of order.

The Speaker: Citation?

Point of Order Factual Accuracy

Ms Notley: Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). The minister is relaying a set of facts which are not accurate, and it is bringing our statements into disrepute. That’s unfortunate. As the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood said, our staff showed up at 5:30 and again at 6:30 yesterday. After contacting this minister’s office in the middle of last week trying to get a briefing, the time that was first offered to us was 5:30 yesterday afternoon. When they didn’t show up where they were supposed to be, then we tried again at 6:30. Once again, it was still not offered. The briefing that we received finally, when his staff showed up, was well after the bill was introduced and well after the press conference. That needs to be clarified, Mr. Speaker. I don’t know why that happened, but there were two good-faith attempts that did not occur. The minister knows that, and he knew that when he went ahead with the press conference.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, this frequently happens. We get a difference of opinion on what happened here and what happened there. The NDs have just clarified their position. I think the minister has indicated his. Could I just ask the two of you to work this out amongst your two caucuses and not take up our time here? It’s on the record now who did what from their various perspectives. I’m not going to get into the middle of this. It’s a good point of clarification. Let’s let the minister conclude his comments, and if this needs revisiting, hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, I surely will revisit it.

In the meantime, hon. Minister of Transportation, you might wish to respond to that during your comments.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I’m going to really try to be kind to the member opposite that raised the point of order. As you rightly said, we have a difference of opinion here. The fact is that the Official Opposition met with me and were fully briefed. The Liberal critic met with me and my staff and was fully briefed. We offered the same process to the NDP, and somehow we failed to connect. I can assure you that we made efforts to do that. I will take the member at her word that they attempted to meet with us. I can assure you that we sincerely meant to meet with them, too, and I think that there’s pretty good evidence of that by the fact that we were successful in meeting with the other two parties immediately before the time that that was to occur.

The Speaker: Thank you. I think that sufficiently clarifies that matter.

Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, you had something to add?

Mr. Saskiw: I’d like to briefly close on my argument.

The Speaker: I haven’t recognized you yet, but I will shortly.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: Are there any others who wish to chime in briefly on the point of privilege under SO 15? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre I’ll be brief and just basically use your words from earlier on another issue. Basically, what our hon. ministers have said is to circumvent what I think is

the issue here, which is this breach. We ought not do indirectly what we are not supposed to do directly. The idea of putting a disclaimer on these announcements or the idea of putting a disclaimer before the press still violates the rules. In other words, they circumvented the rules of this House, and that was actually disrespectful, in my view, of what has gone on here. I just want to say that I don't buy the idea that the Official Opposition was briefed somehow and that settles that and it's done.

I'm going to tell you that it's sort of a game. I got briefed on the environmental bill that is before this House, but I was unable to make it because there wasn't enough of a time frame given. I understand why some of these ministries do that. I understand that you push it as close to the timetable as you possibly can, but unfortunately our schedules don't always allow for that. We try to do it in good faith. That's the best we can do. We can try to do it in good faith, but this government is in control of that timetable, and they have the ability to actually allow enough time. In this case they could have tabled this bill in time, or they could have briefed. They had that choice. They are in full control of that, and in this case they didn't live up to their responsibility.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: I believe that concludes our speakers list with the exception of the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Briefly.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to add my two cents, and that's basically that when it was mentioned by the Minister of Transportation that I asked for a copy of the bill, first of all, I don't remember that, and secondly, I don't see how it's relevant. When his office staff asked me for the appointment, which, I believe, was on Saturday afternoon, I accepted the time that was suggested, between 4:30 and 6:30 on Monday. I appreciated that the minister and his staff were there and gave, you know, an idea of what was coming up on the bill. In that discussion I may have asked for some paperwork, but again I don't feel that my part in that is relevant to this bigger issue.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, a lot of different comments have been made here, and names of other members of the House have been raised, and that prompted them to get up to speak. Now we have Innisfail-Sylvan Lake wishing to chime in, and I'm going to allow that briefly, but before I do, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, it is not normal for us to revert to the mover of the motion in this particular case. I thought you were rising on the point of order.

Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, do you wish to briefly chime in as well?

Mrs. Towle: Mine is very brief, Mr. Speaker. One of the things I do want to bring to the House's attention is that the sign, which we will table a copy of, actually does not state that parliamentary approval is coming. It does not say that it's to be tabled. It actually says, "Alberta Government, Building Alberta: Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads (Bill 32), Honourable Alison Redford, Premier." This sign was already placed out in the public before coming to be tabled in this House. So, clearly, that is absolutely false, and clearly we have a right to stand up and talk about that. If the hon. minister would like to retract that, that'd be super.

This was also tweeted six times by the press secretary for the hon. Minister of Transportation. Also, the speech in Sherwood Park had many, many, many details, details that we were not aware of here as the Official Opposition.

Also, the hon. Minister of Human Services' speech today was the same as a speech on March 4, 2003, when the Speaker actually ruled against him and ruled in favour of the person who brought

forward the action. I would just like to bring the Speaker's attention to that as well.

The Speaker: Well, it's been an interesting 45 minutes on hearing the points for and against the subject at hand. Let me just remind everyone here that a point of privilege under Standing Order 15 is actually the most serious charge that one MLA from this Assembly may bring forward against another. If you're not familiar with it, I encourage you all to look at page 10 of our Standing Orders, where it talks about "a breach of the rights of the Assembly or of the parliamentary rights of any Member" and how that constitutes a point of privilege.

There are at least two major issues that need exploring here, the first of which is whether or not there was leakage of the actual bill and, if so, in what form. The second is the issue of the alleged advertisements that may or may not have occurred and what they might have concerned and, in that general context, what, if any, details that are directly out of the bill may or may not have surfaced and, if so, in what form.

Then we get into a lot of other issues with respect to comments that were made by various members who just spoke pertaining to whether a breach occurred regarding any of the above or what might subsequently follow. Was there any contempt in that regard? Several citation comments were made by a couple of the speakers, including some from *Erskine May*, including some from *Maingot*, and perhaps elsewhere, and I took about five pages of notes in that respect.

4:00

There was also a comment made about media briefings. I will review what we consider to be a media briefing and see if we have a definition that pertains to that, notwithstanding what was said about the previous Speaker's ruling and also what context that all occurred in.

Did some folks receive a technical briefing or not is another matter that I'm going to review in the *Hansard*, that is being recorded as we speak. I know that no one would like to take away the concept of briefings by ministers with and for members of the opposition, especially the official critics. That's a very important point, so there are some grey areas here that need attention if nothing else.

Others talked about the authorities of the House. I want to review those comments carefully.

Other members mentioned issues pertaining to billboards and other forms of advertising. I want to take a look at that as well.

There were comments made about three-column documents and in what forms they appeared, all be they not in final form, not even in draft form, but I want to review the comments that have been made in that respect as well. The idea of sharing concepts and sharing details and sharing briefings is a very serious matter when we're dealing with bills that are to come forward to this House.

I'll just wrap up by saying that the comments made by all of you warrant a further study. I was hoping that they wouldn't, frankly, so we could move on, but I do find myself in the unique position of having to spend a little bit of time, at least tonight, perhaps more time tomorrow, reviewing this because of the nature of it and because of previous precedents and the context within which they all arose. There were federal examples given, there were provincial examples given, and the list goes on.

With that in mind, I will review all of *Hansard*, including what other facts and details I can get my hands on, working with individuals under my employ directly to come back with a further update and a ruling on this as soon as I possibly can, and I would

hope that would be tomorrow. We'll leave the matter there until that time.

Orders of the Day
Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 29
Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2013

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to move second reading of the Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2013.

On June 19 the federal government announced that amendments to their Food and Drugs Act as well as the food and drug regulations would take effect on December 19. The amendments allow the federal Minister of Health to create an online prescription drug list, which will be easier to access and be updated more frequently. The prescription drug list will replace the current list found in schedule F of the federal legislation. Mr. Speaker, there is no policy change to our scheduling of drugs with these amendments, and there is also no cost to the government.

Mr. Speaker, those are my comments on second reading, and I would move that we adjourn debate at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Rogers in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 207
Human Tissue and Organ Donation
Amendment Act, 2013

The Chair: Are there any questions or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill at this time? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is with great pleasure that I finally rise for discussion here in Committee of the Whole of Bill 207, the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Amendment Act, 2013. Now, as many of you know, this bill started out its life as a private member's bill and was adopted as a government bill during the spring session. I have to praise thanks to the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley for allowing me to take over his private member's position in order for it to come up for debate.

I also would like to thank the overwhelming support of third-party stakeholders, many of whom are up in the members' gallery and the public gallery here today; the government members for supporting this wholeheartedly through the process; and also the opposition members as well for their overwhelming support of Bill 207.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 207 takes action to improve Alberta's organ and tissue donation rates. Now, the intent of the legislation is to establish a provincial organ and tissue donation agency and an online consent-to-donate registry as well as to increase public

awareness and education about donation in Alberta. Consultation on the implementation of the bill occurred all of September and October. I led this committee as chair of the Alberta provincial advisory group for organ and tissue donation. It consisted of many transplant doctors in Alberta and critical care doctors. It included nurses, liver and kidney foundation representatives, and, of course, many community advocates as well.

Mr. Chairman, during second reading a number of colleagues around the room here stood up and spoke, and I would like to just address some of the comments that were made; in particular, the Member for Edmonton-Calder, who had some very good points that he came up with, that I took under serious consideration. One of them was that many Albertans don't have drivers' licences. Of course, drivers' licenses are part of the bill, where I hope to have registries ask people who are applying for their driver's licence or are renewing their driver's licence whether or not they intend to donate their organs and tissues. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder raised the issue that many Albertans do not drive, and there is a huge number of them that we have to also tap into, so I will be putting forward an amendment later on regarding this.

Also, some other points that he brought up. Does and can the family trump the consent wishes of a deceased? Currently, yes, they can, which is unfortunate, but I do hope that with this agency and this consent that we are asking Albertans for that they will go out and talk to their family members and express their deep wishes of wanting to donate their organs and tissues so that families don't trump the wishes of their deceased loved ones.

He also talked about performance measures and monitoring. Of course, that certainly will be a part of the bill and the agency once it comes into operation.

4:10

Then he brought up the issue of costs. What might this cost be? That is a very good question, hon. member. All I can say is that the Trillium Gift of Life Network that operates in Ontario right now, a wonderful, wonderful agency, has certainly increased their donations considerably since this agency has been in operation. The cost to run the Trillium Gift of Life in Ontario is budgeted at \$21 million a year, but that \$21 million includes 21 hospitals around the province ready on a moment's notice when the opportunity of potential organ procurement arises. The staff there are trained in all 21 hospitals, and they are basically ready to go on a moment's notice. Really, hon. member, this agency will save lives, so I don't particularly care what this will cost. It will save lives, so that is what is important.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View expressed some issues here as well. I appreciate you speaking in second reading, hon. member. You talked about opportunity costs and prevention programs, very good points. Absolutely, of course, it is important for the Alberta government to implement prevention programs so that individuals, you know, take precautions in order to limit injuries from sports. Those are the things that you talked about. I don't know how that really fits in with the organ and tissue donation agency, but perhaps you can comment on that later.

Also, hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, thank you for your comments during second reading. You talked a bit about cornea transplants and the long list of people in Alberta waiting for these cornea transplants. Of course, the hon. Minister of Health just made an announcement a couple of days ago regarding cornea transplants and how we are going to bring down that list considerably through bringing in corneas from elsewhere.

You talked a bit about your brother Ron as well, which was very moving, hon. member, and you talked about how he could not donate his organs and tissues at the time of his death. I know

exactly how you feel. My dear wife, who passed away a few years ago, told me three days before she passed that she was very sad that she could not donate her organs because of the cancer that had been inflicted upon her body. I will never forget that. That has stuck with me today and is one of the main reasons why I am up here now pushing this bill. So I feel for you as well.

Also, hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, I appreciate your very good comments regarding presumed consent and the fact that other countries around the world, Spain in particular – and you mentioned many others, 25 to 26 other countries around the world – have presumed consent so that when an individual passes away, they are automatically presumed to be donors unless indicated otherwise. You had wished that at some point our government would take a bold step and move toward presumed consent, and I'm hoping perhaps someday we can go there. Of course, I'm more concerned right now about getting this agency up and running, getting it going, and perhaps down the road being able to talk in this room here again with regard to presumed consent. But note well taken, and I would say that I would agree with you as well on that matter. So thank you.

Of course, the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall also stood up and talked about the education aspect of this bill and that we need to get out there and educate Albertans regarding organ donation. Absolutely, hon. member. I thank you for your contribution in second reading.

I especially would like to thank the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, who shared the story of his son Troy and how he shared his gift of life with many, many people in the province of Alberta and other provinces as well, I understand. Hon. member, my heartfelt thank you to you for sharing your wonderful gift with us.

Now, Mr. Chairman, the Alberta provincial advisory group for organ and tissue donation that met this summer: we met with many stakeholders, both external and internal. We had sessions in Edmonton, Calgary, and within the government. There were numerous themes that were heard during the consultation process and a number of amendments that were suggested to us in this bill, and I will be sharing some amendments here. I'm hoping that we can discuss the amendments here in the near future, but right now I just would like to talk about the consultation process and this committee that met over the summer. Overall, there was strong support for the creation of a provincial structure and a single voice related to organ and tissue donation.

Now, regarding the creation of an agency to co-ordinate organ and tissue donation activities in Alberta, we heard that a single provincial structure will help to co-ordinate access to donated tissue and organs across Alberta and result in more effective and streamlined processes, that resource allocation would be improved with a separate designated sustainable funding stream, and that having the agency directly linked to the Minister of Health and accountable to government is key to the success of this agency. We also heard that building on what works and past consultation is very important and that key purposes for the agency are co-ordination, support, education, oversight, monitoring, measurement, and accountability. We also heard that the agency should support and research the best practices around the country and around the world.

Regarding the creation of an online consent-to-donate registry we heard a lot from this committee. We heard that sustained efforts in building and maintaining public awareness is key to success. We heard that the ease of registering is essential. We heard that the ease of consent retrieval is important to health care providers and that governance and management of processes and

legalities are key considerations and that integration of Service Alberta's online portal was strongly recommended.

I do have to thank the hon. Minister of Service Alberta and his staff as well for participating in this and for the wonderful co-ordination and co-operation they gave to us during these consultation periods. Thank you sincerely.

We also heard that if Alberta Registries is the preferred option for collection of consent, fees for services will need to be addressed as well and that there are numerous resources and supports that can provide assistance in identifying lessons learned and implementing best practices in registry development.

Now, Mr. Chairman, there are a number of amendments that I would like to bring forth here, amendments that were talked about during our sessions this fall with the provincial advisory group, so I would ask that we issue the amendments. I hope that they're out there to be issued. Okay. I guess I will do that first.

The Chair: Sure. Hon. member, we'll just pause and have the pages distribute the amendment and catch a breather, and then we'll ask you to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Webber: Sure.

4:20

The Chair: Thank you.

For the record, hon. members, since this is the first amendment to this bill, we will call this amendment A1.

Hon. member, you make speak to the amendment.

Mr. Webber: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a point of clarification here. There are seven proposed amendments to this bill, and there are – I won't say that there are housekeeping changes, but there are changes. Do I include all amendments in one? Do I talk about them all right now?

The Chair: It is considered one amendment, hon. member, which would include all the changes that you are proposing unless you're telling me there are others. If these are all the changes that you are proposing contained in these two pages, then combined they are considered one amendment, A1, so you can proceed to speak to the entire list.

Thank you.

Mr. Webber: Thank you. Excellent, Mr. Chairman. I will try to do that in a way that you will understand because it is a little bit confusing here right now.

Anyway, currently in Bill 207, Mr. Chair, when an adult applies to a registry to obtain a driver's licence, they will be asked whether or not they want to consent to donate their tissue, organs to the health care system. Now, the proposed amendment in section 4.2(1) of the bill will include this question being asked for both operators' licences and identification cards for people without a licence. That was brought to my attention, of course, again, by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder. This amendment is important because this bill right now focuses mainly on drivers, and as such it excludes over 180,000 identification card holders who may wish to donate their tissue and organs. The amendment to 4.2(1) is one change that we would like to make there.

Now, the proposed amendment to section 4.2(2)(a) will make a slight wording change to enable consent information provided at the registry office to be transmitted to the online consent-to-donate registry. Now, since there is no need to have the agency involved to transmit this information, the words "Alberta Organ and Tissue Donation Agency for inclusion in the" will be removed, if that

makes any sense. So it will read that the information be transmitted “to the online registry.”

Okay. Current wording in section 4.2(2)(b) of Bill 207 suggests that we affix a sticker on the operator’s licence to indicate a person has provided consent to donate. Now, the amendment that I’d like to make here would allow for the printing of a code or symbol rather than a sticker on the licence so that printing would be attached to the driver’s licence or the ID card, indicating consent to donate. These changes are necessary because there are a range of problems with stickers, as we probably know, including that anything not laser engraved onto a card will eventually wear out or peel off or get damaged, so we are suggesting an amendment there to have it laser engraved onto the licence rather than a sticker.

Also, the current wording in section 12.1(2)(b) says that one of the purposes of the agency is to “educate the public and increase awareness about donation in Alberta.” The amendment being proposed is to replace the words with the following: “educate the public and health care community and increase their awareness respecting tissue, organ and body donation.” The goal with this change is to establish outreach programs and comprehensive communication campaigns to increase awareness about donation, not only to the public but to the health care community as well. That is another amendment.

One final amendment is to section 12.1(2)(c), the words “manage, deliver and encourage use of the online registry.” That will be substituted with wording like “support, encourage and oversee the use of the online registry.” Now, the intent of that amendment, Mr. Chair, is to be clear that while the oversight, support, and accountability of the registry rests with the agency, the management and delivery of the registry may be better served by utilizing existing resources within government such as Service Alberta or the Department of Health. [Mr. Webber’s speaking time expired]

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Webber: Well, actually, Mr. Chair, I’ve got one more amendment. Can I speak on that, or is my time up?

The Chair: Sure. Would you just go ahead and finish your point, then, hon. member?

Mr. Webber: Okay. Thank you.

One other amendment, section 4.2(1), that refers to an adult providing his or her written consent, will be removed to be consistent with terminology throughout the act. We only use the term “consent,” not “written consent.”

Also, section 4.1, changing the term “individuals” to “adults.” The term “individuals” is not used in the act, so this change will also ensure language consistency between the bill and the act.

Again, those are the seven amendments. I know that they’re rather confusing, but perhaps we can talk about that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, you have a clarification you’re asking for?

Mrs. Forsyth: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills. Of course, I don’t need to tell him about how much I support this bill.

The Chair: Hon. member, are you asking for a clarification, or are you speaking to the bill?

Mrs. Forsyth: I will get to that in just a second.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Forsyth: I guess what I’m asking this member – and I think it’s important – is about the fact that he’s asked to have these amendments done all at once. You’ve agreed, and it’s on one sheet of paper. I’m wondering if the member could be kind enough to start breaking these down into A1, A2, A3. The reason I say that is that we’re scrambling trying to figure this out. With one of the amendments that he’s proposing, we have a similar amendment, which then makes for some confusion. Is it a subamendment or something like that? If we could just start with, you know, where he’s talking about where section 3 is amended and vote on that, get down to the next one. He’s changed 4.2 considerably, and we’re trying to absorb all that.

Then we go to section (b), which is really – I’m trying to learn this very quickly – one of the places where we would like to propose an amendment if we can. Then it gets quite confusing because he’s included the health care community in that amendment, which I think is key to increasing awareness. Could we maybe ask the member if he’s prepared to do that and then start debating each amendment separately?

The Chair: Okay. Hon. member, you’ve heard the request.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, hon. member. I know this is quite confusing. I knew that it would be better if we were to break down each section and talk about that. Absolutely. Let’s do that. Let’s start with the first amendment.

The Chair: Hon. member, if you’re amenable to that, just so we can give other members a chance to speak to your proposals, my suggestion would be that the first portion would become A1A and then A1B. Then under section B – I’ll get to you in just a minute, hon. Government House Leader.

Just to be clear, then, a clarification for the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. If we broke this into section A as a subamendment and then section B as another subamendment, would that deal with your concerns? Then I’ll find out if that’s amendable to the member.

4:30

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Chair, I’m going to have to get some advice, obviously, from my House leader and from the table officers because the amendment that we will be proposing is under section 6, which I think possibly. . .

The Chair: That’s referenced under B.

Mrs. Forsyth: We’re actually going to amend 12.1 by striking out – I really would like to get some clarification.

The Chair: Just to be clear, then, hon. member, it sounds to me that what you’re requesting – and again, I’ll clarify if this works with the sponsor – is that section A could be subamendment A1A, and then the portion that’s labelled B would be A1B. We would deal with them in two parts.

Hon. Government House Leader, did you want to chime in before I went back to the Member for Calgary-Foothills?

Mr. Hancock: Well, I think you’ve finally got to it, Mr. Chairman. There are really two amendments here or two pieces to it. It’s one amendment but two pieces: section A, which amends section 3, and section B, which amends section 6. You can split them into two. I know the House is quite keen to deal with this bill, and

from what I hear from the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, she's got a subamendment to B. You don't actually need to split it to do that. You just move the subamendment to section B. If you want to split them, it's A and B.

The Chair: It's just A and B. That's the proposal at this point.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: All right, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: To be clear, then, the proposal is that you would split this into A1A and A1B, to be voted in two pieces.

Mr. Webber: All right.

The Chair: You can live with that?

Mr. Webber: I can live with that, Mr. Chair, absolutely, whatever can bring clarification to the room here.

The Chair: Wonderful. Thank you.

I'll recognize the next speaker, then. The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my honour to rise today and speak to Bill 207. As I said earlier, in the gallery today are two of my friends and constituents, Murray McRae and Melodie Helm. Years ago Murray was diagnosed with a rare degenerative eye condition called keratoconus. This condition causes changes to the structure and curvature of the cornea that often result in a substantial vision loss, streaking, and sensitivity to light. This condition can affect one or both of the eyes. If the condition afflicts both eyes, the deterioration in vision will eventually take away the patient's ability to do everyday things like read a book or drive a car. In 25 per cent of the cases a cornea transplant is eventually needed. Murray found himself among this 25 per cent. Murray needed a transplant in both eyes. Murray has since had cornea transplants in both eyes but does require a second transplant in his left eye. He is told that his turn is imminent, but to reach this point, Murray has had to wait five years.

He knows first-hand what the gift of an organ donation can mean. It is thought that at any point there are around 400 people on a waiting list for some kind of organ or tissue transplant here in the province. It is also known that a person who decides to donate their tissue and organs upon their death has enough usable tissue and organs to save up to 40 lives.

Bill 207 truly means the difference between life and death for many Albertans. For others Bill 207 means the difference between two vastly different qualities of life. As legislators we owe it to Albertans to create the highest quality of life possible for our constituents, and when facing a health crisis, Bill 207 goes a long to make sure that that dream of those constituents becomes a reality.

The barrier in Alberta has often been the absence of a registry system that potential donors can sign up for and make their intentions known while they're still in good health. Murray and Melodie have initiated a golf tournament in central Alberta called the Bionic Golf Tournament in support of human organ and tissue transplants. It began in 2011 and has grown each of the three years since its inception. All of the money raised goes directly to the HOPE program, which stands for human organ procurement and exchange, based out of the University of Alberta hospital.

Organ donation is an issue that doesn't land on many people's radar until it affects them or someone close to them. We need to take a cue from people who have been affected by organ donation

and who have been loud and clear over the years like Murray and Melodie and support Bill 207, which aims to create a simple, easy, online registry for organ donation. The donor card system simply creates too much room for error. What if the donor has forgotten to sign his card? What if the donor is not carrying his card at the time of death? Personally, I carry my legion card, and I have signed the organ donation portion on the back, but what happens if this isn't on me when I pass away?

Bill 207 solves these issues and others, and it sees to it that anyone who desires to be an organ donor in death will be successful. This is a simple and doable task which will save and improve lives here in the province. Opportunities for organ donation are relatively rare, and the impact is life-saving. Given the opportunity I'm confident that an unprecedented number of Albertans will answer the noble call to be an organ donor. If 10 people can save 40 lives, imagine the impact of 20 donors, 100 donors, or a thousand donors. The possibilities are truly endless. That is why I'm here supporting Bill 207.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to finish by asking all members of this Assembly, my colleagues, to support this bill so that we can truly make a difference in the lives of Albertans. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Allen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to also rise to support Bill 207. First of all, I'd like to start by taking the opportunity to thank and commend the Member for Calgary-Foothills on his hard work and diligence in bringing this important piece of legislation forward. Every year thousands of Albertans and their loved ones wait anxiously on the list for just any kind of word of a possible transplant, and I believe this crucial piece of legislation will help increase organ and tissue donations and decrease preventable deaths. In addition to that, it's brought a lot more awareness to it. How many people do you talk to that, as soon as you bring it up, have not even signed the back of their driver's licence or given much consideration as to whether or not they would be a donor?

Section 7 is the most important part of the act as it makes it mandatory that the medical practitioner consider and document the medical suitability of the deceased person's tissue or organs for transplantation to waiting patients. This will create accountability and ensure full compliance with the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Act of 2006. Over the last couple of years waitlists have increased. I've heard from my constituents that standards and guidelines for medical practitioners would greatly help in the decisions regarding suitability for donations.

Again, I thank the member for providing his leadership in introducing Bill 207. Mr. Chair, earlier we heard the Speaker mention that there seemed to be a lot of love in this room. I'm feeling a lot of love on this bill, and all members are very supportive of it. I urge everyone in the Assembly, government members and opposition members, to support this bill and for the government to move immediately to royal assent and proclamation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there others that wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I, too, commend the member for this important advance in medical care for people who have no other option. I will reiterate just a little bit of my comments from before. For the record, there are quite a number

of, I guess, chronic illnesses associated with organ failure that are preventable: infectious diseases of the liver, for example; smoking and lung failure; some of the workplace diseases, particularly farmer's lung and coal miner's lung. Some of these that eventually require transplants for organ failure are preventable. Some of the injuries that can occur are associated with active sports. If proper instructions and prevention measures are in place, if education is in place, some of the injured organs can obviously be affected. Perhaps the most common one where lifestyle factors contribute is heart disease, an obvious one. We're seeing dietary and lifestyle choices affecting arterial and cardiac function.

4:40

We could be doing so much more than we are in this province, where only 3 per cent of our budget goes into prevention programs, including education. There's a tremendous opportunity here to not only reduce the ongoing health care costs but the need for transplant if we actually implemented some of what we could do in prevention programming from conception: mothers' immunizations, for example, mothers' nutrition, and then lifestyle choices affecting various of the offspring organs.

I want to put a pitch in again for leadership on prevention in this province, where we spend \$17 billion patching people up after they break down. Most developed countries are investing much more than 3 per cent of their health budget into prevention programming. We can do more. We must do more. Our health care system will thank us, our population will thank us, and we'll have a quality of family life and community life that will be unparalleled.

Having said that, only one question hasn't been entirely clear to me or discussed, and that is revoking consent. It's not entirely clear to me how one changes one's mind about the decision at one point committed to, and I hope there's a fairly straightforward mechanism for addressing a change of mind, a change of heart, if people have given consent and then decide to revoke that consent. Apart from that I also applaud the work together with Service Alberta and the importance of making this as easy and painless as possible, but again there have to be some checks and balances in order to allow people to change their mind at some point if they decide that for whatever reason they are not comfortable or can't follow through on the commitment of organs that they previously made.

Having said that, I don't think anyone would vote against this important, systematic, evidence-based, and thoughtful approach to both registering and ensuring that the whole health care system is geared to the very complex IT registry issues, communications issues, rapid response issues that have to be involved in these critical life-and-death issues, that are matters of minutes at the time of an accident or injury or an unexpected death. Everything has to be in order or we just lose tremendous opportunities for this life-saving measure.

Again, this caucus will be supporting this bill, and I look forward to rapid proclamation of the bill as well so that things can move forward on an active basis within the health care system.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other comments on the amendment? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would also like to commend the member for putting forward this bill. I've heard a lot of great comments from him regarding this bill, and I realize the passion that he has with this bill, and I think it's great. From our conver-

sations around the room, I don't see anybody who would be opposed to this.

I know that in my small town I had a young gentleman who had some really significant heart changes and waited for years to try to find a new heart. Actually, it came a little bit late. He ended up passing away, but if there would have been access to a heart across the province or across the country, a little bit more access, it hopefully would have helped the situation. I also know another gentleman – I believe he's from Medicine Hat – that had a double lung transplant. We hear some good stories, and we hear too many bad stories about not being able to have access to organs that could have been donated. I think it's, you know, great to see, and it's something that will help everybody in Alberta and, hopefully, across the country. I can speak for myself, and I'm in full support of this member's bill. Hopefully, we can get it passed and totally completed and get it out into the public so everybody can start benefiting from it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I actually have a few questions that I'm looking to be clarified by the hon. member. The first question that I have is: what is the process if a registry owner does not necessarily believe in this bill and chooses not to comply? I have that question.

With the Alberta health care card, for those of us who signed the back of our Alberta health care card as a donor, when we go to the hospital and present our Alberta health care card, is there the potential for those people who self-declare to be added to the registry at some point in time? Are you considering that, or is that further down the road?

A third question. A lot of us maybe don't carry our actual Alberta health care card, where you actually declare that you're a donor, but we do carry the plastic hospital card. I know that in my region we still have the plastic hospital card, so you don't actually have to carry your Alberta health care card. I'm just wondering: if the government decides to implement this bill, would there be the ability to self-declare somehow at the hospital and to be added to the registry or on the back of that card or something that would improve your chances of getting more people onto the registry?

I would like to speak to this bill, but I'm just wondering if you can answer those questions first.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: All right. Well, thank you, hon. member, for those questions. Again, I apologize for the amendments. I maybe was not that clear, but I think that if we do go through each and every amendment, we should be able to get through this without pain.

With regard to your questions, hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, for most of the details that will occur with the registry, those decisions will be made after this bill is passed, and the consultation period will then come and continue on.

This bill is the first step. Once the agency is implemented, then we're going to bring back the health care communities. The committee that I sat on over the summer: many of those members will come back, and we'll discuss the details that you're asking about with regard to registry owners. If they don't agree with wanting to participate: that's a very good question. That is something that will have to be talked about in the future, down the road.

Health care cards added to the registry: absolutely. It is difficult to determine who has signed the back of the cards until they show their cards. I personally think that signing the back of the health care card will sort of phase out and that individuals will go directly to the registry to indicate their intent and their consent to donate. That's what I would like to see because, basically, I think that signing the back of health care cards is prehistoric, and we need to move to a better system than that. Likewise with hospital cards. There are many venues that we can go to and tap into individuals to ask them whether or not they want to be organ and tissue donors. This is just the start, the identification cards and the drivers' licences. Perhaps down the road we can implement other ways of asking individuals whether they want to be donors or not.

This is an evolving agency. It's going to take time to evolve, to have it run smoothly. It's going to take time, and it's going to take steps. Right now I'm more concerned about passing this bill so that we can implement this agency, and then they can start to delve into the details.

Thank you for those questions.

The Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak on this bill, including, I believe, amendment A1A. I need to get some clarification from the hon. member. I understand this because, like he, I'm anxious to get it passed. I, as he is well aware, brought forward a private member's bill. It went to the committee, and then another private member's bill came from, I believe, two or three other members from the government in regard to organ donation.

4:50

I truly, truly think we have wasted so much time, when this bill could have been proclaimed five years ago. I would love to think how many organs could have been donated while the government sits on this. Now, there have been – what? – four, to my knowledge, private members' bills that have been passed on this in particular that are stuck in limbo somewhere. For me and, I'm sure, for this member it's quite frustrating because I know how passionate he is.

The questions that we're asking and trying to get some clarification on are on the comments that you've been making since we've been debating this bill, for the last hour or so, questions that the online registry team or group, I guess, if you want to call it that, is going to be dealing with when these questions come to them. The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake talked about: what if you have a registry that for religious reasons or whatever reasons refuses to do that? How are you going to deal with that? That is a very important question.

You talk about the Alberta health care card. I signed my health care card – I don't know – umpteen million years ago. I've been an organ donor probably longer than some of these people that are in the House, which is embarrassing for me to say. What about the FOIP legislation? Has anybody checked with the FOIP commissioner in regard to the privacy issue of the health care cards? Is she aware of the situation, and is she onside with it? There have been, quite frankly, many, many, Albertans that have signed their Alberta health care card and are assuming that that health card is going to be their permission to donate their organs and who may not even think about registering online.

One of the amendments that we're going to talk about later: you talk about if the person doesn't drive and that you've made an amendment with regard to the identification card. Fine. Some

people get identification cards. What about talking to the family doctor and initiating the family doctor's having some sort of a discussion in regard to signing up on the online registry? The government has mentioned in this Legislature before about how they are educating the health care professionals in regard to immunization. Why can't we look at that?

Member, you know, we are going to be supporting your amendments. We're like you. If this bill goes through the House today and we get to Committee of the Whole this afternoon and you get into third reading tonight, then you're on your way to proclamation, which I think is great. I guess, for me, that when you talked about the cost and you said that you didn't care what it costs, I agree with you. I mean, \$21 million in the budget that we're seeing that this government has is peanuts, quite frankly. The cost to the system, as up front as it may seem, is going to be down the road a lot less.

I mean, I had a cousin that waited for a double transplant, who ended up in the hospital for months and months and months waiting for a donation and, unfortunately, didn't get it. I'm dealing with a friend right now, a very, very, very close friend of mine, that has got a 1 per cent chance of survival. He's in the Foothills at this particular time. He knows it's his time. We've talked. But I don't know, as much as I love his family, if they've even considered the idea of approaching him in regard to organ donation. You get into that fine line of seeing your dad lying on a bed and looking pretty good. He's now given a 1 per cent chance of survival, and he's made the decision in his life that he wants to move into the palliative care program. Then again, whose responsibility is it to approach him to see if he's got some organs or, for that matter, some tissue?

There are so many things. My concern, quite frankly, to the Member for Calgary-Foothills, is: is this bill, once it's been proclaimed, going to spend all of its time where the other bills are that have been proclaimed that have never been passed into law? The government can do this huge news release and say: Bill 207, the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Amendment Act, 2013, has passed through the Legislature. And it sits and sits and sits because it's never gotten royal assent. I'm sure, knowing you as well as I do, of how diligent you will be in forcing your government to have the LG in and get it done and then follow through with your agency in getting all of the i's dotted and the t's crossed. So you can say by the end of the year, which would be virtually impossible, to my knowledge, because you've got lots to do, hopefully by the middle of next year, that this agency is up and running, that it's got its dollars, and that it's making progress. When we come back into session, you can sit back and tell us the progress of what has happened with all of the hard work that has been put into this bill for many years.

I'm going to suggest, if I may, that we start on amendment A1A and call the question, and as we get down to A1B, which the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has some questions on, we're going to be providing a subamendment – sorry; I have to sign the subamendment – to make your bill stronger, obviously, so that we can move forward on this and get on to some of the more contentious or more questionable pieces on A1B. Then we can get to section B, where we want to propose a subamendment so that we can get this through the House as quickly as possible.

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there other speakers? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you. First of all, I want to thank the hon. member for bringing this bill forward. Most of us spoke to this bill

in second reading, and it was very passionate. I have to say that when I knew this bill was coming up today, I went back and read what I had said then, and while that all still stands today, I am still so incredibly moved by what the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti had to say.

Over the summer, when I was meeting with constituents, I shared parts of your story when people said that they weren't sure about why they would make this decision. I shared your whole story with my husband. As many of you know, I spoke in this House before about my husband being one of those people who are fearful of this bill. He was moved by your story. It was interesting. He said that one of the things that he hoped never to have to do is to be in the position that you were in. But he was also moved that you were so selfless to actually take that position and save so many other people.

While I'm sure he won't admit it, I'm pretty sure I've changed, and I think that even in those comments that day I said that I would win, and I did, so it was a good day. One of the things that he mentioned to me about that conversation on the discussion: at which point do you have it, and how do you alleviate fears that are legitimate fears? I've always been a donor, just like the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I've been a donor since the time I turned 18. From the minute I got an Alberta health care card, I signed it. I liked it at one point in time when I thought the drivers' licences would have that on there as well. I had said to my husband at that point in time that when and if that ever happens to me or to someone I know very closely, he's going to probably have to help me or make that decision himself, and I hoped that he would honour my wishes.

Before your story came to him, one of the things that he mentioned was the fear, the legitimate fear for some, that organ donation really means a quicker death. I think that most of us understand that that's not the case. My experience with health care professionals, physicians, and having been an employee of David Thompson health region for a long time is that our health care professionals are not trying to quicken death or hasten death in any way, shape, or form. What they're trying to do is take the best of a bad situation and ensure that those who are waiting on a very long list get the organs that they so desperately need so that no more have to die than is absolutely necessary. In every occasion, as I understand it, they go out of their way to ensure that the organ donation is at the absolute last point.

5:00

I think the story that you shared with us identified that in such a personal way. I also think that that experience you had and that you shared so eloquently with us and so personally with us also showed us that it's a very scary decision to have to make but that between yourself, your family, and health care professionals you at this point in time are comfortable with that decision and know that it was the best decision possible for yourself and your family. I appreciate your helping to educate us and helping to educate all Albertans on exactly what this process was like. Thank you for that.

About eight years ago a friend of ours went through a heart transplant, and I have to admit I didn't have a true appreciation for what that was like. He was mid-60s, he'd had heart disease for a long, long time, and stayed on a transplant list for a long, long time. You know, he went through periods of ups and downs, where he was told he could get a heart transplant, then he was told he didn't qualify. He'd get close to getting a transplant, and then he'd get sick and get pulled off the list. I remember him expressing supreme frustration with that process. There was no ability for him to push people to any registry. There was no ability to share

with people what needed to be done. Eventually he did get his heart transplant in his mid-60s and, sadly, only lived six months, but I can tell you that those six months for him were life-saving because he'd spent a good five years at least with severe heart disease and was struggling quite a bit.

His family expressed many times that they had wished that there was somewhere they could go where each and every one of them could register, where each and every one of them could make their wishes known very clearly and very succinctly: I want to be a donor. I think that that's what this registry does. This registry allows everybody to self-declare. It allows you to walk up and actually say: I choose this. It allows you to open up a frank discussion with your family about why you're choosing to donate your organs and how you choose that process.

My constituency assistant also confided in me in the last couple of weeks that her grandfather is on the transplant list. Unfortunately, he's been told that he will not receive an organ at all because of his advanced age. And while he knows that, she is a strong advocate for organ donation. She walks every year in the hundred-kilometre walk, and she's been doing that for, you know, five or six years. I applaud her. I sat with her. It's a very emotional journey for anybody who's going through this process. She also expressed support for this bill and also hoped that I would support it and hopes that everybody in this House passes this bill.

I'd like to just take a moment to read a letter that I received today from a constituent about your bill. She has asked for me specifically to read it in the House and to let you know of her support. She says: "My husband and I are business owners and leaders in our community. We are heavily involved in volunteerism in our community and surrounding area. Among various groups we volunteer, and I have been with the victims services unit with our local RCMP detachment for the last four years. We understand our duty to serve, and we take this seriously as do all of our five adult children, who've spent countless hours keeping our community running. I am 51 years old, and I am currently in end-stage renal disease due to an autosomal dominant genetic disorder. I will start dialysis soon, but unfortunately my health care team has assured me that I will not live long enough to reach the top of the transplant list. I cannot believe this is happening to me. Please support Bill 207. Myself and my family need your help."

The time to act is now. Albertans need a Provincially coordinated Organ and Tissue Donation Agency that is well funded and accountable.

Bill 207 brings hope to thousands of families and friends touched by the need for organ and tissue donation. I urge the Government of Alberta to pass Bill 207 and put their full weight behind implementing an Organ and Tissue Donation Agency.

An organ and tissue donation agency will:

- Create a well-funded, accountable provincial agency to manage all aspects of the donation process across the province
- Establish ongoing provincial public awareness campaigns [and]
- Establish an electronic Consent to Donate registry.

In just this past year, 72 Albertans needlessly died for their gift of life. On average, 1 Albertan dies about every 5 days waiting for an organ to become available. Of the top 12 countries ranked for organ donation, Canada sits at 10th. While once the leader in organ donation in Canada, Alberta now has the lowest rate of organ donation in Canada.

In the world, I think she means.

We can do better.

Organ donation not only saves lives, it returns critically ill individuals to active and productive members of our communities.

We need action! Please put your full weight of support behind passing and implementing Bill 207.

I couldn't have said it better myself. Clearly, this is somebody who is absolutely in the stages and on the list. I don't know what I would do if my children or my husband were told: this is your outcome, and I can do nothing to help you.

The only other thing that I would add to what she has so eloquently said in this letter is that it's one thing to pass a bill, one thing to say that we all agree in this House today or tomorrow, whenever this happens, that this bill is right for Alberta. It's one thing for all of us to stand up and talk in support of this bill. It's a whole other thing to stand up and actually proclaim this bill. We sit so few days in this Legislature, and Bill 207, Human Tissue and Organ Donation Amendment Act, 2013, deserves the full weight of every single member in this House to see it proclaimed quickly. Even with all of the business on the table it would seem to me that Bill 207 should have no problem not only being accepted by this House, not only being supported by all of our members but also being proclaimed in a relatively short period of time.

We know the government has the power to move bills through. We've seen it before. We know the government has the power to absolutely do it in an amazing amount of time. Today the government has the support, I believe, of all the opposition parties for this bill. There is the ability today or tomorrow or fairly quickly to pass this bill, and then there's the absolute ability for the Premier of this province to stand up and do the right thing and proclaim it immediately after it is passed.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Chair: The question has been called on amendment A1A.

[Motion on amendment A1A carried]

The Chair: We're now debating A1B. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Saskiw: I believe we have a subamendment to that.

Mrs. Forsyth: No. That's on section B.

The Chair: We're now on B, hon. member. Would you like to speak to B? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek on subamendment A1B.

Mrs. Forsyth: This is B on this side, too?

The Chair: That's correct.

Mrs. Forsyth: Oh, good. Okay. Sorry. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we would like to propose a subamendment if we can, please. You've seen us back and forth with the Member for Calgary-Foothills to make sure that we're all on the same page. I have the subamendment. I would like to have it passed around if I may.

The Chair: Okay. If you would send the original to me and have the others sent around, please. Thank you. We'll ask the pages to distribute them. Maybe just pause for a minute, hon. member, while we get those circulated so that others can see what we're talking about.

You can speak to the amendment, hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

5:10

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to move subamendment – what are we? A3?

The Chair: A1B-SA1.

Mrs. Forsyth: I didn't hear that, but I'm pleased to move subamendment A1B. Under "Section 6 is amended in the proposed section 12.1(2)," the member originally had been striking out clauses (b) and (c) and substituting the following. The current amendment reads: "(b) educate the public and health care community and increase their awareness respecting tissue, organ and body donation." In the subamendment that we're proposing, first of all, we're going to strike out "and increase their awareness respecting tissue, organ and body donation," substituting "and work with health professionals and their respective organizations to increase awareness about human tissue and organ donation in Alberta."

I have spoken to the Member for Calgary-Foothills, and we're both passionate about it. I truly appreciate what he was talking about when I went over and talked to him about the health care community because he was looking at the agencies and the cancer boards and things like that that are out there. I was concerned about our health care professionals, which are doctors and nurses and all of the health care professionals that do such a good job on a daily basis. We've both come to an agreement, so I'm going to ask everybody in the Assembly to accept that subamendment.

The Chair: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have any issues with this amendment to the amendment, hon. member. I guess I originally was concerned with the fact that you are not including the health care community, which I had in my amendment here, but when I read this, it says "and work with health professionals and their respective organizations," and to me that basically is the health care community. I don't have any issues with your amendment to the amendment, and I would support that.

Thank you.

Mrs. Forsyth: I appreciate what the hon. member is saying. I think probably as a member of the government – and we've read it into *Hansard* that we've both made it very, very clear that we want the health care communities to be consulted as well as our health care professionals. I know full well that this member is probably – I would hope that the Premier appoints him to the advisory committee in some major role so that he can carry forward the issues that have been raised in this Legislature. I have no doubt that will help.

I'm not sure if anyone else wants to speak. If not, I'd like to call the question.

The Chair: The question, then, has been called, hon. members, on subamendment A1B-SA1 as proposed by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

[Motion on subamendment A1B-SA1 carried]

The Chair: Now we will vote on amendment A1B as amended.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment A1B carried]

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader, please.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Given the time and the couple of pieces of work that still need to be done, I regretfully have to move that the committee rise and report progress and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills with some amendments: Bill 207. I wish to table copies of the amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? That is carried. So ordered.

Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Evening Sitings

37. Mr. Hancock moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the 2013 fall sitting unless on motion by the Government House Leader made before 6 p.m., which may be made orally and without notice, the Assembly is adjourned to the following sitting day.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.
This motion is not debatable.

[Government Motion 37 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Committee Membership Changes

38. Mr. Hancock moved:
Be it resolved that the following changes to

- the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund be approved: that Mr. Amery replace Mr. Sandhu;
- the Standing Committee on Private Bills be approved: that Mr. Allen replace Mr. Webber;
- the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing be approved: that Mr. Goudreau replace hon. Ms Jansen, that Mrs. Fritz replace Mr. Sandhu;
- the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved: that Mr. Webber replace Mr. Allen, that Mr. Luan replace Mr. Goudreau;
- the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved: that Mr. Young replace Mr.

Rogers, that Mr. Young replace Mr. Rogers as deputy chair, that Mrs. Fritz replace hon. Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been a number of appointments to cabinet, et cetera, so there's some need to change some of the standing committees of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.
Hon. members, this motion is not debatable.

[Government Motion 38 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Committee Membership Changes

39. Mr. Hancock moved:
Be it resolved that the following changes to

- the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be approved: that Mr. Allen replace hon. Mr. Fraser, that Mr. Khan replace Mr. Goudreau, that Ms Calahasen replace hon. Ms Jansen;
- the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship be approved: that Mr. Goudreau replace Mr. Allen;
- the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee be approved: that Mr. Luan replace Mr. Allen as chair, that Mr. Dorward replace Mr. Luan as deputy chair, that Ms Kubinec replace Mr. Allen.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move Government Motion 39 in the same vein, that some changes need to be made, in this case to the standing committees of the House.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand that there are amendments that are going to be proposed to that. They'll be moved by the deputy whip. They're at the table, so if the deputy whip has one in hand, he'll know it. There are just some late changes that were to be made, but otherwise I would ask that the House approve these changes to the special standing committees of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.
This motion is debatable. I'll just have those circulated, and then we'll deal with the changes as proposed.

5:20

Mr. Dorward: Regarding Government Motion 39, I move Government Motion 39 be amended as follows, that, number one, clause (a) is struck out and the following is substituted:

- the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be approved: that Mr. Khan replace hon. Mr. Fraser, Mr. Xiao replace hon. Ms Jansen.

And, two, clause (b) is struck out.

The Deputy Speaker: All right.

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

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Government Motion 39. I'm really referring to subclause (c), which states that Luan would replace Allen – I'm reading from here; I don't think that violates our code or whatever – Dorward replaces Luan as deputy chair, and then Kubinec replaces Allen on the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee.

What I take exception to is the fact that – we have these all-party committees. Obviously, the government members dominate those committees. They're able to push forward every single piece of legislation or amendment to legislation they so choose. I'm on this particular committee where all the government MLAs are

voting one way. It seems that there isn't much process in terms of having opposing viewpoints.

We've seen other committees such as the Public Accounts Committee, for example, which is chaired by an opposition member, the Member for Airdrie. That committee in particular has been working very well. You know, it allows a little bit of a balance. Of course, government members will still have the ultimate authority. They still have the majority of members on that particular committee, the Public Accounts Committee, but having an opposition presence, either in the chair or the deputy chair position on these committees, allows for a little bit of balancing. We see this in other jurisdictions, whether it be provincial Legislatures or parliament.

I'm going to suggest that this is a type of balance that's needed. We've seen a government, that's been in power for over 42 years, that likes to cut the corners in terms of having free debate and the opposition questioning their decisions. I think this is another example. Having a committee that deals with ethics but not having any type of opposition member either in the chair or the deputy chair position, I think, hinders the ability of this particular committee to go ahead and do its work. I question the reason – we're dealing with a subamendment right now, I believe – why this government won't simply alter its position on these committee positions, put an opposition member as a chair or deputy chair, and see how it works.

It's worked for the Public Accounts Committee. I think they get a lot of good work done. It's very thorough. There are various experts that come and present to the committee. The chair of that committee, I think, gets along quite well with the deputy chair, who is in fact a member of government. It's a good to-and-fro discussion in that particular committee. Why can't we have that same type of robust discussion and debate in the ethics legislation?

This specific committee, the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, is dealing with ethics. We've seen again and again various ethics violations. The Ethics Commissioner has found violations in his most recent ruling. We see that the Premier herself is under a direct investigation by the Ethics Commissioner. In those circumstances one would suggest that there should be at least some level of neutrality there, and I think that neutrality would be done by having a member of the opposition be either the chair or deputy chair of that particular committee.

When you look at the amendments, for example, that were put forward on that particular committee – I believe there were several or perhaps dozens of amendments that were recommended to be made to the legislation, that were put forward by the opposition – virtually every single one was voted down. Obviously, the government members have the majority on that, so that's their prerogative to do that. They do as they please on that committee.

What's the big deal of having either the chair or deputy chair, which is primarily just a function of creating agendas, ensuring that individuals have the ability to participate in the committee meetings, those types of what I would call rudimentary aspects of committee work – I think that this government's ignoring of precedents in other jurisdictions, that actually have opposition members as chairs of particular committees, is quite telling. I think it's telling of a government that's been in power for 42 years, a government that's arrogant about the role and responsibility of the Official Opposition and other members, and I think that by the continuation of not instituting a particular precedent, that's done in other jurisdictions, it's really demeaning the role of opposition MLAs.

I see that there are, obviously, other amendments that have been put forward on different committees, but I would like to focus

primarily on clause (c). The reason I'm focusing on that particular clause is because it's dealing with ethics legislation, and the role of that committee is actually to put forward recommendations for the act. I used a very interesting term of what that act is in its current state.

Mr. Hancock: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Hancock: Yes. On several occasions I understand the hon. member to indicate that he wants to speak to clause (c), but we're actually speaking to a subamendment that deals with clauses (a) and (b). It does not deal with clause (c), so that would perhaps be better reserved for another portion of the debate.

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

Hon. member, if you'd keep your comments to the clauses that we're debating on this amendment. You can come back to (c) later.

Debate Continued

Mr. Saskiw: Sure. Just with respect to the particular amendment that was put forward – I guess it's signed by the Member for Edmonton-Riverview – obviously, we just received this amendment tonight here and have had limited time to review it. Of course, we'd like to see these type of amendments come forward in advance. This isn't government legislation. Why aren't amendments given to the opposition in advance? We saw this, actually, even with the previous bill, Bill 207. It would have been nice just to see them in advance so we can analyze the particular amendment, make sure that it's in accordance with what we believe in, but instead we get these types of amendments at the last minute. This government has known, perhaps, what it was going to do on this particular amendment for some time now, but instead we get this last-second amendment on a government motion, and these motions are very important.

I think, you know, the Standing Committee on Families and Communities, which is outlined in this subamendment that was put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Riverview and actually, I believe, moved by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, this particular committee, is very important. Obviously, they do a lot of good work. My understanding is that they've met on regular occasions throughout the summer. I was part of this committee for a short period of time. We'd like to know what the reason and rationale for these particular changes is. We'd have liked to see this in advance to know how these particular individuals are going to benefit that committee because, of course, these committees benefit all Albertans.

When you look at the Standing Committee on Families and Communities, this particular amendment replaces two hon. members. We'd like to see this in advance so we could weigh the costs and benefits of these types of replacements to see what backgrounds and knowledge bases those individuals have in terms of applying their skills to a particular committee.

5:30

In addition, it looks like they've decided to strike out clause (b). Clause (b), in the original government motion, states that Goudreau is replacing Allen on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. Actually, in this instance I'd have to agree with

clause (b) being struck out. I think the member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, you know, is obviously from Fort McMurray, has a particular skill set in resources, and has a knowledge base in those areas. On that particular subamendment subsection (2) states that clause (b) is to be struck out. I agree with that subamendment to the main amendment because I think that particular member, being from the north, being from the oil sands region, would have that knowledge base on resource stewardship.

I understand that there may have been a reason. It would be nice to know what the rationale for the change was. The original motion had Goudreau replacing Allen, so it would be nice to know what the rationale was for maintaining the status quo. What was the reason for replacing him to begin with? If he was doing his job on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, what was the impetus for the government to put this replacement forward? What was the impetus for reversing it? But, you know, overall I do agree that clause (b) should be struck out.

Going back to clause (a), on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities, it would be interesting to see what the rationale from the Government House Leader is in terms of why these particular individuals are more suited to perform the role on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities. It looks like, just from the names on this replacement, perhaps it's because the two individuals who are being replaced are now in cabinet or are assistant ministers. You know, we have a minister for everything in this government. I think 48 per cent of the PC MLAs are in cabinet. It's kind of a unique situation in Canada when you have so many cabinet ministers and so many titles.

It seems that because of all of these different, new titles that are coming up, these individuals that are being replaced were elevated there, and now members of government who are not in cabinet are in fact replacing those individuals. I'm guessing that's the reason these changes are being made. It would be interesting to know why the government felt these two particular individuals had the requisite skill set to deal with the Standing Committee on Families and Communities. What are their backgrounds? What's the rationale for these changes?

These committees are important. They do a lot of good work. You know, unlike the Legislature, where individuals don't come to provide their expertise, these types of committees can call in experts from all across the country to look at best practices, to ensure that we here in Alberta are adhering to those best practices. So we think these committees are vitally important, and we think the composition of these committees is important as well.

Mr. Speaker, while I do support subsection (2), which has clause (b) being struck out, I'm a little uncertain about clause (a) being struck out and substituted for something else. I don't necessarily know the skill set of these individuals, and I'd like to know more from the Government House Leader about why these particular individuals would be best suited for this committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: And we'll ask the Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to the subamendment. Obviously, after a great deal of thinking about it, the hon. member realized that members of cabinet are not usually appointed to committees, although they sometimes are, and there's no reason why they can't be. Obviously, the reason those two members are being replaced is because they have been appointed to cabinet.

I find it interesting that the hon. member would make such comments about their appointments given that the people that he's

talking about were appointed as associate ministers for flood recovery, a very, very important aspect of what's happened in Alberta over the last four months, and that he would be critical of the idea that there be cabinet ministers appointed specifically to deal with southwestern Alberta and southeastern Alberta and the High River area to actually focus on the issues and be on the ground there. I find that very surprising.

When he's talking about the number of cabinet ministers and the reason why these particular members have been appointed to cabinet – or one of them. The other one was appointed to cabinet to be an associate minister in the Human Services department to focus specifically on the issues of sexual violence against children and the trafficking of human beings, an appointment that the Premier made which I think was quite remarkable actually, the only one in Canada, to really show that focus and put that focus on the full spectrum of violence, particularly against children, the full spectrum from bullying right to sexual violence. That's a remarkable thing.

But all of that I say just in response to what the hon. member raised about not understanding why we're replacing them. It isn't actually that normal for us to debate the membership of committees in this House. Normally we pass them because our time-honoured tradition is that we ask the opposition to nominate the people that they want to nominate for committees, and we put them in the motion, and we put the people from the government caucus that we want to have on the committees, and the committees are in proportional representation to the membership.

Having said all of that, I understand that there may be a technical issue with the amendment. Therefore, it would be prudent to move that we adjourn debate at this particular moment and move on to Bill 31 so that we can accommodate the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, who would like to speak to that before we adjourn at 6 o'clock.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, you're moving that we adjourn debate on this motion?

Mr. Hancock: Yes.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

(continued)

Bill 31

Protecting Alberta's Environment Act

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 31, Protecting Alberta's Environment Act. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Essentially, Mr. Speaker, Bill 31 establishes the Alberta environmental monitoring, evaluation and reporting agency, more commonly called AEMERA. This will be the voice of authority when it comes to monitoring and reporting on the conditions of Alberta's environment.

In Alberta's true pioneering fashion, this arm's-length organization will be the first of its kind in Canada. Bill 31 lays the foundation for how this agency will operate: its powers, duties, and functions. It will be governed by a board of directors and led by a CEO. There will also be a science advisory panel within the agency. Their purpose is to ensure AEMERA's programs, practices, and procedures are credible and scientifically sound.

As most members in this House know, there is always increasing demand for development of our energy resources, and its effect on the environment is very real. This has resulted in increased international scrutiny on natural resource development in the province, especially in the oil sands region. To help boost confidence in the provincial monitoring system and to reassure all of our consumers here and abroad, Alberta remains committed to sustainable resource management.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of hard work has gone into the creation of this agency. This all began in 2011 with the report entitled *A World Class Environmental Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting System for Alberta: the Report of the Alberta Environmental Monitoring Panel*. We took quick action to work on the recommendations from the report, and over the last year government has made several announcements regarding the move to an integrated resource management system and enhanced environmental monitoring.

In February of 2012 the governments of Canada and Alberta moved forward on the joint Canada-Alberta implementation plan for oil sands monitoring.

In March of 2012 a group of experts was asked to provide government detailed advice on establishing a province-wide comprehensive environmental monitoring system. The group submitted its report to government in June of 2012, and the primary recommendation was to create an arm's-length agency to oversee environmental monitoring across the province, beginning in the oil sands region.

In October 2012 our government accepted all of the recommendations of the report. An independent board was created to immediately begin work to set up the new system and agency. The team of scientific, academic, and business experts has done an excellent job in giving us recommendations to create an organization that will oversee an improved monitoring system, a system that includes looking at analyzing and reporting on air, water, land, and biodiversity; hence, Bill 31 and the creation of AEMERA.

5:40

This agency will be a significant part of Alberta's integrated resource management framework. Initially the agency will begin its work in the oil sands region and will assume responsibility on behalf of the government for the joint Alberta-Canada monitoring program. While it will initially begin its work with a focus on the oil sands, eventually this agency will look at the entire province. With science at its core the information AEMERA will provide will be credible, relevant, and focused.

To be clear, AEMERA has no regulatory or enforcement role. As the very name suggests, their mandate is to monitor, to evaluate, and to report. They are a data-producing agency, data that is vital to the official decision-making process when it comes to natural resource development projects. This very same information will be provided to the public. Open and easy access to information allows people to form their own opinions and to ask questions. Alberta has nothing to hide and much to gain from informed discussions on these issues. In fact, we encourage debate so people can better understand resource development, including oil sands industry performance and oversight.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to realize that the work of AEMERA will not replace any required monitoring and reporting by companies. Industry will still be required to do this under Alberta's stringent regulations. AEMERA's work on cumulative effects monitoring will complement the required work of the companies.

Mr. Speaker, establishing the agency is another step by this government to assure future generations from here and around the world that Alberta will continue to enjoy its natural resources for work, for development, and for enjoyment. This is yet another step that this government has taken and our Premier has taken to demonstrate to Albertans and the world that we are committed to environmental stewardship and responsible resource development.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I am pleased to be able to rise to begin debate on Bill 31. You know, there's no question that the objective of the bill, as stated by the minister, is something that probably most of us in this Assembly can agree on. My concern, having reviewed the bill in some detail, is that the agency which the minister is proposing to set up, at least as one can contemplate it under the legislation that we have before us, is not, unfortunately, the vehicle through which we're going to be able to achieve these objectives.

I think probably the best way to go about this is to go back a few years and review some of the history. It was interesting that the minister chose to start the history from the spring of 2011. I choose to go back a little bit further. I was first elected in 2008. I won't go past that. I could actually go back 25 years. There was a time, in fact, when I remember my father in this House raising concerns about air quality and water quality in the oil sands in the early '70s and being assured in a very sort of patronizing way that everything was just okely-dokely.

Fast-forward to 2008, 2009, and the early part of 2010. I, too, would occasionally get up in this House and ask this government and representatives of this government and typically the minister of environment about concerns that were being raised repeatedly by members of the community in and around the lower Athabasca region about the safety of the industrial activity there and its impact on the air, land, and water upon which they all relied.

Repeatedly I was again reassured with the greatest of confidence and the occasional bit of a patronizing tone that everything was just fine up there and that if I just was a little bit smarter and knew my portfolio a little bit more, I would understand that, you know, tar and toxins that were found in the water were naturally occurring, and it's just because I didn't understand oil and gas enough to know that, in fact, it was all safe and it was all natural and everything was unfolding exactly the way it should be. I remember being assured of that repeatedly. You know, if you get condescendingly told that you don't know what you're talking about enough times, you notice that that's being said. You might not think I hear that, but I do hear it.

That being said, though, thank goodness that people far more credible than me finally weighed in on the debate, and I refer in particular, of course, to that eminent personality, Dr. David Schindler, someone to whom all Albertans owe a tremendous debt. In August of 2010 he released his long-awaited report, a report, interestingly, that was not terribly funded by local funders, into the state of industrial impact on the air, land, and water in and around the lower Athabasca region. Because he was such a pre-eminent person, everyone had to listen. His report concluded, of course, that, no, it was not all naturally occurring and that, in fact, significant and notable damage to the air, land, and water, to a level that was a risk for both plants and animals and people, was in fact occurring in the lower Athabasca region.

Now, as a result of that, everyone started scurrying to take some more looks at that, and a couple of months later the royal

conservatory of scientists, I believe, a Canadian consortium of leading scientists on the matter, put out a report which mostly focused on how the monitoring process that had been in place at that point, one that we all referred to as RAMP, had failed abysmally to provide any real guidance or information that was of value to scientists on whether or not industrial activity in the lower Athabasca region was negatively impacting the air, land, and water in that area.

So that report came out, and then at that point the government had to scurry some more, and they actually, probably for the first and perhaps the only time in this process, went directly to some scientists and set up a committee. It was a water monitoring committee. They reviewed the findings of the royal conservatory and also Dr. Schindler's findings, and they concluded that, yeah, indeed, there was, in fact, a fair amount of damage. There was evidence of non-naturally occurring toxins in the air, land, and water in and around the lower Athabasca region. I believe it was that report, not the royal conservatory's, but I might be getting the two confused.

The other thing that I found profoundly important to this discussion in particular was that they said: you know, we just don't really know how government could ever have assured Albertans that there was no negative impact by industry on the lower Athabasca region's air, land, and water, because, quite honestly, there is no data on it, and no one ever actually asked the right questions. It made me think: jeez, I go back to two years ago, and I didn't apparently know anything about anything when I asked those questions, but the ministers knew everything about everything, and they could completely assure us that nothing bad was happening. Then, lo and behold, we find out that the very scientists and the very staff in whom all of us have been putting our public trust hadn't even asked the darn question.

I think it's really important for us to understand that this is the history that then led to the government's need to create this agency. It is, unfortunately, a history of a broken trust, a broken trust with the people who live in and around that community, a broken trust with the rest of Albertans, who are concerned about preserving the integrity of our environment, and, quite frankly, a broken trust with industry as well. That was one of a number of things that continue to contribute to the undermining of our industry's credibility on the international stage. Let me just say very clearly here that our industry's credibility on the international stage, our so-called social licence – I know that's the new term that everyone wants to talk about – is not something you earn by putting out press releases and going through the motions. That's something you earn by doing what you say you will do and actually providing the details for how that will happen.

5:50

That's where I come to a little bit of a problem with this legislation. I'm afraid this legislation really looks more like we're going through the motions. It looks a little bit more like a public-relations exercise, and there are guarantees that are absent from this legislation.

[Mr. Casey in the chair]

Now, I will say, with no disrespect to the current minister – it's not by any means a personal thing – that based on the history of this government on this file as well as on any other file, when it comes to balancing the public interest around ensuring and preserving the integrity and the safety of our air, land, and water, around ensuring and preserving the opportunity for our indigenous communities and all other community members to participate in a fulsome way, where their voice is equal to that of industry, when

it comes to ensuring that and balancing that against the right of industry to develop as fast as humanly possible, the fact of the matter is that this government has never achieved a proper balance. They have yet to achieve a proper balance.

For the government to then come into this Assembly and bring to us a piece of legislation that essentially can be wrapped up with two words, trust us – trust us; here are the most skeletal, bare bones of a piece of legislation; we're not going to tell you who's going to be appointed, we're not going to tell you the criteria for who will be appointed, we're not going to specify scientific standards, and we are going to make sure that almost every critical element of this agent's functioning remains under the thumb of the minister; trust us – that, Mr. Speaker, cannot work given the deplorable record of this government on this file.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

When all of this stuff first came out, everybody came together and said: we need independent scientific review. Key people said to me: scientific review. But this agency doesn't give us scientific review. It gives us a whole schwack of people who aren't criminals. I'm happy to hear that. I believe the absence of a criminal offence is criteria in this legislation. That's pleasing, but I could have seen a little more detail, Mr. Speaker.

We've got a bunch of folks who very likely, based on past behaviours, will be friends and insiders of this Tory government and/or industry, and those people will then appoint a scientific panel. As far as we know, we don't have any idea what a scientific panel means. Who is qualified to be a scientist? Whether they're a scientist of physics but are now working in their retirement as a consultant for CAPP – well, I guess that could be a scientific panel member. You know, you think I'm being facetious, but if you look at the history of this government and who they appoint to these things, if anything, that's not a facetious statement; that's a prediction. That's what many people would put money on.

You know, we look at some of the things that have happened just most recently. Even in the process of trying to establish an independent group of people to oversee the establishment of this monitoring agency, this government went off and appointed a fellow, Bruce Carson, who had a blatant conflict of interest in his position and, of course, was very much attached to the oil and gas industry. Of course, he had to ultimately resign. Even on this very one, their go-to place was to appoint somebody who really had no credibility on the environmental file but did have a lot to gain personally for his industry and had a long relationship with the oil and gas industry.

More broadly, we have the spectre of the Alberta Energy Regulator. Even though it comes under the Ministry of Energy, we know that essentially that is the go-to environmental protection agency for all that has to do with oil and gas and energy production in this province. Who is the chair of that? Well, honestly, I would have a year and a half ago thought it was facetious to say: hey, they're going to appoint the past chair of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers to chair this environmental regulatory agency. Not facetious anymore, Mr. Speaker. Uh-uh. In fact, that's the record.

Then: well, don't worry too much about the fact that that's who the chair is because our CEO is a former deputy minister. Great. Well, here's what a recent judge had to say about the record of that former deputy minister.

It is difficult to envision a more direct apprehension of bias unless it is the Premier of Quebec telling the Quebec Liquor Commission to revoke a restaurant's liquor licence because the proprietor of the restaurant is a Jehovah's Witness as happened in *Roncarelli v Duplessis*,

which, as most lawyers in this building – and there are a few of us – know, is a textbook law school case for bad governance and bias. That’s what a judge recently used to compare the actions of the ministry of environment with respect to meeting its commitments to ensure fair and open and impartial hearing processes on development appeals under the ministry of environment under the leadership of the current CEO of the Alberta Energy Regulator, appointed by this ministry.

Once again, I think that members of the opposition and members of the public can be forgiven for being a little nervous around the legislation referred to as: trust me; I’ll appoint good people. Quite frankly, the record just isn’t there. Quite to the contrary, the record is there for a very, very different way for this to go.

Now, there are other difficulties within this legislation that we will get into in more detail. I think we’re up to about 10 or 11 amendments in our office that we propose to make in order to try and bring it into the realm of an agency which Albertans and others can trust and rely on. As things stand now, we’re concerned as well about the delay which has occurred up to now and the fact that we have really no explanation from the minister for how this will be funded for any work outside of the lower Athabasca region.

I can only think back again to – you know, it’s a darn good thing that I only got elected in 2008. You know, I’m getting to that age where I like to go: well, back in the day. At this point I can only go back to 2008, but I believe that was when the land-use framework was introduced to much applause and all that stuff. You know what? I think we’ve got – what? – one full framework with a whole bunch of extra things to be filled in and one draft framework and, I believe, six others that remain undone. Why? Because there is no funding for it. So I’m a little worried.

The minister is shaking her head, but I actually remember her predecessor saying to me: well, we’re just going to have to accept that it’s going to take longer to get these land-use frameworks done because I don’t have the money to do the work. So it’s not done yet. It was introduced in 2008, and, just to be clear, it’s not done yet five years later. I’m a little worried that the same fate awaits this monitoring agency and that, in fact, this agency will be set up and will ride the coattails of the federal agency. It will not have the independence that most stakeholders need to see in order to believe that there is some credibility to it and that with all the work that is desperately needed to be done outside of the lower Athabasca region, we’ll still be here talking about it five years from now, wondering when it’s going to get started.

There are other points, and I won’t get into them now. The one other thing I must say in second reading is that at this point there is no provision in this act for inclusion of the indigenous community at any level in terms of being a representative, as being acknowledged as needing to be part of this. More than any other group, they have been subjected to the government’s refusal to apply open and transparent science to what they’ve been experiencing for decades. They deserve to be recognized in this legislation and have a role recognized in this legislation. So do others, but I think I’m about to run out of time, so I want to make sure that that is referenced.

I look forward to having greater debate, and I hope that the minister will seriously consider our 10-plus amendments, which are coming her way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, it’s 6 o’clock. The House stands adjourned until 7:30 tonight.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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